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November 2021



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Sky-high pies embody the delights of meringue.

*By Paula Disbrowe
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ON THE COVER

A slice of Rebecca Rather's lemon meringue pie from Emma + Ollie in Fredericksburg.

Photo by Wyatt McSpadden

ABOVE

Bison at Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway.

Photo by Earl Nottingham | TPWD

Future Foodies

TONI TIPTON-MARTIN is a food and nutrition journalist and author whose latest book, *Jubilee: Recipes From Two Centuries of African American Cooking*, features a recipe for Baked (Barbecued) Beans that we spotlighted in May. She adds to her long list of accolades this month when she receives the Julia Child Award, which honors those who have made a significant difference in the way Americans cook, eat and drink.

Tipton-Martin plans to use her award, a \$50,000 grant, to mentor the next generation of food writers.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

A TEXAN WOULD NEVER ...

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: **The sweetest sound in the world is ...**

The distant whistle of a passing train at night as I drift off to sleep.

RICK SULIK
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC
SHINER

Horses munching hay in the quiet evening.

ROBIN GRAY
SAN BERNARD EC
HOCKLEY

Silence. Nature is a close second.

ALLEN JONES
VIA FACEBOOK

Ocean waves gently hitting the shore.

KATHY O'NEAL PRIKRYL
VIA FACEBOOK

A baby's giggle.

MONA TUCKER
RUSK COUNTY EC
CARTHAGE

Rain falling on my tin roof porch.

SUE NASH
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC
ETOILE

To see more responses, read Currents online.

FARMING GOES ELECTRIC

Monarch Tractor plans to begin shipping its first-of-its-kind fully electric, driver-optional tractor this fall.

The California-based company claims the machines will be able to run 10 hours on a full battery, recognize humans and livestock that may get in the way, and even be programmed to follow a human.

The Monarch will start at \$58,000.



November 3
National Sandwich Day

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A Broadcasting Victory

THE FIRST LIVE PLAY-BY-PLAY broadcast of a college football game in Texas occurred 100 years ago in College Station, a scoreless tie between Texas A&M University and the University of Texas.

To pull it off November 24, 1921, radio station 5XB—later WTAW (Watch The Aggies Win)—ran lines from the Kyle Field press box to a transmitter at Bolton Hall and borrowed equipment from the Corps of Cadets Signal Corps.



First Lady's Milestone

Laura Bush, former first lady of Texas and the U.S., turns 75 on November 4. Before marrying George W. Bush, she taught in public schools in Dallas, Houston and Austin and worked as a school librarian. Laura Bush was born in 1946 in Midland.



TCP *Contests and More*

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RECOMMENDED READING
We're up to our eyes in pies this month. Visit our website to find dozens more pies to try.



DAVE SHAEFER

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“I was happy to read that Texas Tech opened a veterinary school. We need more country boys and girls who don’t mind getting manure on their jeans.”

MINNIE PESL
BARTLETT EC
ROCKDALE

Aviation Fame

The Lone Star Flight Museum at Ellington Airport in Houston hosts the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame, which includes Bessie Coleman as one of 70 or so who have made remarkable contributions to flight [Queen Bess Soared, June 2021].

Gary Watt
Bluebonnet EC
Washington, Texas



My granny had a small stock tank [Pools in the Pasture, August 2021]. She called it the goose tank. We had fun in it. Seined it for crawfish. Used them for fish bait.

MARY RUTH LARGENT
VIA FACEBOOK

A Toxic Topic?

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers’ words did bug me [Do Words Bug You?, June 2021].

In addition to ingestion, poisons can affect life by contact or radiation—think poison ivy or certain cancer treatments. Poison is best defined as a substance with inherent properties that tends to destroy or impair life. Toxins are a subgroup of poisons produced by an organism. Venom specifically is a toxin introduced into victims by injection.

Robert Humphrey
Heart of Texas EC
Waco

Fleeing Thought

I never realized that while the armies of Texians and Mexicans fought, many civilians found it necessary to abandon everything they owned and relocate in a hurry [The Runaway Scrape, April 2021]. This makes me wonder what I would do if that situation arose in my lifetime.

B. Jason Epps
Trinity Valley EC
Heartland



GORDON STUDDER

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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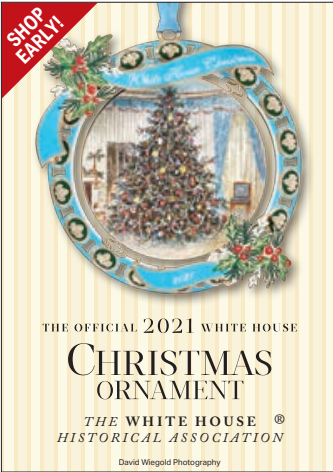
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holiday GIFT GUIDE

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The Alchemy of Egg Whites

IT WAS MOSTLY ABOUT the reward of pie, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

For several years I joined my daughter, Flannery, and her Girl Scout troop on their annual trip to Camp Champions in Marble Falls. The outing, which usually landed in early May, was much anticipated by the girls, even though each year seemed to be cursed by dramatic Texas weather. There were frigid nights in drafty cabins and torrential thunderstorms, and one terrifying year, a tornado chased us out of town.

Mother Nature, plus a hysteria fueled by s'mores and the energy of several hundred girls, made our departure each Sunday morning feel like a small victory, akin to making it through an episode of *Survivor*.

The treat at the end of those epic weekends was breakfast at the Blue Bonnet Cafe, the beloved institution known for its pies and recognizable by its awesome neon signage. One year we gave Flannery's bestie, Clara, a ride to the restaurant. As we waited in line for a table, we all became mesmerized by the cooler displaying whopping wedges of fruit pies, cream pies and custard-based show stealers crowned with implausibly high clouds of meringue.

Clara, eyes wide and mother conveniently en route, asked if she might order pie for breakfast. Naturally, I acquiesced. When the massive wedge of lemon meringue pie was placed in front of her, her reaction—a mixture of disbelief, wonder and pure joy—made us all burst out laughing. Years later we all vividly remember Clara's meringue pie moment, which speaks to another attribute of pies: They can create cherished memories.



ABOVE Making meringue starts with separating egg whites from yolks. RIGHT Adela Rangel has been the pie chef at Koffee Kup Family Restaurant in Hico for 24 years.



