

GRANDMA IS A
TIKTOK STAR

HOLIDAY SIDE DISHES
FOR YOUR GATHERINGS

WHEN TEXAS REACHED
INTO WYOMING

Texas Coop Power

FOR SAM HOUSTON EC MEMBERS

NOVEMBER 2022

Prize Catch

High school anglers
reel in championships
and scholarships

**THE
HISTORY
CENTER
IN DIBOLL**

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November 2022



08

Grandma Goes Viral

She's a TikTok star whose down-home videos have amassed a global following.

*By Mark Wangrin
Photos by Scott Van Osdol*

12 Lakes' Allure

High school anglers get their hooks into lucrative tournament prizes and experiences.

*Story and photos
by Erich Schlegel*

ON THE COVER

Tyler Anderson of Lake Travis High School lands a bass during a tournament.

Photo by Erich Schlegel

ABOVE

Dawn Hodges has put her Bellville kitchen on the social media landscape.

Photo by Scott Van Osdol

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Over the Moon

WANT TO SEE a total lunar eclipse?

The moon will pass through the darkest part of the Earth's shadow November 8, a phenomenon that will be visible in Texas wherever skies are clear.

Check it out 2:01–7:58 a.m. It's the last chance to see a total lunar eclipse from Texas until March 14, 2025.



Edible Edifice

The Traditions Club near Texas A&M University holds the world record for the largest gingerbread house, built in November 2013 in Bryan.

The brown gingerbread bricks lacquered in frosting required 1,800 pounds of butter, 7,200 eggs, 7,200 pounds of flour and nearly 3,000 pounds of brown sugar.

All told, the house stacked up to be 60 feet long, 42 feet wide and 10 feet tall. Oh, and it contained nearly 36 million calories.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I ...

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 September prompt: **Rural life is ...**

Seeing the dust rise a mile away and knowing you better get the laundry off the line and folded before mother pulls into the driveway.

BARBARA TWEED
TRI-COUNTY EC
FORT WORTH

Seeing more tractors go by your house than cars.

JOHN AND SHERRIE MOORE
BLUEBONNET EC
PAIGE

When you see every star in the sky and you can hear every sound that nothing makes.

COREY JACOB
PEDERNALES EC
DRIPPING SPRINGS

Knowing and helping your neighbor even though he's acres away.

ROBERT LANKFORD
HOUSTON COUNTY EC
APPLE SPRINGS

Far from Walmart.

ANGEL GORKA
CECA
MAY

Visit our website to see more responses.

75 Years of Insight

Meet the Press, the longest-running program on American TV, first aired November 6, 1947.

Dig This

NOVEMBER 4 is Arbor Day in Texas.

Your electric cooperative wants to keep you safe and your power on, reminding you that regardless of where you're planting, never dig without first calling 811 to locate underground utilities.



Landmark Election

Edith Wilmans became the first woman elected to the Texas Legislature when Dallas County voters chose her 100 years ago this month—November 7, 1922.

She served one term in the House and then ran unsuccessfully for governor.

Make sure to cast your vote on Election Day, November 8.



S-U-R-R-E-A-L

That's how San Antonio teen Harini Logan, above, described winning the 2022 Scripps National Spelling Bee in June.

Surreal could also describe Texans' prowess at spelling. Three of the other 12 finalists call Texas home. And Logan joins six other Texans who have won outright or shared titles since 2014.

That includes three from the state who were among the octo-champs in 2019—the only time eight contestants were co-champs.

Contests and More

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TAYLOR CALLERY

Roll Call

“In 1959 my bus driver, Mr. Wisely, gave me a Standing Liberty quarter when he saw me crying over losing my Big Chief tablet.”

DAN KING
LAMAR ELECTRIC
PARIS

Returning Home

I loved the article showcasing young people returning to the family farm as entrepreneurs [*Connecting With the Land*, September 2022]. I am in a similar circumstance with my rancher father in a San Saba nursing home.

We have been in the area for five-plus generations, but I have lived all over and find I, too, am a “weirdo.” Glad to see I am not alone.

I was also pleased to see the article highlight how one family set up a business inviting more diverse communities, including LGBTQ and people of color, to the area to camp.

Michelle Pollock
Hamilton County EC
Lometa

This is a delicious burger [Homemade Popper-Topped Burgers, August 2022]. And the topper can also be tweaked into a topper for something hot off the grill. Yum.

MELINDA WOOD
SASARAK
VIA FACEBOOK

Costly Payoff

Kirk Tidwell’s statement, “I only get paid once a year, and this is my payday right here,” shook me [*Prized Fibers*, July 2022]. I guess I have always known that farmers only get paid when crops are sold, but seeing it in writing made it so real. Farmers and others in agriculture should be the most appreciated workforce in this country.

Roberta McLaughlin
Heart of Texas EC
Lorena

Landry’s Followers

As I traveled around the country, I tried to schedule trips to coincide with a Cowboys game [*The Most Glorious Autumn*, August 2022]. I watched Coach Landry sign autographs in every hotel lobby for almost 30 minutes before he could make it to the elevator.

Bill “Cowboy” Lamza
San Bernard EC
Hempstead



JULIA ROBINSON

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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Watch Grandma Cook

She's a TikTok star whose down-home videos have amassed a global following

THE MOST UNLIKELY TIKTOK INFLUENCER in Texas lives in an old country house behind a scattering of oak and hickory off Highway 36 about 5 miles north of Bellville, which is about the time it takes to drink a beer, judging by the number of empties Dawn Hodges usually finds beside the roadway in front of her farm.

Quick-witted and flashing a smile beneath her piercing blue eyes, this Houston native is 76 years old, not quite 5 feet tall, uses glasses sparingly and can hear a visitor knock on the back door from her kitchen at the other end of the house.

We mention the kitchen because that's how we got here. Dawn cooks—well. And she loves to share her recipes on a social network most septuagenarians are as likely to use as a skateboard.

"I don't have the big head," says a bemused Dawn. "I'm not feeding off it—but I am enjoying it. I never thought people would be so interested in watching a grandma cook."

And yet, here she is, a TikTok star who has posted 173 videos and boasts more than 200,000 followers; her three-minute video on how to make pickles has 1.9 million views. At a follower's request, she filmed a shorter video with her 17-year-old grandson, Caden, and his friend, sampling the pickles, crunching loudly and looking happy. It got 166,800 views. Heck, a TikTok of her riding a tractor got 42,400 hits.

If there's one thing about a grandmother being a TikTok star that makes sense, it's that Dawn loves to talk. A visitor could come with 30 minutes' worth of questions and leave



OPPOSITE Dawn Hodges serves up a plate of fresh-baked oatmeal chocolate chip cookies. ABOVE Hamburger steak, as TikTok viewers see it come together.

four hours later with a notebook full of scribbling and a belly full of her delicious chocolate zucchini cake. (Yes, her recipe is on TikTok.)

A question about her cooking might lead to a yarn about Willie, the ill-fated family pig. One about how many critters she has on her farm turns into a tale of Squeaky, a sturdy, good-tempered feral cat who likes to kill gophers and drag them above an open door in her garage, much to the dismay of her two dogs—and anyone standing there when the door comes down.

