

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

## CRAWFISH, Y'ALL

Mudbug-loving Texans pull up a seat at the communal table



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Crawfish and good times at Repka's in Brookshire.

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CRAWFISH: ERIC W. POHL. CONJUNTO ARTIST: COURTESY TEXAS FOLK LIFE



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**ON THE COVER** For many Texans, a crawfish boil marks more than the arrival of spring. Photo by Eric W. Pohl

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## Keeping in Touch

I am 84 and rely on good reading material to keep in touch with “all.”

Seldom have I enjoyed such fine articles as your November issue. I began with interesting Letters, then the woman behind Wreaths Across America and the magnificent photos accompanying the one-of-a-kind artists. Then comes my favorite subject—history.

BRENNA QUEBBEMANN | BLANCO PEDERNALES EC AND CECA

## Startling Conclusion

The star on the coin looks nothing like the lone star on the flag [*A Star Is Born*, December 2019]. There were stars for centuries on flags, shields and emblems of nations. Our Texas founding fathers . . . considered Texas a “lone star”—alone as a region fighting the tyrannical dictatorship of Santa Anna.

To try to stretch so far to connect these patriots to an insignificant star on a coin minted in 1817 is a thin presumption and certainly not clear. The Long Expedition in 1819, usually given credibility for being the first image of the lone star, is proven history.

COY PRATHER | MONTALBA TRINITY VALLEY EC

## Made in Texas

It is great that you are celebrating the makers in our areas [*In the Making*, November 2019]. Nice photos and nice story.

TRAVIS FROELICH | BASTROP BLUEBONNET EC

So many of us artisans here in Texas! . . . My husband and I have been making soap for

## Clip-and-Save Recipes

Being in my 20s, I know that

I am in the minority of

your readership, but that also

makes me the future of your

readership. I read your articles

monthly, but I only ever save the recipes, just like my mother and my mother’s

mother before her. I clip them out and keep them in my homemade recipe

book/binder/scrapbook.

KASEY MENN | BRYAN | BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES



the past 17 years using the milk from our award-winning Nubian dairy goats.

CAROLINE LAWSON | VIA FACEBOOK NAVASOTA VALLEY EC

Ryan Drapela [above] is an awesome young man. He works hard to be the best craftsman he can be.

MARK WOODS | VIA FACEBOOK

## Hamil to the Rescue

President Richard Nixon’s failure to thwart REA was a huge

success for rural electrification nationwide [*Nixon’s Attack on Co-ops*, December 2019]. Pictured behind Nixon was REA administrator Dave Hamil, a dear friend of mine.

Hamil almost single-handedly organized national leadership to save co-ops. Nixon was forced to sign legislation that restored federally funded loans and even greater financial health to co-ops.

BILL MULDOON | KERRVILLE CENTRAL TEXAS EC

## Co-ops and VFDs

I applaud your recognition of the critical importance and needs of volunteer fire departments in the communities they serve [*Putting Others First*, October 2019]. There are several volunteer fire departments served by our local co-op, Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative, including the McQueeney Volunteer Fire Department.

In October, the McQueeney VFD was the recipient of a Power-Up Grant of \$20,000 for the purchase of lifesaving extrication equipment. This is one of the many ways in which GVEC has helped our department to better serve our community.

MARILYN MARSHALL | NEW BRAUNFELS GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

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

   Texas Co-op Power

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## HAPPENINGS

# Chopin and Friends

Classical music lovers are in for a treat when distinguished Canadian pianist Ryo Yanagitani performs **CHOPIN AND FRIENDS: ROMANTIC GENIUS** at the Cailloux Theater in **KERRVILLE** on **FEBRUARY 27**.

Frédéric Chopin was a 19th-century Polish composer and virtuoso pianist who was close friends with French composer Hector Berlioz and sometimes friend, sometimes rival of Franz Liszt. The concert will feature pieces by all three and one by Johann Sebastian Bach, one of Chopin's greatest influences.

"This concert is all about showmanship," says Eugene Dowdy, conductor and artistic director for Symphony of the Hills, host of the event. "Ryo is a wonderful showman as a performer, super energetic. And even Chopin, himself a famous piano performer, also hung out with other showy composers like Hector Berlioz—composer of a piece named *Symphony Fantastique*, by the way. Who writes a symphony and names it that?"

**INFO** ▶ (830) 792-7469, [symphonyofthehills.org](http://symphonyofthehills.org)

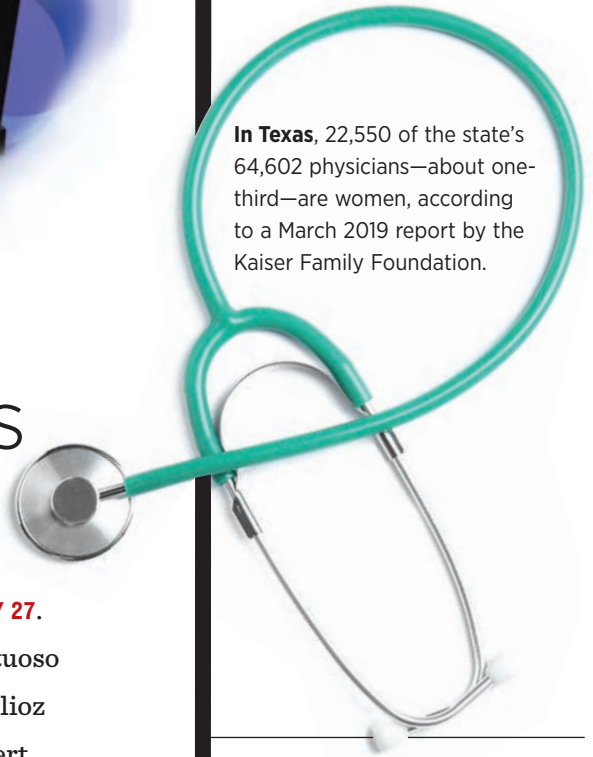
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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### PIONEERING M.D.