↑

*Sky-high pies
embody
the delights
of meringue*

—



TOP Rebecca Rather, chef at Emma + Ollie in Fredericksburg, with a lemon meringue pie.
ABOVE A slice of coconut meringue pie from Koffee Kup.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT Servers Ellie Fonseca at Blue Bonnet Cafe in Marble Falls and Emma Roach at Koffee Kup show off the towering meringues at their diners. Maura Dominguez has been mounding meringue at Blue Bonnet for 33 years.



FOR MANY PEOPLE, myself included, certain pies are steeped in memories or connected to memorable occasions. Coconut cream pie? The time I was lucky enough to interview Lyle Lovett over a couple slices in Old Town Spring. Late June means Stonewall peaches and galettes (rustic French tarts) several nights a week. Billowy meringue pies always make me think of my friend Rebecca Rather (more on her later).

“Pie, in general, makes people happy,” concurs Dave Plante, owner of Blue Bonnet Cafe. “If you come through our line between the hours of 10 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon, chances are you’re gonna see our huge mixers full of a fluffy white mixture bubbling up and out of the side,” Plante says. “It’s mesmerizing to watch.”

The fascination with sky-high meringue is evident in the surprise of customers at Hico’s Koffee Kup Family Restaurant, where the motto is “Pie fixes everything.”

“When they see the meringue in the pie case, their jaw drops open,” says manager and co-owner Irene Leach, whose first job at the Koffee Kup in 1987 was baking pies. Now, Adela Rangel starts baking five flavors, plus two sugar-free options, at 6:30 each morning, as she has for 24 years.

Blue Bonnet’s Plante tells me that customers often inquire how they pile the meringue so high—a trick he attributes to seasoned bakers who have been whipping egg whites and sugar for years.



SO WHAT IS MERINGUE, actually? In its simplest form, it's a mixture of stiffly beaten egg whites and granulated sugar. To achieve a perfectly smooth texture, the sugar is typically added slowly—a tablespoon at a time.

For further insight I called a noted meringue whisperer—Rebecca Rather, chef at Emma + Ollie in Fredericksburg and the creative mind behind her wildly popular “big-hair meringue tarts” (featuring spiky meringue tops reminiscent of retro hairstyles). “Once I went to a Weight Watchers meeting, and some of the women there yelled at me and said I was responsible for their extra pounds,” she recalls with a laugh. “You know I love meringue but only when it's done right; it needs to be stiff and strong and hold up. I don't like it when it's sloppy, watery and nasty.”

Rather perfected her meringue game years ago when she was the pastry chef at Tony's in Houston. “I used to decorate huge ice cream bombs with meringue, and I had to do it in the freezer,” she recalls. For all her desserts, including the banana pudding served at Emma + Ollie, she still relies on the meringue recipe in her first book, *The Pastry Queen*.

For Rather's method, the sugar is whisked with egg whites over a pan of simmering water until it dissolves and then whipped with an electric mixer until it's stiff and shiny. The key, she tells me, is to beat the whites slowly in the beginning, until they're light and foamy, and then beat them at high speed until stiff peaks form.

I knew Cathy Barrow, author of *Pie Squared* (a cookbook devoted to rectangular “slab pies”), would have opinions on the subject. “I think we all need more meringue in our life,” she tells me. “It tastes so much like campfire marshmallows and makes the kitchen smell great as it toasts under the broiler. If you have a blowtorch, bronzing meringue is a badass move as a party trick.”

Preparing meringue is also a smart way to make the most of leftover ingredients. “If you make ice cream or flan or many cakes or enriched doughs, you'll end up with egg whites, and they keep a long time,” Barrow says. She keeps hers in a covered jar in the fridge. “Sometimes I make Pavlovas and then turn those into fruit fools,” she adds. (Named after the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova, the dessert consists of a crisp meringue base topped with whipped cream and fresh fruit.) “But whenever I can,” Barrow continues, “I cover the surface or pipe or plop a pretty meringue edge on a pie. Don't limit this action to lemon or lime pies. A meringue topping on a bumbleberry pie is amazing.”

Pie recipes handed down from one generation to the next are particularly transporting. “My grandma's chocolate meringue pie is my favorite thing to eat in the entire world,” says Lisa Fain, author of *The Homesick Texan* cookbooks and food blog. “Whether it makes an appearance after a good day or a bad one, it never fails to lift my spirits. It's always a declaration of love.”

This particular pie, Fain adds, is more than the sum of its parts. “It's a simple recipe, and her meringues are more of an accent rather than a statement since they're never all that tall. The combination of fluffy topping, rich custard and salty crust may appear humble, but it's the finest dessert that I know.” ■



Rebecca Rather's Meringue

Rather uses a kitchen torch to brown her meringue-topped pies and tarts, but the process can also be done quickly under a broiler.

**10 extra-large egg whites,
at room temperature
3 cups sugar**

1. Place a large, perfectly clean metal bowl over a pot of simmering water. Pour in the egg whites and sugar. (If there is a trace of fat in the bowl, the eggs won't reach their proper volume.)
2. Heat the egg whites and sugar while whisking constantly until the sugar melts and there are no visible grains in the meringue. Take a little meringue mixture and rub it between your fingers to make sure all the sugar grains have melted.
3. Remove the bowl from the pot and whip it with a mixer fitted with a whisk attachment on low speed for 5 minutes; increase the speed to high and beat 5 minutes longer, until the meringue is stiff and shiny.

MAKES MERINGUE FOR 1 PIE

Reprinted with permission from *The Pastry Queen* (Ten Speed Press, 2004).

TCP WEB EXTRA Learn more about meringue online, including Paula Disbrowe's tips for success.

BY RHONDA REINHART

LAST OF THEIR KIND

The Texas State Bison Herd, a legacy of Charles Goodnight, helps a species crawl back from the brink of extinction

After long days listening to shots ring out across the Texas Panhandle plains, Mary Ann Goodnight would lie awake, tormented by the cries of orphaned bison calves. It was the late 1870s, and professional hide hunters were obliterating the country's bison population.

Known as the “great slaughter,” hunting from 1874 to 1878 left the iconic animals nearly extinct, with estimates from 1888 suggesting that fewer than 1,000 bison remained in North America—down from the 30 million–60 million that once roamed the continent.

But it was the wails of those abandoned calves bawling for their mothers night after night—heartbreaking sounds that Goodnight described in diary entries from the time—that spurred her to act in 1878. The wife of cattleman Charles Goodnight, the famed Texas Panhandle rancher, pleaded with her husband to rescue what he could of the surviving bison.