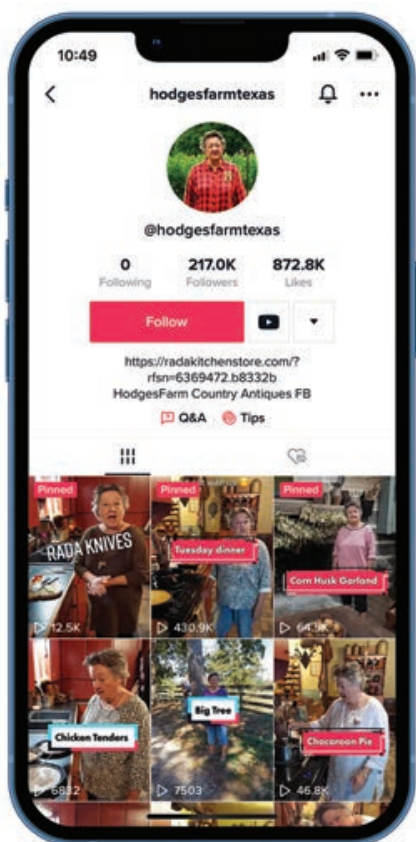
Outside the house, cobbled together from homes and parts of homes from the 1800s and filled with antiques of the same period, is the rest of the L-shaped, 95-acre

spread. There's the potting shed, a garden, a log cabin and an older structure surrounded by an overhanging porch that served as a commercial kitchen when Dawn and her late husband, Doug, gave a go at a business—a result of her fame as the Pimento Cheese Queen of Bellville, a story for another day—but now houses antiques and a refrigerator she stocks with farm eggs that neighbors can stop by and pick up on the honor system. Out back is the barn, a chicken coop, pasture, pond and the home of her daughter, Amy Owens.

Amy sparked Dawn's TikTok adventure because she wanted others to enjoy her mom's prowess in the kitchen.

"Well, I've always wanted to do that," Amy says, "because she's really good at telling people what to do. Anybody will tell you that."

And Dawn could always cook. Anybody will tell you that, too.



FROM LEFT Millions of viewers like seeing what Hodges is up to in her kitchen. Grandson Caden Owens shows the simplicity of producing a TikTok video. “I never thought people would be so interested in watching a grandma cook,” Hodges says.

In October 2020, Doug passed away. He spent 31 years as an office and then business manager at San Bernard Electric Cooperative before retiring in 2005, and he slowly succumbed to dementia. “It was the worst time of my life,” Dawn says.

Looking to lift her mother’s spirits, Amy suggested producing videos for YouTube and later Facebook. Dawn admits the videos were long and unfocused, but it was valuable experience.

One evening about a year ago, Amy, Caden and Dawn were eating supper when Caden said, “You should put them on TikTok. That’s where the videos go crazy.”

So they posted a blackberry custard pie video, and it has since gotten over 54,000 views. “And we’re like, whoa,” Amy recalls.

Her fame took off from there, with Dawn getting to share her passion with strangers all over the world.

“I don’t care whether you believe it or not, but God puts stuff on your heart,” she says. For her, that has almost always been cooking.

As a child, Dawn spent summers on her Aunt Mary’s farm. Mary was a superb cook, and Dawn was inspired. Dawn’s mom “cooked because she had to,” so Dawn became the self-

taught family chef-in-residence.

Enter TikTok, where creators can make short videos, ranging from a few seconds to up to 10 minutes, often set to music and modified by filters. It skews young—almost half its users are under 25.

After making its international debut four years ago, TikTok has captured short attention spans among Americans. The platform boasts 3.5 billion mobile app downloads worldwide. It’s a popular platform for businesses, marketing and entertainers trying to make it big and people who create memes, attempt unusual challenges and generally try to go viral.

Dale Blasingame hates the expression. “I think marketers use it too much,” says the assistant professor of practice in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Texas State University, where he specializes in social media. “They promise everything will go viral. If you’re producing consistently good content, you have a much greater chance of something finally hitting than if you’re doing nothing but trying to go viral all the time.”

Which brings us back to Dawn. Blasingame can see why she’s successful.

She looks different from many TikTok performers, he says. She’s genuine, displaying a rare comfort level with the platform, unlike many her age. Her videos have solid production value (“Just me and my fancy Samsung phone,” Amy says), aren’t overproduced and are clear, simple and easy to understand.

And she’s typecast for her role.

“When you stop to think about who you trust with cooking



tips, she kind of fits the exact bill, right?” Blasingame says. “Especially when you think about the typical TikTok user, who’s probably between 15 and 30. She’s Grandmother’s age.”

Not much is known about the algorithm TikTok uses, but one thing that’s obvious, Blasingame says, is that it’s equal opportunity.

“The greatest aspect of TikTok’s algorithm is that you don’t already need to be a celebrity, a superstar or a big name or have a big following to become a shining star on TikTok,” he says. “Unlike Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, it’s the one platform where anyone, literally anyone, can produce one piece of content that can catapult them to tens of thousands, even a million, followers.”

That’s not lost on Dawn, who ponders the ridiculousness of becoming a TikTok influencer.

“This blows my mind,” she says, shaking her head. “I thought TikTok was just a bunch of kids jumping around and acting crazy.”

She has also become aware of the flip side of TikTok fame—the trolls. Commenters will rag on her for using Velveeta instead of traditional cheese, for mentioning God a lot or any one of a dozen or more things.

“I had to almost ban a troll last night for just being tacky

“This blows my mind. I thought TikTok was just a bunch of kids jumping around and acting crazy.”

because Mom used a packet of gravy on her hamburger steak instead of making it homemade,” Amy says.

Dawn has her go-to reply for those instances: “I just respond with a heart emoji.”

The rest of her followers bring her joy. She hears from fans in Finland, Mexico, Canada, Germany and France, to name a few, and some ask for recipe substitutes when they can’t find some of the ingredients she grows in her spacious garden. And then there’s the Corpus Christi artist who created an oil painting of Dawn in 80 minutes, recorded a time-lapse video of the process and sent the TikTok to her.

She’s got a new fan, too. Blasingame, who became a vegetarian in May, still is intrigued by Dawn’s videos. There are the biscuits and sweet potato casserole, of course, but there are also memories of his own mother, who passed away in 2021.

“She kind of even looks like my mom a bit; they have a very similar hairdo,” he says sweetly. “When I watched her videos, that was the first thing that popped into my mind. My mom was a great cook.

“I wish I had videos like this preserved in time, you know, to try to remember all of her amazing recipes.”

Thanks to TikTok and Dawn Hodges, he kind of already does. ■



Lakes' Allure

High school anglers get their hooks into lucrative tournament prizes and experiences

How about a big fish tale?

Within the first few casts at the 6 a.m. start of one of the biggest Texas high school fishing tournaments this year, Hunter Boren and Joe Fleming hooked the biggest catches of the day—within seconds of each other. Captain and boat driver Mike Boren had to scramble to figure out which fish to net first.