**National Women Physicians Day** is February 3. The date marks the birthday of Elizabeth Blackwell in 1821. When Blackwell graduated from New York's Geneva Medical College in 1849, she became the first woman to receive a medical degree in the United States.

**In Texas**, 22,550 of the state's 64,602 physicians—about one-third—are women, according to a March 2019 report by the Kaiser Family Foundation.



## LIFESTYLE

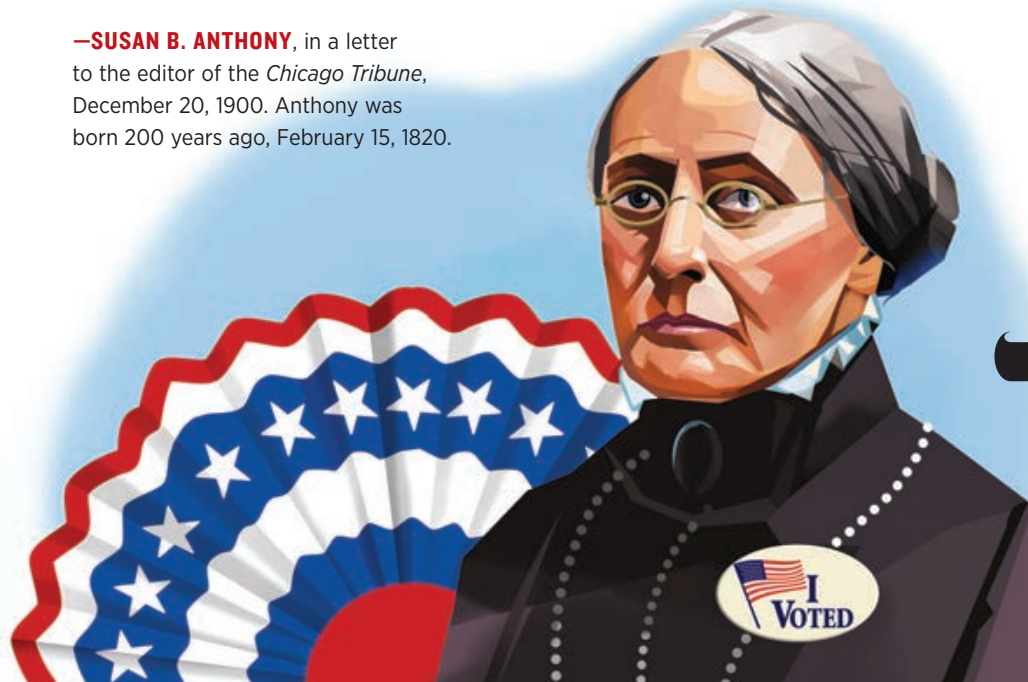
### Cut It Out!

**Have you witnessed** crape murder—the horrific and drastic pruning of innocent crape myrtles? Or seen the gnarled, knotty scars left by previous crimes?

**Read *Crape Murder*** on Page 8, then tell us about your experience by emailing [letters@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:letters@TexasCoopPower.com) or posting on our Facebook page. Include your name, co-op and city. (We won't turn you in to the pruning police.)

*“There is no history about which there is so much ignorance as this great movement for the establishment of equal political rights for women. I hope the twentieth century will see the triumph of our cause.”*

—**SUSAN B. ANTHONY**, in a letter to the editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, December 20, 1900. Anthony was born 200 years ago, February 15, 1820.



BY THE NUMBERS

5,200

That's the number of choking deaths in the U.S. in 2017, according to the National Safety Council. Surgeon Henry Heimlich, who in the 1970s invented a technique used to help choking victims dislodge an obstruction from their airways, was born 100 years ago—February 3, 1920, in Delaware. The Heimlich maneuver is credited with saving thousands of lives.

➔ *Did you know?*

In 2016, at the age of 96, Heimlich himself used his technique for the first time to save the life of a woman choking at his retirement home in Cincinnati.

NATURE



**Desolate Skies**

*The New York Times*, reporting on an analysis in the journal *Science*, said in September that there are 2.9 billion fewer birds in the United States and Canada than there were in 1970.

**While the study** was not designed to determine the cause of the 29% drop in population, scientists suggest likely culprits are habitat loss and pesticides.

**FINISH THIS SENTENCE**

*My most unforgettable first date was . . .*

**Last month** we asked readers to finish a sentence that we started. Your snappy answers are still coming in, and we'll share them next month. Meanwhile, amid thoughts of romance and Valentine's Day, how would you finish the sentence above?

**Your answers** can be silly, serious, deep or superficial. Post your responses on our Facebook page or email them to [letters@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:letters@TexasCoopPower.com). Please include your name, city and co-op.

**EVERY FEBRUARY**, horticulturist Greg Grant dreads the sight of tree trunks topped by sawed-off limbs. The annual chain saw massacre generally targets only one kind of tree: crape myrtles. “I’m *never* going to get used to that horrifically wrong way of pruning them,” huffs Grant, a Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension agent for Smith County. “Someone’s *got* to stop the madness.”