The couple had settled in Palo Duro Canyon in 1876, and within two years, hunters had nearly wiped out the animals. That's when Mary Ann Goodnight persuaded her husband to capture some of the orphaned calves and start a herd on their JA Ranch. The Goodnight bison herd prospered and grew to more than 200 animals by the 1920s. After the Goodnights' deaths (Mary Ann in 1926, Charles in 1929), the bison continued to roam the vast and rugged landscape of the JA Ranch. Though Charles Goodnight sold his interest



in the JA operation in the late 1880s and started a new ranch on nearby land, the bison ultimately migrated back to their original home.

Left on its own, the herd dwindled, and by 1994, only about 50 animals remained. When the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department learned about the declining herd in the mid-1990s from an unlikely source—Wolfgang Frey, a German wildlife conservationist with a particular interest in American bison—the agency conducted DNA testing on the bovines, revealing genetic markers not found in any other bison. Because Goodnight never brought in any bison from other areas and kept detailed records to prove it, all the animals in his herd were native Texas Panhandle bison. These animals, direct descendants of the herd started by Goodnight, were the last surviving examples of southern Plains bison.

Convinced that the historic herd was worth saving, the owners of the JA Ranch donated the bison to TPWD, and in 1997 they were relocated to Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway in Briscoe County, about 100 miles southeast of



Amarillo, on land that is part of the bison's native home range.

After two decades of TPWD management, what has become known as the Texas State Bison Herd has grown to almost 300 animals, thanks to selective breeding, annual health checks, vegetation studies and progressive habitat management practices. The donation of three bison bulls in 2003 by media tycoon and rancher Ted Turner helped broaden the herd's genetic diversity.

The bison's road to recovery was a long one. "When the park got them, there were 32," says Donald Beard, park superintendent at Caprock Canyons. "And then when I took over, there were probably around 60 or so, and that was in 2009. Then we released them into the park in 2011, and that's when they really started to flourish."

Before the 2011 release, the bison were enclosed in a 300-acre section of the park, far from view of Caprock Canyons' 100,000 yearly visitors. In September 2011 the bison were moved into more than 700 acres of restored native grass prairie but still were fenced off from the park's campsites and day-use areas.

Part of the Texas State Bison Herd at Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway.

Now the bison roam 80% of the park. "The park total is almost 15,000 acres, and they have almost 12,000 acres of it to roam," Beard says. "There is one section, which is on the opposite side of a county road, that they don't have access to, but other than that, they've got free run of this park. That means through the campsites, through the trails, on Lake Theo—everywhere. This is their historic range."

Today's visitors to Caprock Canyons State Park, which is served by Lighthouse Electric Cooperative, might be greeted at park headquarters by dozens of the massive, shaggy creatures. From a distance, they appear like black specks on the wide-open prairie, but when they approach the parking lot to graze and explore, an up-close view emphasizes their sheer magnificence: the broad hump between their shoulder blades; their thick, dark brown fur;

Driving through the park, it's clear who's the boss. If the bison feel like lounging on the roadway, well, so be it.



and their awe-inspiring size. The bison is the largest mammal native to North America, and the bulls at Caprock Canyons can reach up to 2,000 pounds, with cows averaging 750–900 pounds. And even though some refer to the animals as buffalo because of their similar appearance, the only true buffaloes reside in Africa and Asia.

Driving through the park, it's clear who's the boss. If the bison feel like lounging on the roadway, well, so be it—traffic stops and drivers watch and wait. Hikers might also encounter them on the trails that weave through the park's striking red rock canyons, and campers might wake up to a crew of bison ambling outside their tents. Visitors to the park enjoyed a special treat in spring 2021, when about 80 bison calves joined the herd. "It's pretty neat when you get a bunch of calves out, running around and playing," Beard says. "It's a really good time to be here, come April or May."

Now that the herd is growing at a rate the park can sustain (to keep from degrading the grounds' natural resources, the current herd of about 300 is close to the park's max), Beard and his team are working on phase two of Caprock Canyons' bison conservation program. "To me, that second phase is satellite herds," he says. "So we would have another herd of 200 here, another herd of 300 there, but a herd of just Goodnight animals. And they would all be managed as one big herd—a metapopulation basically."

Though there's a herd of bison at San Angelo State Park in West Texas, those animals aren't related to Goodnight's. In fact, Beard notes, anytime an animal leaves the grounds of Caprock Canyons, it's no longer considered part of the Texas State Bison Herd.

Beard—who sits on several boards for bison conservation, including the Bison Specialist Group, a species survival commission of the International Union for Conservation of

The state herd of about 300 descends from bison raised by Charles Goodnight in the 1800s.

Nature—is in talks with the InterTribal Buffalo Council to start herds on tribal lands with Goodnight animals. He's also looking at how partnerships could work with the Nature Conservancy, other nongovernmental organizations and even private ranchers. "There's a big-picture vision in place," he says. "The plan hasn't been completely put together yet, but the vision is there."

So what has the plight of the Goodnight herd taught wildlife conservation experts? The way Beard sees it, it's been a lesson in survival. Around the same time Goodnight was forming his bison herd, four other conservation-minded individuals across the American West and in parts of Canada were doing the same. The five foundation herds helped save bison from extinction by providing the foundation stock for today's herds. Though Goodnight's herd was small, it was one of the best known of the five foundation herds.

"[The Goodnight herd] has taught us that we can come back with a relatively small number of animals to a healthy, viable population," Beard says. "To be a success story in conservation, the IUCN and some of the other conservation organizations have said that you need a couple of thousand head of bison, which means that if we were to walk away and not touch this herd ever again, they would survive. We're not there yet, but we're well on our way." ■

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Reflection of *Gratitude*

FOLLOWING OUR FIRST drive-thru annual meeting, I was feeling thankful for our employees and members. It is such an awesome experience to see our organization together regardless of obstacles. Together we have been resilient, flexible and able to move forward, despite challenging circumstances.

It is easy to get caught in the traps of “why?” “it is not fair” or “if only this were different.” There are no answers or explanations to those thoughts and questions. Furthermore, those thoughts are damaging and not productive.

As I reflect back on the past year, here are a few things for which I am grateful:

January

RECORD SNOWSTORM—While we never want you to be without power, we learned extremely valuable lessons on the importance of member communication during emergency events. Thanks to this storm, we expanded our phone system capabilities to allow all office personnel to answer calls, created new phone messaging options specifically for storms, and designed a robust communication plan to share information with members through a variety of sources.