“Mine weighed 7.95 pounds, and seconds later Joe caught his that weighed 7.6 pounds,” Hunter Boren says. “Those first few minutes were insane madness.”

With those fish, the Pearland High School seniors won the Texas High School Bass Association’s Angler of the Year tournament on Lake Conroe in June. Three weeks earlier, the team scored nearly the same quick hits to finish seventh in the THSBA State Championship on Belton Lake in Temple.

On the first day of the state championship—within minutes of the sunrise start—Fleming caught the first and biggest fish of that day. The 5.81-pound bass jumped once, then Fleming quickly wrangled it into the net, pumped his fist and high-fived Hunter Boren.

The Angler of the Year event is the final tournament in the THSBA circuit, which includes more than 50 tournaments. According to Matt Tolnay, who heads operations for the series, more than 3,100 anglers from 300 Texas schools compete for more than a half-million dollars in scholarships.

Boren and Fleming each won \$3,000 scholarships and \$1,000 gift cards from Academy Sports + Outdoors for winning Angler of the Year. Because THSBA isn’t part of the state’s University Interscholastic League, it can award prizes and scholarships.

The THSBA is the largest fishing circuit for high school anglers, but there are several smaller series, including Deep East Texas High School Fishing, based at the Sam Rayburn



OPPOSITE Early positioning—4 a.m.—helped Joe Fleming, left, and Hunter Boren land 30 pounds of bass and first-place trophies. ABOVE Boat captain Mike Boren prepares to net one of Fleming’s bass.

Reservoir; the Central Texas High School Tournament Trail; and Texas B.A.S.S. Nation, run by Bassmaster.

On THSBA tournament days, boat ramps are busy with teams backing their crafts into a lake in the dark well before dawn, their glowing red and green navigation lights reflecting on the water. The tournament organizer gathers the teams to announce the rules and time for weigh-in.

Then, as dawn’s colors creep into the sky, anglers stand on their bows as the national anthem is played over a loudspeaker. When the starting horn goes off, teams zoom off to their first fishing spots, which they had identified in their preparation for the day. Tournaments are typically won in the first hour of fishing.

The rules are similar at most tournaments: one or two anglers per boat, driven by a registered adult “captain” (usually a parent). One- and two-day tournaments will usually start at 6 a.m., with weigh-in starting mid-afternoon. Anglers keep fish in live wells in their boats, then transfer them into oxygenated water troughs using a perforated bag for weigh-in. The heaviest bag of fish wins. The fish are then released back into the lake.

Most tournaments hold a practice fishing day before the competition begins, offering crucial preparation for competitors learning a new lake. Experienced anglers will know the fish patterns for that time of year—a serious advantage. Another way to get a leg up: Rise early on tournament day.

“In the Angler of the Year tournament, we were in our spot just after 4 a.m. and waited there to hold that spot until we could start fishing at 6 a.m.,” Hunter Boren says. “Fishing tournaments is competitive, but after weigh-in, it gives you the opportunity to walk around and meet new people from around the state.”

More than 3,100 anglers from 300 Texas schools compete for more than a half-million dollars in scholarships.

Mark Hooker, coach for the high school fishing teams from Montgomery, north of Houston, calls his program the most decorated in the state. “This year we have 92 anglers and are very competitive within our own team,” he says.

That competitive spirit led one of his teams to a historic national championship.

Although most high school anglers are boys, more and more girls are getting out on lakes. Montgomery anglers Fallon Clepper and Wyatt Ford, students at Lake Creek High School and members of MidSouth Electric Cooperative, won the 2022 High School Bass Fishing National Championship—the top tournament in the U.S. for high schoolers—in June at Pickwick Lake near Florence, Alabama.

The team spent 11 days practicing at the lake, researching fish patterns and water levels. Their hard work paid off, and Clepper became the first female national champion. “We definitely had our game on,” says Clepper, who split the \$10,000 cash prize with Ford. “My parents and grandparents were jumping up and down and cheering at the weigh-in.”

There’s big money to be made in professional bass fishing. But these days, there’s another route for turning passion for the sport into a career.

Tyler Anderson founded the Lake Travis High School fishing team when he was a sophomore, finishing fourth at state his senior year, in 2015. When he got to Texas A&M University, he joined the school’s fishing team and started expanding a YouTube channel he started back in 2013. Nine years, 782 videos and a quarter-million subscribers later, Tyler’s Reel Fishing boasts more than 32 million views, and Anderson is able to make a living off his content and sponsorships.

“I’m pulling my new 2022 FXR21 Skeeter bass boat with a Yamaha 250-horsepower engine and Native Slayer 10 kayak on my truck roof rack—all sponsors of mine,” Ander-

son says over the phone as he drives to Michigan to film smallmouth bass fishing. “I get paid by them and from YouTube ads.”

Anderson, a Pedernales Electric Cooperative member, helps pro anglers Alton Jones and Alton Jones Jr. of Lorena, outside Waco, with their video content.

“I enjoy being outdoors with friends and family, making memories,” Anderson says. “As soon as I realized I could make a living fishing, I compared that to my friends’ jobs and realized that I could make a career out of my passion if I worked as hard as I could.” ■

ABOVE Wyatt Ford, left, and Fallon Clepper teamed up to win the 2022 High School Bass Fishing National Championship, making Clepper the first girl to do so.



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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES BELIEVE that hiring and caring for veterans and military spouses strengthens our work and our communities. This Veterans Day—November 11—Sam Houston Electric Cooperative thanks those who have served our country and wants to spread the news that electric cooperatives need veterans to help power rural Texas.

Electric co-ops are nonprofit, community-focused organizations that deliver safe, reliable and affordable energy to their member-owners. Unlike investor-owned utilities, co-ops are owned by those they serve and prioritize members' interests—not profits—above all else. This fundamental difference shapes every decision made by electric co-ops and provides employees with a unifying sense of purpose.

No matter which branch of the military you served with, there are three areas in which America's electric cooperatives can resonate with you as a veteran. Co-ops are:

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Using advanced technology: From cybersecurity and broadband to the many facets of beneficial electrification and turning data into actionable insights, technology plays a major role in operating electric cooperatives.

Operating in challenging circumstances: To power 20 million households, America's electric cooperatives work diligently to maintain service for their members no matter what challenging circumstances arise. Co-ops continue to do all they can to keep the lights on throughout hurricane season, during ice storms and floods, and amid global health and economic crises.

A wide variety of skills are required to keep operations running smoothly. Veterans can put their skills to work in jobs such as construction, equipment operation, engineering, customer service, communications, human resources, software analysis, cybersecurity and more.

Check out job listings at careers.electric.coop to explore career opportunities at electric co-ops across the U.S. ■



Three Sam Houston EC employees were photographed by retired Marine Corps and Communications Specialist Chad Simon. From left, Bryan Heard, lineman and former Navy; Elina Hobbs, billing coordinator and former Navy; and Mike McGallion, electrical technician and former Air Force.