That madness is known as “crape murder.” No one’s sure how or why the excessive shearing got started, though Grant, a member of Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative, has some theories. Despite efforts to counter it, the crime against nature continues.

Crape myrtles have long been loved in the South as ornamental shrubs and trees for their peeling bark, prolific blooms and colorful fall foliage. Their tolerance of hot, dry climates makes them especially suited for Texas landscapes.

**AS HEALTHY TREES** are hacked in the prime of their lives, an expert pleads: **“STOP THE MADNESS!”**

# Crape Murder

In part, their name refers to the flowers’ crinkly crepe paper appearance. However, crape myrtles, which are native to India and southeast Asia, are not true myrtle trees, which bear white, star-shaped flowers. Instead, crape myrtle blooms—which range from white to pink, red and lavender—look more like lilacs, hence its nickname, “Lilac of the South.” Today, more than 110 crape myrtle varieties range in size from 3 feet tall to more than 30 feet.

Their earliest cultivation traces back to the Chinese gardens of the Tang dynasty, which ruled from 618 to 907 A.D. In 1786, French botanist André Michaux planted crape myrtles in his gardens in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1799, the ship *George Berkeley* ferried plants and seeds from India, including crape myrtles, to George Washington for his Mount Vernon plantation in Virginia. Thomas Jefferson also planted them at Monticello, his home in Virginia. The tree’s popularity spread across the South.

Marilda Maxey, wife of Confederate Gen. Samuel Bell Maxey, is believed to have brought the first crape myrtles to Texas in 1857, when the couple moved from Kentucky to Lamar County.



A decade later, she tended a formal garden, which showcased crape myrtles, at their new Italian villa-style home in Paris, Texas, now the Sam Bell Maxey House State Historic Site. Paris residents planted crape myrtles after fire destroyed almost half the town in 1916. They planted more for the state’s centennial, in 1936.

In 1997, the 75th Texas Legislature declared the crape myrtle as the official state shrub. (Texas purple sage was deemed the official state native shrub in 2005.) It also designated Paris as the state’s official Crape Myrtle City and Lamar County as Crape Myrtle County Capital. Not to leave anyone out, the Legislature also named Waxahachie as the Crape Myrtle Capital of Texas and Brazos County as an official Crape Myrtle County. McKinney, billed as America’s Crape Myrtle City, boasts some 65,000 crape myrtles across the city and in its 7-acre World Collection Park.

Despite its official standing, not even Paris is immune to crape murder. “It’s an ongoing issue here,” sighs Billie Paskin, former president of the Lamar County Master Gardeners and a Lamar Electric member. “We talk to people, and they still cut





off their crape myrtles.”

Likewise, Grant—who’s introduced 49 plants, including two crape myrtle hybrids, to the nursery trade—regularly writes about the foibles of crape murder. “I’m not the crape myrtle police,” Grant says. “People can do whatever they want with their trees. But it’s the No. 1 horticultural phenomenon that you see, and there’s not a single word in any horticultural publication that condones the practice.”

Grant theorizes that the severe style of pruning originated in Europe, where upper branches of some trees were pollarded—cut back to the trunk—to provide fuel. “Perhaps the practice came with the Spanish, who brought it with them to Mexico,” he says. “From Mexico, it spread across the South.”

These days, motives for crape murder vary, depending on who’s wielding the saw. “Homeowners tell me they cut off their crape myrtles because they’re too tall,” Grant says. “So it’s important that people know what size crape myrtle they want and then buy the right one for the site. Don’t plant one that can

grow 30 feet high under a utility line.”

Crape murder disfigures the shrubs, spurs growth of more suckers (new shoots) at a tree’s base and decreases a tree’s cold hardiness. Grant also suspects that pruning wounds and new growth attract crape myrtle bark scale, an introduced pest that’s spread across most of the Southeast. Sooty black mold and white, feltlike encrustations on higher limbs indicate a likely infestation. Though not a death sentence, the scale can turn healthy trees into eyesores and reduce their vigor by about one-third.

Bottom line: Crape murder costs money, wastes time and adds debris to landfills. It’s dangerous, too—chain saws and ladders don’t mix. Left alone, crape myrtles grow into graceful sculptures worthy of admiration.

“The only pruning they need is removal of dead wood, branches that cross and suckers from the base,” Grant says. “The prettiest ones I’ve seen have never been touched. And I mean *never*.”

**Sheryl Smith-Rodgers** of Blanco blogs about her gardening adventures at [sherylsmithrodgers.blogspot.com](http://sherylsmithrodgers.blogspot.com).

A top-down view of a large platter of boiled crawfish. The crawfish are bright red and glistening, scattered across the platter. Interspersed among them are several ears of yellow corn on the cob and several halved red potatoes. The entire dish is served on a bed of newspaper with faint, illegible text. A yellow dashed circle is drawn around the central text.

# A TALE OF TEXAS CRAWFISH

# TASTY CRUSTACEANS

CREATE A FEASTING FRENZY EVERY SPRING

**CRAWFISH. CRAWDADS. MUDBUGS.** Whatever you call them, they swim at the heart of a Southern tradition that's as much about eating the tasty freshwater crustaceans in a messy jubilee of divine spiciness as it is about bringing friends, family—and even strangers—together.

From out-of-the-way eateries and exuberant festivals to backyard shindigs and community celebrations, mudbug-loving Texans happily pull up a seat at a communal table and peel tails. Steam and aromatic spices fill the air as piping hot, bright-red crawfish tumble from giant pots onto paper-covered tables.