February

WINTER STORM URI—Our employees went above and beyond: driving on icy roads, sleeping at our office with no running water and working 18-hour days to help answer members’ questions and restore your service in treacherous conditions. While it is our job, it comes with great personal sacrifice, and I am thankful for the commitment Houston County Electric Cooperative employees show to our members.

March

POWER BILLS FOR WINTER STORM URI—Sticker shock is the phrase that comes to mind when I think about the cost of Winter Storm Uri. I am grateful for the leadership of our members over the past 82 years. Collectively we have built a strong organization able to withstand physical and financial adversity. Be proud of the organization you’ve built to serve our communities.

April

PROTECTING MEMBER RATES—The board took swift and decisive action to pay our obligations, finance the cost of Winter Storm Uri and spread the cost to members over the next six to 10 years. Thankfully, we are not an organization that will send a \$5,000 bill to our residential members. We recognize the importance of affordable solutions.

May

RETURN TO “NORMAL”—The spring rains were a welcome blessing after our winter. Unlike many utilities struggling in the aftermath of winter storms, we were moving forward and focusing on the future.

June

CYBERSECURITY—The Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack brought cybersecurity risk to the forefront of everyone’s minds. I wish I could guarantee such an attack would never affect our members. However, I am thankful for our cybersecurity plan. Protecting member data, hardening our network and developing operational redundancy is a constant work in progress. Criminals and terrorist-state actors will continue efforts to disrupt our lives, and we will continue striving to protect our members.

July

NO LONGER IN THREE MARKETS—For eight years, we have worked steadily to improve our reliability and simplify our operating position. We have built transmission line, added substations, transferred load to different markets and upgraded our distribution system to provide affordable and reliable service. This multiyear effort culminated when we transferred our Groveton load at the end of July. We now operate in only two markets, ERCOT and SPP, thanks to a long-term vision for our members. We are focused on the best interests of our current and future members.

August

NEW MEMBERS—We have experienced an increase in new residential and seasonal member applicants. We welcome new members to the Houston County EC family and look forward to your contributions to our communities. Thank you for choosing us as your new home or your home away from home.

September

FOCUS ON SAFETY—We focus on safety every day, but September is a significant month in our safety program. Once every three years we have an extensive safety audit conducted by our peers from other co-ops. The safety audit delivers more opportunities to improve the safety of our workplace. I am grateful daily when our employees safely return home to their families.

October

THE ANNUAL FISH FRY—While we missed gathering in person, it was great to share fried catfish with you once again. It is an honor to celebrate and share the success of Houston County Electric Cooperative.

As another year comes to an end, may you find hidden blessings and opportunities for gratitude. We are thankful for the opportunity to serve you.



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER
KATHI CALVERT



Your Board of Directors

 Mary Adams Madison Co. District 2021-2024	 Dan Courmier District-At-Large President 2021-2024	 William Emmons Houston Co. Dist. 1 2021-2024
 Mitchell Huff Houston Co. Dist. 2 Secretary-Treasurer 2022-2025	 Kennon Kellum Houston Co. Dist. 4 Vice President 2022-2025	 Larry Nelms Anderson Co. District 2020-2023
 Chuck Siems Houston Co. Dist. 3 2020-2023	 Grady Wakefield Leon Co. District 2020-2023	 David Whittlesey Trinity Co. District 2022-2025



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Electric Cooperative Directors Are Consumers Like You

YOU GET YOUR electricity from a cooperative, which means that the consumers are members and have a say when it comes to running the utility.

A board of directors, composed of members of the community who are cooperative members like you, meets regularly to discuss electricity rates, programs, policies and even personnel.

Because directors are member-owners, they know firsthand what members of the community want and expect from their electric utility.

Directors typically are elected by all of the cooperative's consumer-members and can run for reelection when their terms expire. Occasionally, board members select a director to fill a vacant position when a director is unable to complete his or her term. However, all director positions are up for election once every three years.

Consider running for a seat on your electric cooperative's board of directors. Be sure to vote in board elections and keep up with co-op business. That's the co-op model in action. ■



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Thanksgiving

Thursday, November 25
 Our offices will be closed
 November 25-26 in
 observance of the holiday.

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Peach Sweet Potatoes

- 6 medium sweet potatoes**
- ½ cup packed brown sugar**
- ⅓ cup coarsely chopped nuts**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger**
- 1 can (15 ounces) sliced peaches, drained**
- Butter**
- ⅓ cup chopped cashews or pecans, for garnish**

1. Place potatoes in a large pot, cover with water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and cook 30-45 minutes or until potatoes are tender.
2. Drain and allow to cool, then peel and cut potatoes into cubes. In a small bowl, combine brown sugar, nuts, salt and ginger.
3. Put half of potatoes in an ungreased baking dish. Top with half of peaches and half of brown sugar mixture. Repeat layers, then dot with butter.
4. Cover and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake 10 minutes longer or until bubbly and heated through. Garnish with nuts.

SERVES 10

TCP Find this and more delicious recipes online at TexasCoopPower.com.

Keep Utility Poles Free of Obstructions



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A **UTILITY POLE** might look like a convenient and free bulletin board, fence post or light pole, but before you tack on a yard sale sign, wrap it in barbed wire or attach a light fixture, think twice.

Safety issues caused by pole attachments place the lives of lineworkers and the public at risk.

It might seem innocent, but a small nail partially driven into a pole can pierce a lineworker's glove, damaging critical gear that protects against high-voltage electricity. It could also cause a lineworker to get snagged while working at heights.

Your electric cooperative's line crews climb utility poles at all hours of the day and night—in even the worst weather conditions—to maintain and restore power. Anything attached to utility poles can create serious hazards for our line personnel. Sharp objects like nails, tacks, staples and barbed wire can puncture rubber gloves and other safety equipment, making linemen vulnerable to electrocution.

Your cooperative's lineworkers have reported poles used as community bulletin boards and satellite mounts and even poles that support legs for deer stands, lights and carports. These attachments put at risk not only line crews but also anyone who illegally places items on poles; they come dangerously close to power lines with thousands of volts of energy streaming overhead.


Additionally, large attachments could compromise the structural integrity of the pole, putting it at risk of weakening or failing. A fallen pole means downed power lines, which are extremely dangerous and can lead to outages.

It's always smart to keep any structure at least 10 feet away from utility poles.