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Use the Kitchen Efficiently While Cooking

SLOW-COOKED, HEARTY foods are fall and holiday favorites, yet the energy required to cook them can represent a significant portion of your monthly energy bill. The Department of Energy estimates that cooking alone generally accounts for 4%–5% of total home energy use, and this figure doesn't include the energy costs associated with refrigeration, water heating and dishwashing. Added together, these costs mean that as much as 15% of the energy in the average American home is used in the kitchen.

However, it's possible to cook all those great cold-weather favorites while saving energy and money by learning how to use the stove more energy efficiently. **Here are some energy-saving cooking tips from the DOE that can help:**

Don't peek! When using the oven, it's tempting to open the door to check on a dish's progress. Every time the oven door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by as much as 25 degrees, forcing it to work even harder (and use more energy) to get back to the proper cooking temperature. If you need to check on a dish, use the oven window instead.

Turn it down. For recipes that need to bake for longer than an hour, preheating the oven isn't necessary. If you're baking

in a ceramic or glass dish, you can typically set your oven for 25 degrees less than the recipe calls for because ceramic and glass hold heat better than metal pans.

Don't neglect your slow cooker, microwave, toaster oven, air fryer or warming plate. Putting them to work more often for smaller meals instead of the oven or stovetop can mean significant energy savings.

Give your furnace the day off. If your next party involves a lot of work for your stove, think about turning down your furnace to compensate. The heat of the oven—and all those guests—will often keep the temperature comfortable, and your furnace won't have to work so hard.

Make contact. Warped and rounded pans that wobble when you set them down will not work with electric stovetops. The less contact your pan has with the burner, the more energy the stovetop will have to expend to heat the pan and its contents. ■

Prepare Your Heater for Winter Use

WINTER IS KNOCKING at the door, so now is the time to make sure your heating system is up to the task.

The Department of Energy's heating equipment checklist can help ensure your system is in the best condition to efficiently heat your home before winter's chill settles in.

Chores To Do Yourself

Replace air filters regularly. Inspect, clean or change air filters once a month or as needed to prevent energy cost increases or potential equipment damage.

Check for obstructions. Make sure vents, radiators and baseboard heaters are clear of obstructions like furniture so air can flow freely.

Check the fuel. If you have a propane furnace, make sure your fuel tank is full and ready to go.

Clean the heat exchanger. Remove dirt, soot and corrosion from the system and clean the heat exchanger to maintain heating levels.

Avoid fire hazards. Test your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and replace batteries or units if needed.

Test the System

If air vents emit a high-pitched sound, it usually (but not always) indicates a lack of return air. When the system needs to pull more air, the pressure and velocity of air moving through it increases, making for noisy vents.

Vents also might make a rattling or flapping sound, usually due to debris in the duct. A rattling sound coming from the furnace itself might mean a part has come loose and is moving

around inside, while squeals or shrieks can indicate a bad belt. A metal-against-metal scraping sound can mean that part of the blower system is coming loose.

If you smell gas, burning, or an electrical or a musty odor coming from the furnace area, it could be something as simple as an air filter that needs changing or as serious as a gas leak.

If the furnace is not heating, or not reaching the temperature on the thermostat, it could be one of several culprits.

These issues are all best addressed by a professional.

Tasks for a Pro

Inspect equipment. Make sure all connections, gas pressure, burner combustion and heat exchangers are working properly. Check electrical terminals, and clean or tighten connections if necessary. If your equipment isn't working, it could be a fire hazard or cause the system to operate less efficiently.

Remove blockages. Inspect ducts, filters, blowers and indoor coils for dirt and other obstructions. Duct leaks are common and contribute to poor heating throughout the whole home. Holes, gaps and other damage can result in wasted heat, which leads to frustration and higher bills.

Lubricate motors. Parts that lack lubrication cause friction in motors, increasing the amount of energy used and causing equipment to wear out quickly.

While you're at it, get your cooling systems ready for winter. If you have window units, remove them and store them to eliminate air leaks. If you have a condensing unit, clean off debris and dirt to discourage rusting. ■





A Treasure Trove of East Texas' Past

The History Center in Diboll offers a wealth of records documenting the region

BY RANDY MALLORY

OFFICIALLY, THE MISSION of the History Center in Diboll is to collect, preserve and make available historical records that tell the story of Angelina and surrounding counties.

The numbers tell the tale.

The center's state-of-the-art archives boast more than 4,000 cubic feet of manuscripts and records, especially from prominent companies such as Southern Pine Lumber Co., Temple Lumber Co. and subsidiaries. They made Diboll an economic hub for decades. Thousands of land records, surveys, company documents and maps describe in detail the region's topography, forests, highways, railroads and land ownership.

Historical documents come from dozens of sources: chambers of commerce, public schools, civic clubs, municipalities and family histories. There's also 65 linear feet of original printed newspapers and 700 reels of microfilm capturing life in and around Angelina County from 1913 to the present. The History Center has about a million photographs of local people, places, businesses and events. That includes 3,000 large-format negatives from the J. Shirley Daniel Photograph Collection covering the area's forestry industries and Diboll's community life.

The center's mission has real-world meaning for a growing host of patrons looking for answers to personal questions. Take for example Sam Houston Electric Cooperative member Jerry Jackson of Conroe. The train buff wanted to build a model railroad in his office, specifically an early 1900s line run by the Frost Johnson Lumber Co. of Nacogdoches.

He had researched the subject for more than a year but still needed a detailed view of the company's logo—a "must-have" item for visual accuracy of the line in small scale. After perusing the center's online resources, Jackson requested certain promising items for his first in-person visit last May. Emily Hyatt, the center's senior archivist, led him to the center's spacious reading room, where she had laid out the requested materials. Tucked in that treasure trove of railroad memorabilia Jackson spotted the logo, clear as day, on an aging sheet of company letterhead.

Ellen Temple of Lufkin had a large-scale question to answer when she turned for help to the center's small but dedicated staff. The longtime East Texas writer and independent publisher was knee-deep in producing a documentary film when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down major photo and film



2

1. For more than 20 years, the History Center in Diboll has chronicled the history of Angelina and surrounding counties. Pictured, from left, are Executive Director Jonathan Gerland, Archives Processor Allison Grimes, Office Manager Allison Hearne and Senior Archivist Emily Hyatt.

2. Barley Lenderman of Diboll comes to the center's reading room several days a week to research a range of historical topics.

3-4. The exhibit room features display panels on the history of Diboll and nearby areas such as Boggy Slough.



3



4

archives, including the National Archives in Washington, D.C. She desperately needed to locate compelling images for her film, *Citizens at Last*, which would showcase Texas women's fight for the right to vote.

She turned to smaller archives such as the History Center. Hyatt and History Center Executive Director Jonathan Gerland curated high-quality images of early 1900s rural East Texas women, 15 of which made it into the film.

"Among my favorites is a photo of a gathering of men and women on the Neches River bridge enjoying a Sunday visit on the railroad trestle," Temple explains. "Development of the railroads was a key factor in the long fight for the vote. It gave the suffragists a way to get around and organize in a state as vast as ours." *Citizens at Last* premiered last year on PBS and can be viewed online for free at citizensatlastfilm.com.