Then it's on! Time to twist off the tails and pull out the sweet, tender lobsterlike tail meat. The more adventurous devourers, keeping with time-honored crawfish tradition, suck the rich, flavorful yellow "fat" (it's actually a digestive organ called the hepatopancreas) from the head. Aficionados insist this is the best part.

Crawfish season varies depending on whom you ask, but it is usually in full swing by the start of Lent in late February, with the peak for size and quality covering March, April and May. Seasonal specialty restaurants like the Crawfish Shack in Crosby attract crawfish-crazed patrons by the dozens.

"The first day we open up for the year, we'll have 60 cars in line just to get to-go food," says owner Dan Meaux. "Some people are waiting two hours." The Crawfish Shack has erupted in popularity in the past few years, making it one of the top crawfish spots in the country.



**A crawfish boil encourages friends and family to dig in and eat from a shared plate or right off the table.**

"As of the last two years, we cook more crawfish than anyone in the country," Meaux says. He credits the explosive growth to the backyard party atmosphere and never compromising on quality.

Mudbug-themed festivals feature live music, parades, pageants, carnival rides and literal tons of crawfish. In 2017, Guinness World Records recognized the Bigass Crawfish Bash in La Marque for the most crawfish prepared in eight hours: more than 58,000 pounds.

Across Texas, every crawfish chef and backyard boiler has a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14





## THE TAIL TRAIL: WHERE TO FIND

# THE BEST CRAWFISH

### **BROOKSHIRE REPKA'S GROCERY**

What started as a 1940s icehouse and convenience store, Repka's, a member of San Bernard Electric Cooperative, serves Cajun-style cuisine year-round. If you blink, you'll miss the nondescript building even though it is packed during crawfish season. Wood-paneled walls boast bar swag and autographed headshots of famous diners, including country music star Tim McGraw. Pool tables, vintage arcade games

and a jukebox add to the dive bar vibe, and patron-inscribed dollar bills adorn the ceiling. Plan on trying fried gator, crawfish étouffée and home-made pork cracklings.

### **CROSBY CRAWFISH SHACK**

One could argue the Crawfish Shack is Texas' most popular BYOB boiling pot restaurant. During peak season, loyal patrons lug beer-filled coolers and happily endure 200-person lines to get their hands on Dan Meaux's

savory mudbugs. During the season (typically January–June), the Crawfish Shack serves more than 6,000 pounds of crawfish daily. The open-air, red steel building exudes a garage-party-meets-sports-bar energy characterized by football memorabilia on the walls and sports on big-screen TVs. Get ready for boiled crawfish, shrimp, snow crab and sausage with corn, potatoes and mushrooms.

### **EL CAMPO PINCHERS BOIL'N POT RESTAURANT**

With lakeside dining on a large deck and fresh-daily crawfish from their farm, Pinchers is a cut above your average crawfish shack. Just off U.S. Highway 59 South, the restaurant's conspicuous yellow facade and



**Left: Carl Kokemor and Isabell Cavazos dig in at a crawfish boil at Repka's in Brookshire.**

BYOB. For those who like to get saucy, JuJu's offers three dipping options: red sauce (ketchup and spices), pink sauce (ketchup, mayo and spices) and melted butter.

#### **GALVESTON BENNO'S ON THE BEACH**

On the island's far east end, Benno's serves fresh Cajun seafood on an outdoor patio with unencumbered postcard views of the Gulf of Mexico. Sea gulls and pelicans soar on the briny breeze while diners enjoy crawfish, shrimp po'boys, grilled oysters and deep-fried Cajun crabs.

#### **GROVES LARRY'S FRENCH MARKET & CAJUN RESTAURANT**

There's nothing like Cajun food and live Cajun music to spice up an evening in the Golden Triangle—an area known for its Cajun influence and anchored by Beaumont, Port Arthur and Orange. Tables covered by checkered cloth define the front half of Larry's. Walls are clad with vintage photos of local fishermen and mounted trophy fish. The restaurant's back half enshrines a dance floor featuring live music under a neon glow. Reserve a table on the dance floor and order crawfish in season or step up to the year-round Cajun seafood buffet groaning with fried seafood, frog legs, boudin, étouffée and barbecued crab.

#### **PORT ARANSAS CRAZY CAJUN**

This no-frills hot spot for Cajun cuisine has been a favorite among locals and tourists since 1987. Stepping inside the unassuming teal and pink hut reveals a boisterous atmosphere as patrons enjoy heaping mounds of steaming seafood on white butcher-papered tables. The menu is mostly à la carte but features the Hungry Cajun—a spicy sampler

of boiled crab legs, crawfish, shrimp, corn, potatoes and sausage. It's also known for gumbo, shrimp Creole and fresh sourdough bread.

#### **ROCKPORT THE BOILING POT**

Strings of colored lights, neon beer logos and loads of kitsch create a partylike setting in this lively establishment celebrating 35 years. Every surface, from the corrugated steel exterior to the inside walls and ceilings, is adorned with graffiti, art and caricatures. Hungry diners don white plastic bibs, smash open crab legs with wooden mallets and polish off loads of Cajun seafood, family-style. It has a sizable beer cooler offering more selections than typical seafood joints. One block from the beach, the fishing pier and marina are also within walking distance.