Unauthorized pole attachments violate the National Electrical Safety Code. In Texas it's a crime to attach any unapproved item to a utility pole, and doing so can result in a daily fine.

Please help us keep our linemen—and our community—safe. Do not attach any unauthorized items to utility poles, and contact your electric cooperative to remove any unauthorized items you see. ■

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MEMBER SERVICE

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To report an outage, press 1.

To update your contact information, press 2.

To check your account balance or make a payment using the automated system, press 3.

To speak to a member services representative regarding your account, press 4.

Para hablar con un representante de habla español, presione 5.

To connect, disconnect or transfer service, press 6.

To report outdoor lighting issues or other nonemergencies regarding your electric service, press 7.

VISIT US ONLINE

houstoncountyelec.com





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Entertain Safely This Thanksgiving

AS THANKSGIVING APPROACHES, use this checklist to ensure your home is ready for all the festivities of the holiday season.

Fire Safety

- ▶ Test your smoke alarms monthly and make sure your house is protected by an adequate number of working alarms, which should be installed in each bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of your home.
- ▶ Keep halls, stairs and doorways properly illuminated and free of clutter and other objects that could hinder an escape during a fire emergency.
- ▶ Plan for older guests or those with mobility issues to sleep on the ground floor.

Decorating Safety

- ▶ Avoid overloading electrical outlets, which can overheat and cause a fire.
- ▶ Do not place extension cords where they could be tripping hazards.
- ▶ Do not run extension cords under rugs or furniture.
- ▶ Keep all decorations at least 3 feet from heat sources, including space heaters and fireplaces.
- ▶ Think of youngsters: Place cords, breakables, candles and other potentially dangerous items out of children's reach.
- ▶ Turn off and unplug all decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.
- ▶ Use only weatherproof electrical devices for outdoor activities and protect those devices from moisture.

Home Heating Safety

- ▶ Have your heating system inspected annually by a licensed, qualified professional.
- ▶ Use space heaters properly and safely. Keep them out of high-traffic areas and at least 3 feet from anything that can burn.
- ▶ Do not leave a space heater running unattended. Turn off and unplug space heaters when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- ▶ Never leave an open flame—especially in a fireplace—unattended.

Child Safety

- ▶ If you are hosting small children, put away small items that are choking hazards.
- ▶ Use safety gates at the top and bottom of stairways to keep babies and toddlers safe.
- ▶ Move all cleaning products and other dangerous items out of the reach of children and store them in a locked area.
- ▶ Set your water heater temperature no higher than 120 degrees to reduce the risk of scalding.
- ▶ Install tamper-resistant receptacles to prevent electric shocks and burns, or use safety covers on all unused outlets that are accessible to children.
- ▶ Never allow children to play with electrical decorations or cords. ■

Thank You

**FOR ATTENDING OUR FIRST-EVER
DRIVE-THROUGH ANNUAL MEETING!**

We'll see you next year!





Safe Passage

A specially designed land bridge over a San Antonio highway lets wildlife roam

BY LAURA TOLLEY

A **VIRGINIA OPOSSUM** has strolled across. So have white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbits, and even a coyote or two. All are finding safe passage over a busy roadway thanks to a new land bridge that reclaims important wildlife habitat by connecting two wooded sections of a popular San Antonio park.

Less than a year after its official opening in December 2020, nighttime photos offer evidence that the Robert L.B. Tobin Land Bridge has already provided a safe crossing for wildlife that inhabit both sides of the 330-acre Phil Hardberger Park in north-central San Antonio.

Built over a section of the six-lane Wurzbach Parkway, the land bridge is the largest crossing in the United States built specifically for both wildlife and humans, according to the San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department.

“This bridge is important because the city is so fragmented, animals don’t have a lot of places to go anymore. And they definitely need some space,” says Casey Cowan, parks naturalist for the department. “This bridge literally gives them more land to use and to move their genes around. It helps increase the diversity of the ecosystem.”

Cowan notes that wild animals need food, water, shelter and space to survive, but increased urbanization is making it harder for animals to access those essentials. “Having these wildlife corridors like the land bridge, greenways and greenbelts makes it easier for animals to reach those necessities,” she says.

Incorporating wildlife habitat conservation into transportation projects is becoming more of a priority in Texas and other parts of the country, says Laura Zebehazy, head of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s Wildlife Habitat Assessment Program. Her staff reviews Texas Department of Transportation projects and provides recommendations on how to minimize or avoid impacts to natural habitats.

Land crossings can provide immediate benefits to wildlife, as seen in the photos of creatures traversing San Antonio’s bridge, Zebehazy says.

“[A land bridge] is a good thing to have in our toolbox, and it has proven to have a positive effect,” she says. Bridges also help improve safety for humans by helping to reduce collisions between vehicles and animals.

Hardberger Park has been an outdoor haven for visitors for more than a decade, but it was divided by Wurzbach Parkway. The land bridge is about a quarter-mile long, 150 feet wide at the top and 165 feet at the bases, allowing enough room for wildlife and people to cross safely.

When users walk up the gentle slope, the only evidence of the traffic below is noise that is intentionally muffled by the bridge’s design. The bridge was designed to Americans With Disabilities Act specifications, as are other trails in the park. Bicycles are allowed but must be walked across the bridge.

The area is landscaped with native plants and trees that offer natural beauty and protective shelter for animals. There is a rainwater collection system and two water bubblers, located on either side near wildlife blinds, that provide animals with water year-round.

The parks and recreation department is conducting a five-year study to determine how wildlife use the bridge. More animals are expected to make the hike as the vegetation grows, creating a more natural habitat.

“I’m amazed at the success of it at this very early state,” says Jim Gray, principal at Rialto Studio in San Antonio, the project’s lead landscape architect. “It’s been a huge success for parkgoers, and people seem to really be enjoying it. But the bigger success is the fact that wildlife is already taking advantage of it. And as it becomes more of a natural space,

I think it’s just going to get better and better.”

Erin Christie of San Antonio and Trenton Taylor of Schertz made their first trip across the bridge on a hot, sunny Sunday afternoon in June. They crossed with their dogs, Hazel and Millie.

“I really like the land bridge, and once everything grows, it’s going to be really nice,” says Taylor, whose dog, Hazel, cooled off by burrowing into some dirt under the trees. “This is a big improvement compared to how it used to be.”

Christie, who recently moved back to San Antonio, plans to return to the bridge. “I loved it, I really did. I can’t wait to come back and watch it grow,” she says. “Millie and I do a lot of exploring, and I think this one is going to be one of our favorites.”