History of Growth

Seeking help from Diboll's History Center was a natural decision for Temple. She and her late husband, Buddy, helped get the center off the ground nearly 20 years ago. It began as a records repository for the T.L.L. Temple family, which founded the Southern Pine Lumber Co. of Diboll and related businesses including Temple Industries, Temple Lumber Co., Temple Eastex and Temple-Inland.

The center grew beyond the Temple family's archives to meet pressing community needs, explains philanthropist and environmentalist Ellen Temple. "Many of the folks who made history

in Diboll and East Texas were passing on without a chance to tell their stories or to have a safe place to preserve their photos and papers," she says. "Folks in East Texas are hardworking people. They love the land, forests and the rivers throughout the region. We are celebrating their contributions to the life and history of Texas by collecting, preserving and granting access to their stories."

The History Center's Craftsman-style building exudes the welcoming ambiance and wood-grained feel you expect from a repository of Piney Woods history. The floors, walls and ceilings are comprised of heart pine and cedar, custom cut and locally milled. The natural wood glow in the exhibits room surrounds a permanent display of photos and information panels that tell the story of Diboll and regional forest and transportation industries. Rotating temporary exhibits spotlight other forest communities and landforms. The current temporary exhibit highlights the Boggy Slough Conservation Area through excerpts from Gerland's new book, *Boggy Slough: A Forest, a Family, and a Foundation for Land Conservation*.

The center's outdoor exhibits feature Engine 13, a restored 68-ton Baldwin 4-6-0 steam locomotive built in 1920. It operated as part of the Texas Southeastern Railroad. There's also a Southern Pine Lumber Co. log car and Texas Southeastern Railroad caboose number 6.

A nearby courtyard sports a statue of T.L.L. Temple's grandson, Arthur Temple Jr., a timber man and early environmentalist who promoted creating the Big Thicket National Preserve.



RANDY MALLORY
1



RANDY MALLORY
2

Appropriately, the center’s landscaping displays showy native plants—like Gulf muhly and bluestem grasses, purple cone and cardinal flowers, and “Dam B” wisteria growing beneath towering pines, oaks and maples.

For some patrons, the center quenches an insatiable thirst for history. Most days, Barley Lenderman of Diboll sits in the reading room. He is as much a fixture as the books and microfilm readers lining the cypress walls. Retired from Angelina County Airport, Lenderman has found historical research a perfect hobby.

“I’ve always been curious about the past,” he says. “I started spending time with this almost endless supply of archival records about the people and companies that have graced this area.” He particularly appreciates the center’s staff, who are always there to lend a knowledgeable hand.

On-Site and Online

After an impromptu visit to the center, another retiree, Patty Oltremari of Woodville, was so impressed by the staff’s com-

mitment to historical preservation that she signed on as a regular volunteer.

“I work behind the scenes mainly scanning documents and photos and cataloging them,” Oltremari explains. She works under the supervision of Hyatt, who says the center is placing “more emphasis on digitizing our physical collections and making them available online. As more collections are digitized, we create more ‘finding guides’ to help online researchers locate what’s available.”

Also available online is the center’s annual magazine, *The Pine Bough*, which highlights new acquisitions and other topics of special interest, replete with historical photos and current images of East Texas forests and rivers.

One of the center’s prime online collections features audio-tape oral histories with interviewees of diverse racial identities and class backgrounds discussing all sorts of topics. The oral history project contains some 500 interviews from the 1950s to the present, complete with interviewee photos, transcripts, and audio files for streaming or downloading. The project won



1. Senior Archivist Emily Hyatt pulls historical documents from the center's secured archival vault for researchers.
2. The exhibit room features display panels on the history of Diboll and nearby areas such as Boggy Slough.
3. Colorful native Gulf muhly grass decorates the landscape near Engine 13.
4. Native plants surround the center's Craftsman-style building.
5. The center's permanent exhibit area tells the history of Diboll.

The History Center

102 N. Temple Drive, Diboll 75941
8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday;
Saturdays by appointment with two
 weeks' notice
 Free admission
(936) 829-3543
info@thehistorycenteronline.com
thehistorycenteronline.com



an award from the Texas Oral History Association, and many of its interviews contributed to the 1998 book by Thad Sitton and James H. Conrad called *Nameless Towns: Texas Sawmill Communities, 1880–1942*.

The ease of researching online as well as on-site proved especially helpful for Ron Price of Houston, who's written several genealogy books on his family. His latest project began as a history of his grandfather Montana Lillie, who lived in Lufkin from the 1920s until his death in 1971. After discovering the wealth of African American history archived at the History Center, Price changed course.

"I wanted to write about not just my grandfather but all the other grandfathers and grandmothers who led unremarkable but proud lives during this era," he says. "I wanted their story to be told and not forgotten."

He finished the book, *Early Lufkin Texas From an African American Perspective*, this past spring. The book is now available on Amazon.

"The key to the book was the [oral history] interviews that

created a timeline and backdrop for the era I was detailing," Price says. "It led me on a personal journey where I better understood the historical significance of ... where I grew up. I discovered pictures of my [late] mother and aunts as track stars, queens and debutantes in their youth. My only regret is that I could not share this information with them."

Helping folks connect the dots between past and present remains the real mission of the History Center, notes executive director Gerland.

"We believe every day is another day of history," he says. "While we live life forward, we understand it backward. History connects people to each other and to something larger than themselves across time and space. To do so, we tell stories. Everyone has a story, and everyone's history matters. By studying the past, history is the basis of understanding that there is even hope of a future." ■