#### **SANTA FE POOK'S CRAWFISH HOLE**

In addition to boiled crawfish, this BYOB shack, about 20 miles west of Galveston, offers deep-fried boudin balls, crawfish pie and gumbo. Expect Pook's to be packed with patrons at wooden octagonal tables peeling crawfish or cracking open huge snow crab legs while listening to live music.

sparkling blue lake beckon passersby to a trifecta eatery, fuel station and RV park. Visitors are greeted by a life-size shark and a large sign inviting them to "EAT TAIL." The novelty lake, complete with ducks, geese and light-up palm trees, sprawls across the restaurant's front. Patrons can walk the adjacent pier, feed the catfish and koi, or watch as the staff bags the purged crawfish.

#### **FANNETT JUJU'S CAJUN CRAWFISH SHAK**

JuJu's does one thing and does it right. Along a pastoral stretch of FM 365, 15 miles southwest of Beaumont, JuJu's serves boiled crawfish, corn, potatoes and sausage. Ambiance of the modest red building is defined by exposed plywood walls and a blackboard menu. And it's





CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

recipe. Most popular is the Cajun style, which calls for infusing boiled crawfish with peppery spices and serving them with boiled corn and potatoes. Another popular offshoot is the Vietnamese-Cajun style, in which the boiled crustaceans are sautéed with butter, garlic and aromatic ingredients such as lemongrass and citrus.

**GETTING THE MUDBUGS** The first chapters of crawfish scripture were written in Louisiana's Atchafalaya Basin, where wild harvests began in the 1880s. By the 1950s, cold storage and the introduction of wire crawfish traps boosted harvest volume. Crawfish farmers found they could raise an excellent crop in flooded rice fields and produce consistently larger crops year over year.

**WEB EXTRAS**

► **Crawfish watch the weather.** Read this story on our website to learn more.

That farming tradition continues with folks like Craig Radley, who converted 50 acres of rice fields near El Campo, in Wharton County Electric Cooperative's service area, into a swampy crawfish heaven.

Radley calls his operation Pinchers Crawfish Farm, and on one sunny afternoon, he readied his flat-bottomed aluminum boat for harvesting mudbugs. He navigated the specially designed craft through the muddy water with help from a hydraulic, cleat-studded wheel that pushed along the slushy bottom.

Radley hoisted each pyramid-shaped, crawfish-filled trap from the water and emptied the catch into a sorting area in front of his cockpit. As he went, he rebaited each trap with commercial crawfish pellets and put it back into the water to capture more.

As he sorted and cleaned his harvest, Radley removed debris and tossed the smaller mudbugs back so they could grow larger. With a full load, he motored back to his nearby seafood restaurant, Pinchers Boil'n Pot. The crawfish are submerged in fresh water for 24 hours to purge them of internal impurities. After that, they get weighed and are ready for their starring role in the restaurant.

Writer and photographer **Eric W. Pohl**, a member of Pedernales EC, lives in Dripping Springs.

**Craig Radley of Pinchers Crawfish Farm empties a crawfish trap into a boat's sorting area.**

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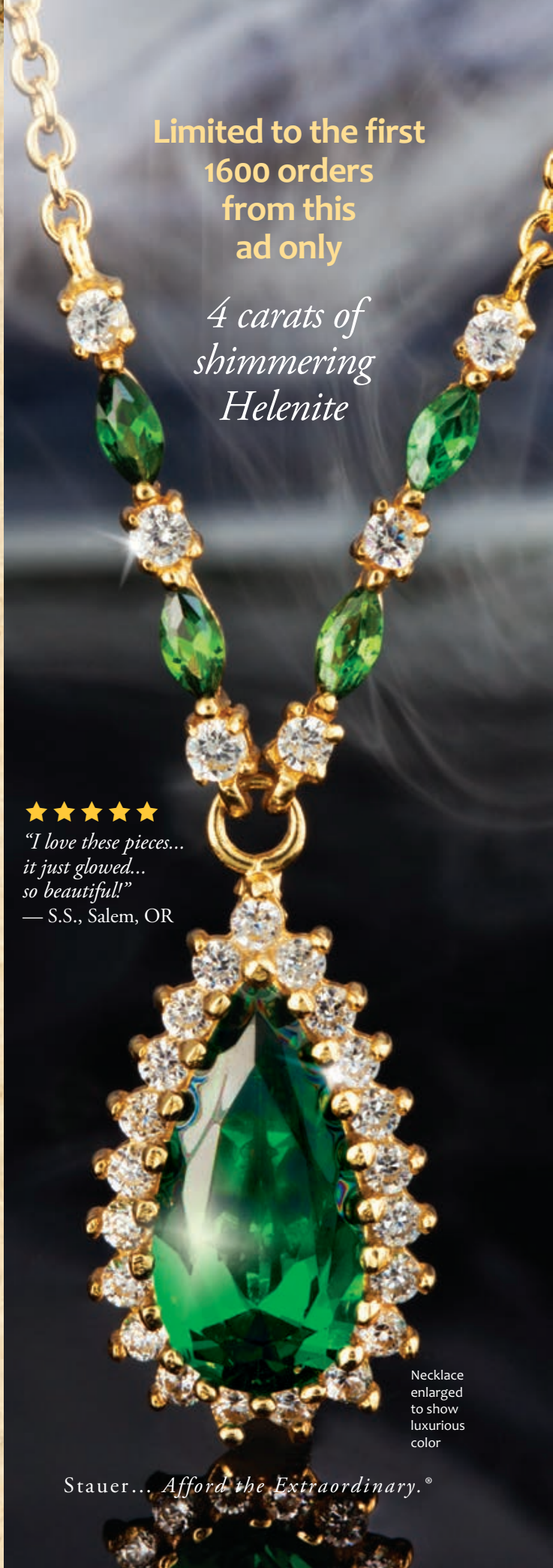
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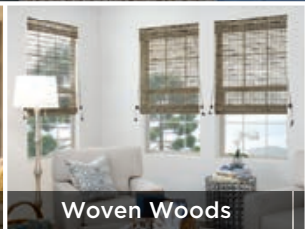
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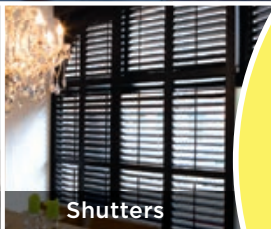
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# Cybersecurity—a Balancing Act



## MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER KATHI CALVERT

**THE THREAT OF CYBERSECURITY ATTACKS ON** the electric grid has gained a lot of attention. In fact, the president's National Security Strategy calls to improve security and resilience for critical infrastructure, and the energy sector is one of President Donald Trump's six priority areas.