Loss of habitat is a major threat to wildlife in Texas, says Ben Jones, executive director of the Texas Conservation Alliance, a state affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.

“Anything we can do to preserve, reclaim, protect and re-wild their habitat is important,” Jones says. “This bridge is a real win.”

The land bridge cost \$23 million, with the funds coming from donations, grants and a 2017 city bond. But there are smaller, less expensive ways to help protect wildlife habitat and corridors, Jones says.

Culverts also can help wildlife safely cross roadways and avoid accidents with vehicles. Drivers can exercise caution, especially at night, in areas where there are concentrations of wildlife. Building owners in migratory bird paths can turn off their lights at night during spring and fall migrations. Everybody can use native plants and trees to provide shelter and food to wildlife.

“The loss of habitat is increasing,” Jones says. “Wildlife are in trouble, and any action people can take to help save them is critical.” ■

TCP WEB EXTRA See a slideshow of images from the land bridge designer, Rialto Studio.

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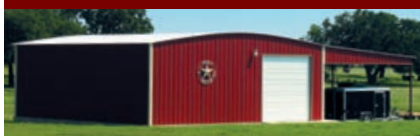
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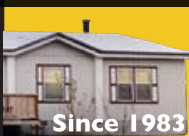
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Biography of a Word

The label derived from the life of Samuel Maverick has Texas origins

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY TRACI DABERKO

THIS IS A BIOGRAPHY of a word that was essentially born in Texas, where it grew up to achieve worldwide fame, ultimately transforming itself from modest noun into grand metaphor.

The word is maverick, and it got its start in San Antonio more than 150 years ago. Today, a maverick blazes a trail, goes against the crowd and is an independent thinker. But originally, any unbranded cow was a maverick, and the first herd of unbranded cattle was owned by Samuel Maverick. Ironically, Maverick's failure (some said refusal) to brand his cattle branded his name in perpetuity.

Maverick was more interested in acquiring land than ranching it, and he ranked with Richard King and Charles Goodnight as a Texas land baron.

Maverick, born in South Carolina, first

demonstrated his nonconformist nature shortly after he arrived in San Antonio in 1835. Even though most Texans were not buying land because they feared they would not be able to hold it during uncertain times, Maverick bought huge tracts around San Antonio and farther east, along the Brazos River.

He joined the Alamo militia and would have died at the Alamo had he not been selected to sign the Texas Declaration of Independence. He was a maverick on March 2, 1836, when he risked his life, along with 59 others, by signing what Antonio López de Santa Anna declared a treasonous document. Maverick later served as mayor of San Antonio, gaining further notoriety as a leading citizen of a rebellious city.

Six years after Texas won its inde-

TCP WEB EXTRA

Listen to W.F. Strong read this story.

pendence, Santa Anna dispatched Gen. Adrián Woll to retake control of San Antonio and to imprison all those who took up arms against Mexico. Maverick organized 53 men on the roof of a building he owned, to resist the invasion. After they killed 14 and wounded 27, they were surrounded by 900 Mexican troops and forced to surrender.

Woll did not carry out orders to execute the prisoners—instead marching them 1,000 brutal miles to Perote Prison, near Puebla, Mexico. The men were chained together in dark cells and subjected to forced labor. As the group representative, Maverick asked for better conditions and was put into solitary confinement just for asking.

After a few months, Santa Anna offered Maverick his freedom in exchange for signing a document saying that Texas had been illegally seized and should be returned to Mexico. Instead of signing, Maverick wrote, "I cannot bring myself to think that it would be to the interest of Texas to reunite with Mexico. This being my settled opinion I cannot sacrifice the interest of my country even to obtain my liberty, for I regard it as a lie and a crime which I cannot commit. I must, therefore, make up my mind to wear my chains, galling as they are."

While Maverick was in the dungeon, San Antonians elected him to the Republic of Texas House of Representatives. When he was released, Maverick refused to leave without as many of his friends from San Antonio as possible. He waited a few days for most of them to be freed, and they all traveled to San Antonio together.

When Maverick left prison, he took the chains that had bound him as a reminder of the incalculable value of freedom. ■

Pies

A perfect showcase for favorite fruits and other fillings

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Although pie is often associated with certain times of the year, I'll take pie over cake any day. With so many flavor possibilities, the only problem is choosing one! This pie is one of my favorites to make, no matter the season. You can substitute blueberries or blackberries or use thawed frozen fruit if fresh isn't available. Be sure to dry the berries as much as possible to preserve the texture of the custard and keep the fruit juices from seeping too much.

Raspberries and Cream Pie

PIE

- 1 unbaked 9-inch pie crust**
- 2½ cups raspberries, washed and patted dry**
- 1 cup sugar**
- ⅓ cup flour**
- 2 eggs**
- ½ cup sour cream**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

TOPPING

- ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons flour**
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar**
- 2 tablespoons sugar**
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, melted**

- 1. PIE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Roll out pie crust and arrange in a 9-inch pie dish. Arrange raspberries evenly in crust.
- In a small bowl, mix together sugar and flour. In a medium bowl, whisk together eggs, sour cream and vanilla until blended, then stir in sugar-flour mixture and whisk until smooth. Pour over raspberries.
- 4. TOPPING** In a small bowl, mix together flour, sugars, cinnamon and nutmeg, then add butter and mix with a fork until the topping is blended and crumbly. Scatter topping evenly over custard.
- Bake about 50 minutes, until top is golden. Let cool before serving.

SERVES 8

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





Chocolate Chip Cookie Pie

DIANE LYERLY
PEDERNALES EC

This decadent pie tastes just like a warm, gooey cookie. It's been a Lyerly family favorite for nearly 40 years, and it's easy to understand why. If you use a premade frozen pie shell, this pie can be ready in under an hour.

- 1 unbaked 9-inch pie crust**
- 6 tablespoons butter (¾ stick), softened**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 2 eggs**
- ½ cup flour**
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips**
- ¾ cup chopped pecans**
- ½ cup shredded coconut**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Roll out pie crust and arrange in a 9-inch pie dish. Set aside or chill while you prepare the filling.
2. In a medium bowl, cream butter, sugar and vanilla. Beat in eggs until smooth, then stir in flour and mix until no dry bits remain. Stir in chocolate chips, pecans and coconut and pour mixture into prepared pie crust.
3. Bake 35–40 minutes, until top is lightly browned and set. Let cool before serving.