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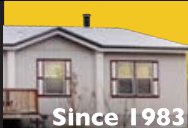
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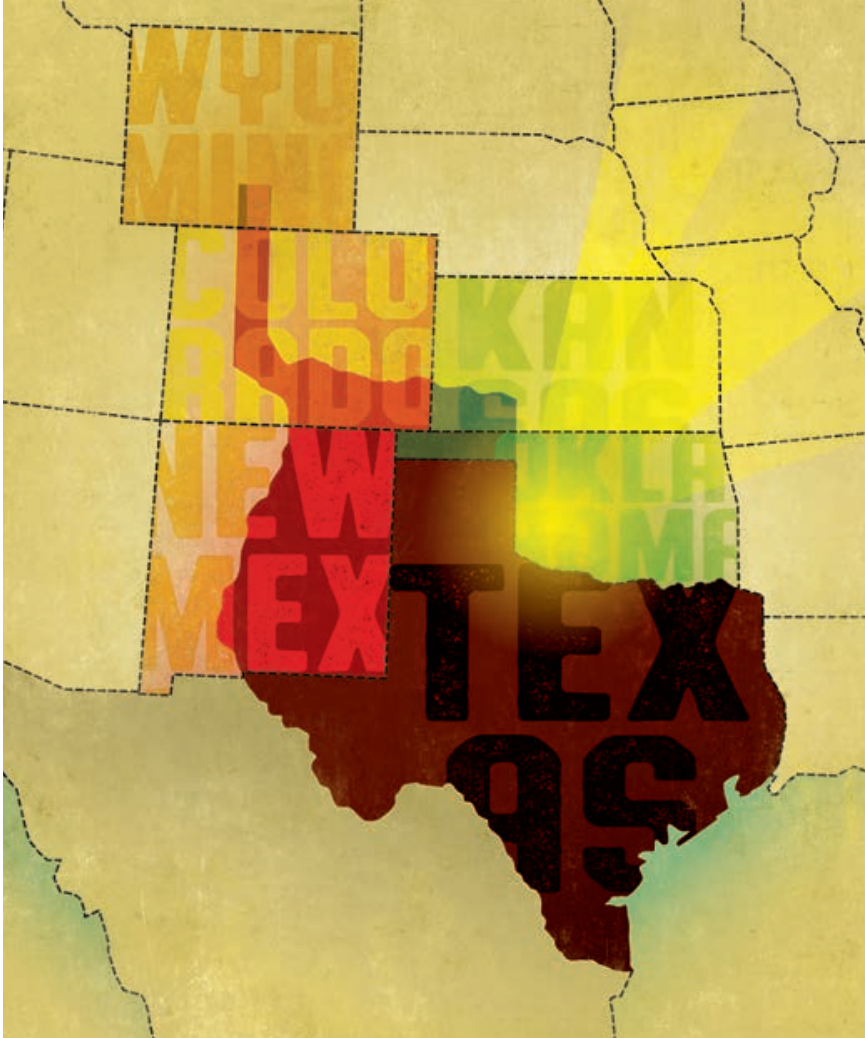
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Everything Was Bigger ...

Lucky folks in modern-day Wyoming were Texans in 1845

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY TRACI DABERKO

TEXANS HAVE A kind of proverb that goes like this: “Driving across Texas isn’t a trip; it’s a damn career.”

Texas is big, no doubt about that. But it used to be a lot bigger—by about one-quarter.

When the Republic of Texas joined the U.S. in 1845, Texas’ borders were dramatically different. The northern boundary stretched all the way up into what is today southern Wyoming. The northernmost town in Texas wasn’t Kerrick; it was Rawlins—some 1,400 miles from Brownsville. A trip like that in 1845 would have been measured in seasons, not days. “We’ll leave in early spring and get there before

winter sets in.”

That slice of land was Texas’ original panhandle, encompassing part of the Rockies. They called that area the stovepipe because that’s what it looked like: a long skinny stovepipe jutting northward. You can still find vestiges of Texas up there. For instance, there’s a stream in Wyoming named Texas Creek.

Texas used to include what is today the panhandle of Oklahoma. That territory comprises three counties, one of them still named Texas County. So some Oklahomans still live in Texas—well, Texas County, anyway. Today the northern Texas border aligns with the latitude

TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



established in the Missouri Compromise that restricted slavery to states south of that line.

The southwestern corner of Kansas was also originally Texas. That’s when Dodge City was in Texas. *Gunsmoke* always did seem like a Texas series. We know that Marshal Matt Dillon was born in San Antonio, and his father was a Texas Ranger. It’s all coming together.

New Mexico used to be about half its current size because Santa Fe, Taos and all of the eastern part of the state were Texas. In fact, Texas was so big in 1845 that if you had put a hinge on the northernmost part and flipped it northward, Brownsville would have been in Northern Canada, next to Hudson Bay.

So what happened to all our land? The U.S. government bought it in 1850 for \$10 million. They bought our claims in present-day Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas and Oklahoma for what amounted to 15 cents an acre. It may seem like we sold out cheap. But that’s \$380 million in today’s money, and Texas desperately needed the money.

Texas’ leaders had a state to build, but the only true assets were land—and a hardened people with unbreakable spirits. So we sold the land, paid off debts and got a much more appealing shape—one that fits nicely on T-shirts.

Even without all that land, we’re no slouch of a state. You know if you’ve ever driven it. We still measure distance in time. We still feel like we’re crossing an enormous frontier when driving Interstate 10 through West Texas or Interstate 35 north and south. And this old Texas saying is still valid: “The sun has riz, the sun has set, and here we is in Texas yet.” ■

Holiday Sides

Tasty servings that just might take center stage

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

During the holidays, I gravitate toward the side dishes over any turkey or ham. Rolls are always a must at my house, and these Cheesy Ranch Rolls have become a family favorite. They're wonderfully soft with a zesty flavor, and any leftovers are perfect for sandwiches the next day. For a larger crowd, simply double the recipe.

Cheesy Ranch Rolls

2 cups flour, divided use, plus more as needed
2 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons (1 packet) ranch seasoning
2¼ teaspoons (1 packet) instant yeast
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup milk
2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, plus more for topping
1 cup shredded Gouda or cheddar cheese

1. In a bowl, combine 1 cup flour, sugar, ranch seasoning, yeast and salt.

2. In a microwave-safe bowl or liquid measuring cup, combine milk and butter. Microwave in 15-second increments until milk is warm to the touch but not hot. Butter does not need to completely melt; it will melt as you mix the dough.

3. Pour milk and butter into dry ingredients and mix well to combine. Add ¼ cup flour and shredded cheese and mix well. Stir in remaining flour in increments, just until dough forms into a ball. Scoop onto a lightly floured surface and knead dough 6–8 minutes, until smooth and springy, adding flour as needed to prevent sticking. Shape into a ball, cover with a towel and let rest 10 minutes.

4. Cut dough into 12 pieces and roll each piece into a ball, then place in a greased square baking dish. Cover again and let rise 30 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 375 degrees.

5. Once rolls have risen, bake 20–25 minutes, until golden brown. Let cool slightly, then brush with melted butter and serve.

SERVES 12

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Brussels Sprouts With Walnuts and Cranberries.





Praline Sweet Potatoes

LANELL MCDANIEL
SAM HOUSTON EC

This easy sweet potato dish has a wonderfully crunchy crumble topping. It's equally at home served as a side or dessert. You'll need 2–3 pounds of sweet potatoes. Excess potatoes can be used to make sweet potato waffles or pancakes.

POTATOES

3 cups cooked, mashed sweet potatoes

1 cup brown sugar

2 eggs, beaten

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

½ cup milk

½ cup (1 stick) melted butter

TOPPING

1 cup chopped pecans

½ cup brown sugar

⅓ cup flour

⅓ cup (¾ stick) melted butter

1. POTATOES Preheat oven to 350 degrees and butter a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. In a large bowl, combine sweet potatoes with brown sugar, eggs, vanilla, milk and butter. Pour into prepared dish.

2. TOPPING In small bowl, combine pecans, brown sugar and flour. Stir in melted butter with a fork until a crumble forms. Scatter evenly over the top of the sweet potatoes.

3. Bake 30–40 minutes, until topping is golden brown and crunchy.

SERVES 8

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

Caramelized Onion Potato Medley Gratin

MARIAN EVONIUK
PEDERNALES EC



Potato fans, this one is for you! With three kinds of potatoes, caramelized onions and a pop of dill, Evoniuk's gratin will have you reaching for seconds and thirds.