We often think that would never happen here at Houston County Electric Cooperative. We are too small. We are too

from the Department of Homeland Security, the Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center, and vendors that specialize in cybersecurity.

Last year, we worked with DHS on a cybersecurity assessment. DHS provided penetration testing and recommendations to strengthen our security practices, including guidance on how to mitigate damage and disruption should an attack occur. Based on DHS' recommendations, the Houston

County EC Board of Directors approved further investments in our network architecture.

Our network has evolved over time, as technology has advanced and business needs have changed. Cybersecurity is a much higher priority in today's environment. We will be redesigning our network with greater overall security. The upgrades will include more protection via firewall enhancements and new network switches. In addition, our network systems will be segregated further. Greater segregation and more control of data-sharing across the network will enhance business continuity should an attack occur.

Business continuity is the backstop to a comprehensive cybersecurity plan. It is unrealistic and cost prohibitive to prevent attacks. While

remote. However, cyberattacks do target small utilities. Often these attacks are steppingstones for criminals and terrorists to learn weaknesses and vulnerabilities to exploit in larger attacks.

Given our limited resources compared to the vastness of the threats, much of our strategy relies on risk management, planning and prioritization. The online landscape is constantly evolving and rapidly changing. To stay abreast of emerging threats and increases in cyberactivity, we rely on information

we hope we never have to implement the business continuity component of our plan, we are striving to develop cost-effective system redundancies to quickly recover and restore operations if an attack occurs.

At Houston County EC, we recognize the importance of your security and are actively taking steps to protect our system, your data and the electric grid from physical and cyber threats.

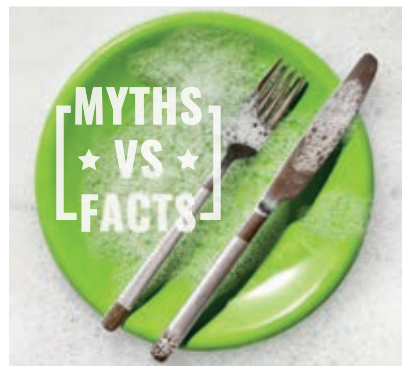


# Somebody Told Me ...

WE ALL HAVE A “SOMEBODY” IN OUR LIVES WHO IS THE SOURCE OF A WEALTH OF INFORMATION—some true and some not so reliable. “Somebody” has spread a lot of myths about saving energy, and we’d like to set the record straight.

**Myth: Leaving a light on uses less energy than turning it off and on several times.**

Even though a higher level of current is needed to turn on a light, this higher level is only used for a fraction of a second. When a light is kept on, it uses a lower level of power but for much longer. Leaving a light on for longer than a few seconds uses more energy than turning it off and back on as needed.



**Myth: Appliances don’t use energy when they are turned off.**

Thanks to standby power settings, most appliances constantly use energy to be ready for immediate usage. These “energy vampires” cannot be turned completely off without unplugging the device altogether.

**Myth: Closing air registers saves energy.**

Forced-air heating systems are designed to operate with all of the registers open.

The blower won’t perform as well with registers closed and can create whistling in the ducts. In some cases, duct systems have so many leaks that closing a register won’t force more warm air into other rooms—it will force more air out of the leaks.

**Myth: Washing dishes by hand rather than running them through the dishwasher can save energy.**

Washing a load of dishes by hand requires a lot of hot water and therefore a lot of energy. Today, most dishwashers have energy efficiency settings that typically allow you to run a load of dishes using less water and less energy than washing by hand.

**Myth: Electronic chargers don’t use energy if plugged in and disconnected from the device.**

Most chargers use power while plugged in but not connected to their device. If your charger feels warm to touch, it is most likely using power. It is best to just assume that all of your chargers waste energy when left plugged in, so unplug them when they are not being used.

**Myth: Most heat is lost through windows.**

While heat can be lost through windows, window heat loss is only a small percentage of the total heat loss in most homes. Typically, walls account for much more heat loss because of their large surface area. It’s best to consider insulating walls before upgrading windows.

**Myth: Replacing windows is a good investment.**

New windows can increase security and comfort, but they’ll take 20–30 years to pay for themselves. Replacing single-pane windows with double-pane low-e windows will save energy and money, but in a house with 20 windows, it’ll take you almost 24 years to recoup the cost of the new windows. That being said, if you plan to stay in your home and the existing windows are drafty and in disrepair, it’s probably a good idea to replace them.

**Myth: Sleep mode is just fine for computers overnight.**

Your computer continues to draw quite a lot of power in sleep mode so that the computer can be ready to pop back on at a moment’s notice. It is best to shut your computer down all the way overnight or when you are planning on not using it for a while.