SERVES 8

MORE RECIPES >

\$500 WINNER

Grandmama's Apple-Cranberry Pie

MARGARET UMSTATT
PEDERNALES EC



A perfect balance of tart and sweet, this pie has been a part of Umstatt's family holiday since she was a child. A food processor can make quick work of chopping the cranberries.

SERVES 8



PIE

- 1 unbaked 9-inch pie crust**
- ¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar**
- ¼ cup sugar**
- ⅓ cup (¼ stick) butter, cubed**
- ½ cup flour**
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon**
- 4 cups peeled and diced Granny Smith apples (3–4 apples)**
- 2 cups chopped fresh or frozen and thawed cranberries**

TOPPING

- ½ cup flour**
- ¼ cup loosely packed brown sugar**
- ¼ cup (½ stick) cold butter, cubed**

1. **PIE** Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Roll out pie crust and arrange in a 9-inch pie dish. Set aside or chill while you prepare the filling.
2. In a large saucepan over medium-low heat, combine the sugars and butter, stirring to melt. Add flour, cinnamon, apples and cranberries and stir to coat fruit. Cook, stirring often to prevent burning, until mixture is somewhat syrupy, about 10 minutes. Pour filling into prepared pie crust.
3. **TOPPING** Combine flour and brown sugar in a small bowl. Cut in the butter with a pastry cutter or two knives until the mixture forms coarse crumbs. Sprinkle evenly over the pie filling.
4. Place a rimmed baking sheet on the lower oven rack to catch juices. Bake pie on the middle rack for 15 minutes. Lower temperature to 350 degrees and bake another 50 minutes. Let cool before serving.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

BRUNCH DUE NOVEMBER 10

Do you go sweet or savory—or both? Enter your best brunch recipe at TexasCoopPower.com/contests by November 10 for a chance to win \$500.



Savory Butternut Squash Pie

LISA LAMB
PEDERNALES EC

Pie doesn't have to be just for dessert. Lamb's take on the classic pumpkin pie makes for a light main course. It's equally at home on the table for dinner or a holiday brunch.

CRUST

- ¾ cup whole-wheat flour
- ½ cup oat, spelt or all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt

- 3 tablespoons cold butter
- 6 tablespoons cold water, plus more as needed

FILLING

- 2 eggs
- 2 cups butternut squash purée
- 1 cup milk
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped sage, savory or fennel
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

1. CRUST Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. In a medium bowl, mix together flours and salt. Cut in butter until coarse crumbs are formed. Stir in water 1 tablespoon at a time, until a cohesive dough is formed. (The amount will vary depending on humidity levels and flours used.) Move dough onto a floured surface, form into a ball and fold a few times to fully incorporate ingredients. Roll out and place into a 9-inch pie dish. Set aside or chill while you prepare filling.

3. FILLING In a large bowl, whisk together all the filling ingredients until well blended. Pour into prepared pie crust.

4. Bake 15 minutes, then reduce temperature to 350 degrees and bake an additional 45 minutes. Let cool before serving.

SERVES 8

TCP WEB EXTRA There's always enough pie to go around when you use TexasCoopPower.com. Visit the Food page, search "pie" and discover hundreds of recipes previously featured in *Texas Co-op Power*.

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A West Texas Gem

Downtown San Angelo features glimpses of frontier living

BY CHET GARNER

IT'S ONE OF THE largest towns in America not on an interstate. It's the wool and mohair capital of the world. And it's one of the few places where the main street still offers a glimpse of genuine frontier days.

On a searing summer afternoon, I found myself strolling down Concho Avenue in the heart of San Angelo's historic district. Named after the Concho River that flows through town a block south, this street is lined with boutique businesses and restaurants in century-old buildings.

I needed a sweet treat to get my mind off the heat, so I popped into Eggemeyer's General Store for a block of homemade fudge. The term "general" truly describes this place, as it seemed packed with everything, including children's souvenirs and kitchen tools, in displays stretching across multiple cavernous rooms.

I wandered a little farther and found myself contemplating a new pair of custom boots from the iconic M.L. Leddy's, then enjoying scenes of local history captured in colorful murals downtown. Inside Legend Jewelers, I marveled at the iridescent beauty of Concho pearls harvested from the river.

Outside the jewelry shop, I noticed a narrow stairway leading up to Miss Hattie's Bordello Museum. I had seen Miss Hattie's Restaurant and Cathouse Lounge down the street and decided to investigate.

Mark Priest, owner of both the jewelry shop and the museum, led me upstairs, where I encountered a setting that transported me to the 19th century—when this infamous business was managed by Miss Hattie. The parlor was furnished in red and purple velvets, and the long hallway passed through rows of small bedrooms. It was a glimpse into a small part of a big town's storied frontier past. ■

ABOVE Chet visits Miss Hattie's Bordello Museum.

TCP WEB EXTRA Stroll with Chet down the streets of this West Texas town and watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

Know Before You Go

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

NOVEMBER

09

Concan Fall Festival on the Frio, (830) 232-4310, visituvaldecounty.com

10

Grand Prairie A Conversation With Stacey Abrams, (972) 854-5050, texasrustcutheatre.com/events

12

Nacogdoches Swingin' Axes and Aces, (936) 468-2801, music.sfasu.edu

Fredericksburg [12–14] Die Künstler Fine Art Show and Sale, (830) 995-5771, dkfredericksburg.org

13

Bastrop Red, White & Blue Veterans Appreciation Banquet, (512) 629-6590, rwbveterans.com

Corpus Christi Holiday Cooking With Herbs Workshop, (361) 852-2100, stxbot.org

Fort McKavett Cooking the Army Ration, (325) 396-2358, facebook.com/visitfortmckavett

George West Dion Pride, (361) 436-1098, dobie-westtheatre.com

Henderson Syrup Festival, 1-866-650-5529, depotmuseum.com/syrupfestival.html

Kingsbury Wings & Wheels Fly-In, (830) 639-4162, pioneerflightmuseum.org

Kyle Veterans Day Parade, (512) 262-3939, cityofkyle.com

Bryan [13-14] Friends of the Library Book Sale, (979) 209-5600, friendsbcs.org

Mesquite [13, 18] Wreath-Making Class, (972) 216-6468, visitmesquitetx.com/events

Boerne [13, 27] Bluegrass Jam at the AgriCultural, (210) 445-1080, theagricultural.org/bluegrass-jams