SERVES 8–12



- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) unsalted butter**
- 2 large sweet onions, peeled and sliced**
- ⅓ teaspoon pepper**
- 1½ teaspoons salt, divided use**
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced**
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh dill**
- 2¼ cups heavy cream, divided use**
- 1 pound Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced**
- 1 pound sweet potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced**
- 1 pound red potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced**
- 2½ cups shredded Gruyere cheese, divided use**
- 1 green onion, chopped, or 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives**

1. Set a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat and add butter, onion, pepper and 1 teaspoon salt, and cover. Cook 25–30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the onions are lightly caramelized. Add garlic and dill and cook uncovered 1 minute more.

2. Pour in 2 cups heavy cream and bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer 3–4 minutes, stirring, until mixture is slightly thickened. Remove from heat and set aside.

3. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with butter and set aside.

4. In a large mixing bowl, combine potatoes, remaining ½ teaspoon salt and 2 cups Gruyere. Pour in creamed onions and mix well, then pour into the prepared baking dish. Combine remaining ¼ cup cream and ½ cup Gruyere in a small bowl and spread over the top of the potatoes.

5. Cover with foil and bake 45 minutes, then uncover and bake until golden brown and bubbly, 30–45 minutes. Remove from oven and let stand 10 minutes, then garnish with chopped onion or chives and serve.

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Sweet Sour Red Cabbage

NANCY FILER
COSERV

Filer's family has been serving this dish during the holidays for nearly 100 years, and it's easy to see why. Tangy and lightly sweet, it goes well with any of your favorite main dishes.

1 head red cabbage, about 1½ pounds
4 slices bacon, diced
½ cup packed brown sugar

2 tablespoons flour
½ cup water
¼ cup white vinegar
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper

1. Shred cabbage and measure 5 cups. Boil a large pot of water and add cabbage; bring back to boil and boil 5 minutes. Drain, transfer to a mixing bowl and set aside.
2. In a large sauté pan, fry diced bacon over medium heat until crisp. Remove and drain on paper towels.
3. Discard all but 1 tablespoon bacon drippings. Return pan to medium heat and whisk in brown sugar and flour, taking care to break up any lumps. Whisk in water, vinegar, salt and pepper. Cook, stirring often, until the mixture thickens, about 5 minutes.
4. Add the bacon and sauce to the cabbage, stirring gently to combine. Garnish with extra fried bacon if you like.

SERVES 6-8

Planning Makes Perfect

BY MEGAN MYERS

Wondering how much to serve at your next gathering? Use these guidelines when choosing dishes for the big meal.

Meat: 6 ounces per person (not including bones).

Appetizers: 6 pieces per person.

Potatoes: ½ cup per person.

Stuffing and casseroles: ½ cup per person.

Salad: 2 cups per person.

Vegetable sides: 1 cup per person.

Gravy and cranberry sauce: ¼ cup per person.

Rolls: 1-2 per person.

Keep in mind that as the number of side dish options grows, guests will likely eat less of each. Also, don't forget to plan for your favorite leftovers.



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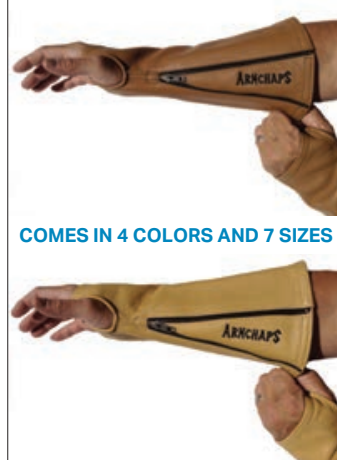
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Toe Tappin' in Turkey

Learn all about Bob Wills—the King of Western Swing—in his Panhandle hometown

BY CHET GARNER

IF YOU ASK someone to name the king of music, they'll likely mention Elvis Presley (the King of Rock 'n' Roll) or George Strait (the King of Country). However, true students of music genres will give credit to the everlasting King of Western Swing—Bob Wills. I took a trip to the Panhandle town of Turkey to pay homage to the legacy of this Texas-sized king.

Days generally pass by quietly in Turkey, unless you're here on the last Saturday in April, when thousands attend the Bob Wills Day celebration and keep string-pickin' circles going into the morning hours. I visited on a normal Thursday afternoon and found the main drag nearly empty, save for a few folks filling their bellies at Galvan's Restaurant. After polishing off a Mexican Platter No. 9, I scooted over to the old elementary school that's now the Bob Wills Community Center.

I wasn't too familiar with Wills other than a few of his hit tunes, like *San Antonio Rose* and *Bubbles in My Beer*. But inside this museum, I received a full-on education.

Wills spent much of his childhood in Turkey and began playing music right out of the crib, as his father was a champion fiddle player. Over time, Wills became enamored with musical styles that included jazz and blues. By the early 1930s, he had formed the Texas Playboys and created a new genre called Western swing, which blended all his favorite styles. It's a feat that landed Wills in both the Country Music and Rock & Roll halls of fame.

The museum is full of artifacts and stories of Wills' rise to stardom. Visitors are sure to leave with a new appreciation for the King of Western Swing—and a foot that won't stop stomping. ■

ABOVE Chet has fun fiddlin' around the tranquil town of Turkey.

TCP Chet tunes in to Turkey's pride and joy in his latest video on our website. Watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

NOVEMBER 09

Harlingen [9–13] Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, (209) 227-4823, rgvbf.org

11

Fort Worth Tarrant County Veterans Day Parade, tcvc@tcvc.us, fw2022parade.org

Lubbock Lubbock Symphony Orchestra: Madam Butterfly, (806) 792-8339, buddyhollyhall.com

Victoria Golden Crescent CASA Wine Pairing, (361) 573-3734, goldencrescentcasa.org

Salado [11–13] Scottish Gathering and Highland Games, (254) 947-5232, saladomuseum.org

Ingram [11–Dec. 16] ArtMart, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

12

Alvin Novemberfest, alvinrotaryclub@gmail.com, alvinrotary.org

Bastrop Red, White & Blue Veterans Appreciation Banquet, (330) 418-9164, rwbveterans.com

Burton Big Star Texas Night, (979) 251-4078, burtontexas.org

Elgin Veterans Appreciation Parade, (512) 281-5724, etx150.com

Henderson Heritage Syrup Festival, (903) 657-4303, hendersontx.us

Kerrville Veterans Day Car Show and Parade, (830) 792-2580, kerrvilletexascvb.com

13

Pearland Country Music Showcase, (281) 997-5970, visitpearland.com

14

Brazoria Henry Smith Day, (979) 345-3335, brazoriahf.org

15

New Braunfels [15-17] Festival of Trees, (830) 832-0089, facebook.com/festivaloftreesnb

17

Temple Taste of the Holidays, altrusatemple.org

Palestine [17-20, 23-27, Dec. 2-11, 16-Jan. 1] Walk of Lights, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