## Houston County Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 52, Crockett, TX 75835

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Kathi Calvert

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**(936) 544-5641** local

**1-800-657-2445** toll-free

To report an outage, press 1.

To make a payment over the phone or speak with a member services representative, press 2.

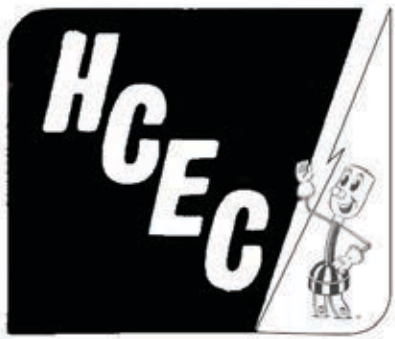
For electrical connects, transfers and disconnects or any other problem with your electrical service, press 3.

Para hablar con un representante que habla español, presione 4.

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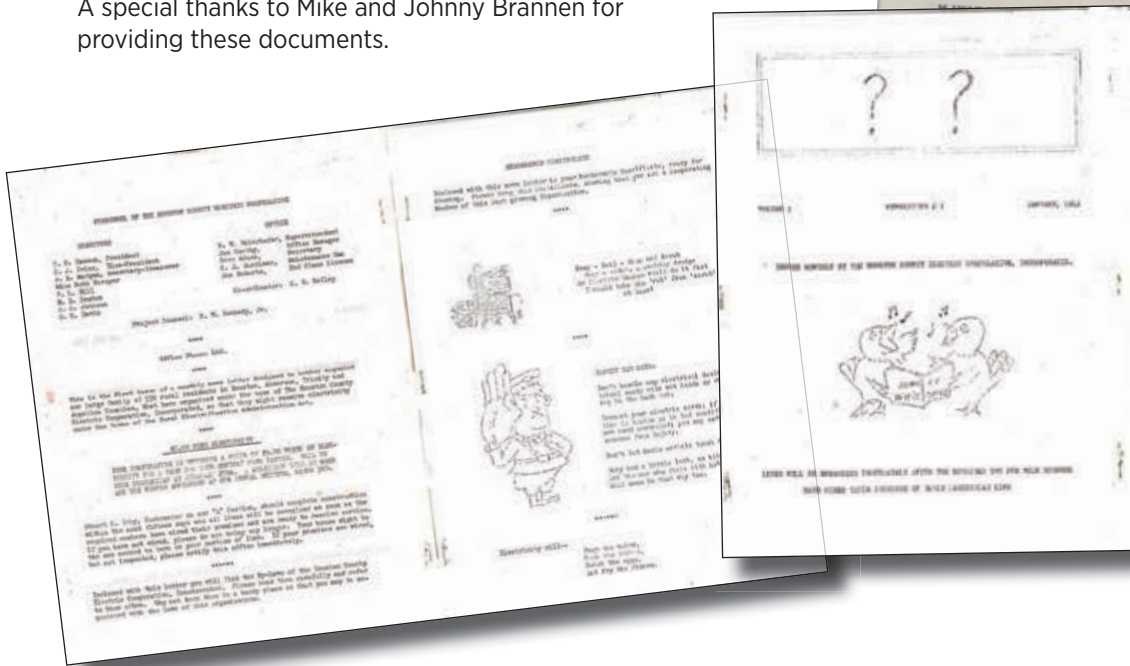
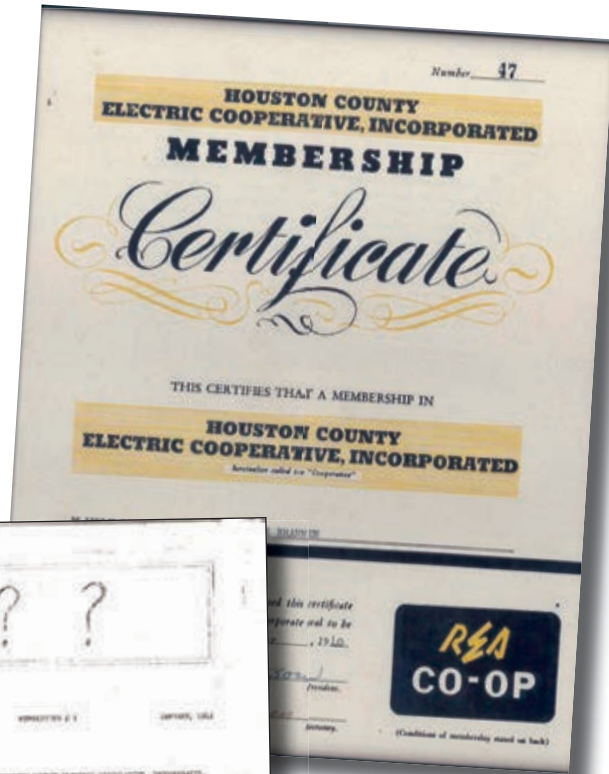


# THROUGH THE DECADES

## 1940S

The first newsletter sent out by Houston County Electric Cooperative, below, in 1941, states that lines will be energized immediately after the required two members per mile have wired their premises on their particular line. Membership certificates were handed out when members received electricity. Joe Brannen was member No. 47 of Houston County EC.

A special thanks to Mike and Johnny Brannen for providing these documents.



## 1960S

Advertisements in the 1960s focused on showing members and others how nice the rural lifestyle was versus crowded city life. The ads also reminded members that electric cooperatives paved the way for rural electrification when other entities weren't willing to do so.



# 1970S

These two *Texas Co-op Power* articles from the 1970s feature a recap of HCEC's 1977 annual meeting, top, and the approval for the new office building, the same one we occupy today in Crockett.