15

Brazoria Henry Smith Day, (979) 824-0455, brazoriahf.org

18

Dallas Visionary Women, (214) 827-0813, fowlercommunities.org

19

Alpine [19-20] Artwalk, (432) 294-1071, artwalkalpine.com

Boerne [19-20] Master Artwork Show, (830) 816-5606, masterartworkshow.com

Katy [19-21] Home for the Holidays Gift Market, (281) 788-4297, homefortheholidaysgiftmarket.com

Ingram [19-20, 26-28, Dec. 3-5, 10-12] A Christmas Carol, (830) 367-5121, hcac.com

20

Corsicana Independent Order of Odd Fellows Trade Days, (903) 872-7438, iooftx.org

MORE EVENTS >

TCP *Submit Your Event*

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

Retreat. Relax in Kerrville Capital of The Texas Hill Country



Texas Furniture Makers Show
Kerr Arts & Cultural Center
Nov 1-Dec 17



Rumours - A Tribute to Rock Legends Fleetwood Mac
The Cailloux Theater
Nov 20

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Fredericksburg

Getaway Contest

Enter online for a chance to win a two-night getaway in picturesque Fredericksburg, including lodging, dining and attractions.

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TexasCoopPower.com/contests



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NOVEMBER EVENTS CONTINUED

20

Crockett Christmas in Crockett on the Square, (936) 544-2359,

Freeport Christmas Market, (979) 233-3526, freeport.tx.us

Henderson A Very Merry Market, (903) 521-3992, facebook.com/churchatlakecherokee

Irving Mozart con Amore, (972) 252-4800, lascolinassymphony.org

Kerrville Holiday Lighted Parade, (830) 257-7200, kerrvilletx.gov

Fredericksburg Albert and Gage, (830) 990-2886, fredericksburgmusicclub.com

Lufkin Straight No Chaser, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org/performing-arts-series

Grapevine Carol of Lights, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

Bellville [26-27] Big Top Vintage Market, (936) 900-1900, bigtopvintage.com

Corpus Christi [26-27, Dec. 3-4, 10-11, 17-18] Holly Days at the Gardens, (361) 852-2100, stxbot.org

Abilene [26-28, Dec. 3-5, 10-12, 17-19, 20-23, 26] Winter Lightfest, (325) 677-1841, unitedwayabilene.org/winterlightfest

Frisco [26-Jan. 2] Christmas in the Square, (469) 633-1721, visitfrisco.com

27

Comfort Christmas in Comfort, (830) 995-3131, comfort-texas.com

28

Bandera Frontier Times Jamboree, (830) 796-3864, frontiertimesmuseum.org

DECEMBER

02

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

Columbus Ladies Night Out, (979) 732-8385, facebook.com/ladiesnightoutcolumbustexas

Grapevine Parade of Lights, 1-800-457-7572, grapevinetexasusa.com

Jacksonville Chamber Christmas Parade, (903) 586-2217, jacksonvilletexas.com

Kerrville Holiday Hopes, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

03

Brenham Gary Morris Christmas, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

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

Grapevine Nash Farm Christmas Decorating, 1-800-457-6338, grapevinetexasusa.com/nash-farm

04

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

Funny Signs

As the song goes, "Sign, sign, everywhere a sign." As we see here, Texans and humor are as close as two coats of paint. Before we pull up stakes and mosey on, let's take a moment to read the writing on the wall.

BY GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

BRAD MOLGAARD
TRINITY VALLEY EC
Spotted on FM 314 entering the town of Edom.

LEORIA MOORE
PEDERNALES EC
Pointing drivers to this town in northeast Texas.

CASEY FANNIN
RUSK COUNTY EC
"A funny sign I saw at Caddo Lake while on a boat tour."

MARK KUNNEMANN
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC
Rosie begs for treats or affection at the gate entering the goat pen.



Upcoming Contests

DUE NOV 10 The Texas Experience

DUE DEC 10 All Wet

DUE JAN 10 Feathered Friends

Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



Dad's Service Station

Giving credit where credit is due

BY DALE ROBERSON
ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID MOORE

IN 1949, MY FATHER left the Odessa oil patch and moved our family to Breckenridge, between Fort Worth and Abilene, where he bought a service station. He started with two customers a day and became one of the busiest stations in town.

The previous owner apparently was known to spend more time drinking whiskey and picking guitars than selling gasoline. We decided the three bullet holes in the ceiling were an indication of his priorities and his station's environment.

We called the business Red's Service Station and Garage—not a filling station because in addition to selling gasoline, we offered under-the-hood service and to clean windshields, sweep floorboards with a whisk broom and check tire pressure. From the age of 12 until I went off to the University of Texas at Austin in

1959, I made spending money by greasing cars, changing oil and fixing flats the old way, with tire tools, a rubber hammer and hot patches.

Because my father followed politics closely and was a huge football fan who gambled on sports, we were frequently visited by a collection of dignitaries and colorful characters from the worlds of politics, sports and newspaper publishing as well as a few bookies.

Probably the most famous customer we had was a wildcatter named Jack Grimm.

Grimm came into the service station one morning, introduced himself and said to my father, "Red, I graduated from Oklahoma University with a degree in geology. I'm going to produce oil here, but I need some credit." He suggested that if Dad carried him on the books for gasoline, he would pay his bill when he made a well.

Grimm was good for his word. Many days he was our first customer, and he would fill his Ford with gas before heading out to the oil fields. He usually burned that tank in a day and was our first customer the next morning. He reportedly hit 25 dry holes before making a good one. He always paid his bill. Before long, he graduated from Fords to Lincolns and moved his business to Abilene.

After striking it rich, he financed searches for sasquatch, the Abominable Snowman, Loch Ness monster, Titanic and, most famously, Noah's Ark.

Grimm was not the only one my father gave credit to. As long as customers paid their bills now and then, Dad would carry them. The only thing that made him mad was when a customer skipped paying a bill and he saw them buying their gas with cash at another station.

In addition to a strong work ethic, I learned at Red's Service Station and Garage never to judge people. My father would give credit to anyone, rich or poor. ■

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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 11/15/21. 2-Year Commitment: Early termination fee of \$20/mo. remaining applies if you cancel early. Included in 2-year price guarantee at \$64.99 advertised price: America's Top 120 programming package, local channels, HD service fees, and Hopper Duo Smart DVR for 1 TV. Included in 2-year price guarantee for additional cost: Programming package upgrades (\$79.99 for AT120+, \$89.99 for AT200, \$99.99 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.