18

Bryan Lights On!, (979) 721-9506, destinationbryan.com

Alpine [18-19] Artwalk, (210) 218-1114, artwalkalpine.com

Henderson [18-20] The Magic of Christmas, (903) 392-0691, visithendersontx.com

New Braunfels [18-20] Weihnachtsmarkt, (830) 629-1572, newbraunfelsweihnachtsmarkt.com

Ingram [18-19, 25-27, Dec. 2-4, 9-11] A Christmas Carol, (830) 367-5121, hcac.com

19

Corpus Christi Wine Festival, info@corpuschristiwinefestival.com, corpuschristiwinefestival.com

MORE EVENTS >

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b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation (1) Mailed Outside-County, (2) In-County, Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Other Mailed	1,814,529	1,848,492
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Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner Date
Karen Nejtcek, Managing Editor October 1, 2022



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NOVEMBER EVENTS CONTINUED

19

Henderson A Very Merry Market, (318) 780-0620, kvne.com

Luling Grinchmas Arts and Crafts Show, (830) 875-0123, lulingcc.org

Boerne [19-20] Fall Antique Show, (830) 329-2870, ci.boerne.tx.us

Fort Worth [19-20] Funky Finds Holiday Shopping Experience, (903) 665-7954, funkyfinds.com

Granbury [19-20] Winter Wine Walk, (817) 488-6789, crosstimberswinetrail.com

22

Wharton Christmas Holiday Parade, (979) 532-1862, whartonchamber.com

26

Jefferson Christmas Parade and Enchanted Forest Tree Lighting, (903) 665-3733, visitjeffersonstexas.com

Nacogdoches Wassail Fest, (936) 559-2500, nactx.us

San Angelo Santa's Santa Fe Christmas, (325) 486-2140, sanangelorailway.org

DECEMBER

01

Cameron Christmas Parade, (254) 697-4979, cameron-tx.com

Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: The Miracle of Christmas, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

La Grange Schmeckenfest, (979) 968-3017, visitlagrangetx.com

Tyler Rotary Clubs of Tyler Christmas Parade, (903) 593-6905, visittyler.com

Paris [1-3] Texas BBQ Blowout, (903) 784-2501, cbabbq.com

02

Fredericksburg Light the Night Christmas Parade, (830) 997-5000, fredericksburg-texas.com

Brenham [2-3] Christmas Stroll & Lighted Parade, (979) 337-7580, jingle.cityofbrenham.org

03

Bowie Fantasy of Lights Christmas Festival and Lighted Parade, (940) 872-6246, cityofbowietx.com

Fredericksburg Kinderfest, (830) 990-8441, pioneermuseum.org

Round Top Houston Masterworks Chorus, (979) 249-3129, festivalhill.org

Aerials

We're flipping over the bird's-eye view these reader photos offer. Come along as they soar to capture the beauty of the Lone Star State.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 JIM BLAKE
COLEMAN COUNTY EC
Springtime over Trickham, taken with a Typhoon H drone.

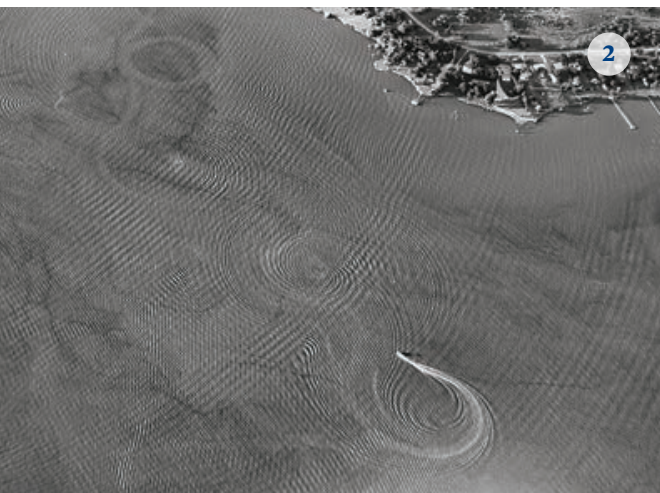
2 ROY O'REAR
TRI-COUNTY EC
"Interference patterns in the waves made by a boat on Lake Arrowhead near Wichita Falls."

3 MIKE ZARELLA
PEDERNALES EC
"A hawk's-eye view of the Pedernales River in Blanco County before the current drought."

4 MIKE PRESTIGIACOMO
BARTLETT EC
Palo Duro Canyon State Park.



1



2



3



4

Upcoming Contests

DUE NOV 10 Land, Sea or Sky

DUE DEC 10 Riding the River

DUE JAN 10 Taking Flight



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



The Arable Twos

Thankfulness and hope for a toddler's trials and travails on the farm

BY MARTHA DEERINGER
ILLUSTRATION BY
CHANELLE NIBBELINK

MY GREAT-GRANDSON, Waylon, is 2 and carries all the baggage that that designation suggests. His temper tantrums are epic, but he also finds joy in everyday things and loves with his whole heart—except when his little sister wants to play with his toy tractors and trucks. “Look!” and “Wow!” are his favorite expressions, although I fear that someday soon the dreaded “No!” will find its way onto this list.

But when I watch carefully, I can already see roots sinking into the earth beneath his constantly moving (and usually grubby) feet.

Waylon is a fourth-generation Texas farm boy finding his place among the hay fields and rocky cow pastures of his Coryell County home. When he hears the rattley roar of a diesel engine starting up,

he runs toward it as if the possibility of Grandpa or Uncle Justin leaving the machine shed on a tractor without him might mark the end of the world. When the mad dash works and I see his red hoodie perched on Grandpa's lap inside the cab of that big green tractor, I know he is in 2-year-old heaven. I can still hear the echo of our son's excited voice when he was that age, yelling for a yank on the throttle: “Pull the smoker, Daddy!”

It's not just the boys. My daughter, an elementary school librarian, can still drive a hay truck with the best of them, and granddaughter Hannah, helping scoop silage into a cow trough at the age of 8, once leaned on her shovel and announced, “You know, I may run this place someday.”

Waylon has already watched a calf being born. He has learned to be quiet so the livestock won't be disturbed. He has checked cows in the pasture from Grandpa's lap on the seat of the Kawasaki all-terrain vehicle, and he's learning to count calves (although so far, he's not very reliable beyond six).

This is how farm kids learn who they are and find their places in the world. They pick tomatoes and squash in the garden and see firsthand where their food comes from, feed and water livestock, and drop fresh eggs in the dirt on the way to the kitchen. Waylon has stepped on stickers, stirred up fire ants and been knocked down by the new Lab puppy, but none of these experiences discourage him from his never-ending quest to be outdoors.

Waylon may grow up to be an electrician or a brain surgeon, but right now he is developing a respect—perhaps even a love—for the land that feeds us. I hope that will last a lifetime. ■

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— Don W., Sherman, TX

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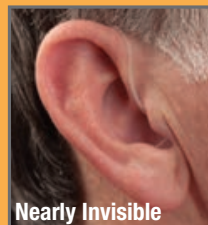
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