**HCEC** Houston County Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
**HOUSTON COUNTY ELECTRIC NEWS**  
 206 S. 6th • P.O. Box 52 • Crockett, Texas 75828 • Telephone (713) 584-2323

**Co-Op members get together in October**

Two young people from the Crockett area will be on their way to Washington, D.C. next June, enjoying a two-week all-expense paid trip.

The trip will be awarded by Allied First National Bank and Electric Co-op of an essay contest sponsored by the bank.

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The trip will be awarded by Allied First National Bank and Electric Co-op of an essay contest sponsored by the bank.

# 1980S

These 1980s copies from the *Houston County Courier* focused on HCEC's Government-in-Action Youth Tour winners and the requirements to apply for the trip.

**Two youths win trip**

Two Houston County youths, Kate Loring of Grapeland and Suzanne Loring of Grapeland, are the winners of a two-week all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. The trip, sponsored by Allied First National Bank and Electric Co-op of an essay contest, will be awarded by Allied First National Bank and Electric Co-op of an essay contest sponsored by the bank.

The trip will be awarded by Allied First National Bank and Electric Co-op of an essay contest sponsored by the bank.

**Bank and Electric Co-op sponsor student contest**

Two young people from the Crockett area will be on their way to Washington, D.C. next June, enjoying a two-week all-expense paid trip.

The trip will be awarded by Allied First National Bank and Electric Co-op of an essay contest sponsored by the bank.

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**Houston County Electric Co-Op to serve members from new home**

A lively afternoon to do an even better job for Houston County Electric Cooperative members is on the way.

The board of directors and the Rural Electrification Administration have approved plans for a new headquarters and vehicle maintenance and at the intersection of Loop 304 and FM 2712 from contract to be let May 22, calls for 13,000 square feet of offices, and vehicle maintenance and warehouse buildings of 10,000 square feet each.

Fiscal point of the development will be the new office building, a steel and masonry structure designed by Houston architect G. G. McKnight and W. W. Smith. In addition to offices, the building will have a directors' meeting room and an auditorium for use of members and farm service area. The vehicle maintenance building will be constructed of steel and the warehouse of precast concrete.

**Students attend co-op program**

Area participants in the East Texas Rural Electric Youth Program were, from left, Brad Lee, Thomas Cuddihy, Julie Myers, Kelly Whitson, Kim Spinks, Amber Stoney, second row, Ashley Hottel, Julia Thomson, Sherry Truitt, Robert Marshall, David Johns, third row, Donald Lamb, Jan Salomon, Paul Jones, Stephanie Atwater, Tracy Young, Tammy Frazier, not shown are Thad Hargett, Steve Anderson and Leah Stahl.

The program is designed to help young people learn about the electric cooperative and its services. The program is held at the Crockett area office building.

# 1990S

The East Texas Rural Electric Seminar had kicked off just a few years prior to this 1990 ad, which shows the attendees of the seminar and lists the different activities they took part in.



Oakwood Volunteer Fire Department Chief Greg Smith, far right, and Assistant Chief Tom Hanson, second from right, in front of their new brush truck. Smith said the donation from HCEC will help to pay off the new truck, which is used regularly in Oakwood VFD's operations. Representing HCEC are Mike Lane, far left, and Tim Johnson.



Tim Johnson, second from left, HCEC Lineman, and Mike Lane, far right, HCEC Director of Distribution Operations, present a check to the Buffalo Volunteer Fire Department. Accepting the check on behalf of Buffalo VFD are Ben Reeder and Jacob Davis.

## We Love Our Community

### “TO MOVE FORWARD, YOU HAVE TO GIVE BACK.”

This quote from Oprah Winfrey reflects the special bond and obligation that tie Houston County Electric Cooperative to the community we serve. With Valentine's Day approaching, we can't think of a better time to express how much we love this community and how proud we are to serve you, the members of the co-op.

When we helped bring electricity to rural Texas many years ago, quality of life improved for all. Through the years, we've tackled other issues, such as right-of-way clearance, transmission line construction, meter and pole replacements, updates to our billing and member service departments, and cybersecurity enhancements. We want to help meet the long-term needs of our community to ensure it continues to thrive—because just like you, we live here, too.

While our top priority is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of those we serve. This focus, to benefit the community on a broader basis, is central to the way we operate as a cooperative.

At Houston County EC, we know it takes more than poles and power lines to make a community—and that can mean many different things. It means offering programs for our youths, such as

scholarships, the Government-in-Action Youth Tour and the East Texas Rural Electric Youth Seminar leadership conference. It means partnering with organizations like CoBank and their Sharing Success program to donate money to local organizations that give back to our communities. It also means contributing money each year to local volunteer fire departments to assist in the purchase of new or updated equipment.

Over the last eight decades, our community-focused programs and other endowment projects have assisted our members and the area in which we live—and we couldn't have done any of this without you, our members. You are the ones who empower Houston County EC through your membership and your participation in and support of these programs.

As a local business, we are proud to provide power for your way of life and contribute to the community. We hope you will continue to guide our efforts by sharing your perspective as we plan for the future.

The energy landscape is undergoing dramatic change fueled by evolving technology and consumer desire for more options. And while the broader environment in which we operate is constantly changing, one thing remains the same—by working together, we will continue to help our community grow and prosper.

# Landscaping for Energy Efficiency

**THE APPROACH OF SPRING HAS MANY** gardeners turning their attention to planting plans, but if energy efficiency is one of your goals as a homeowner, you should know that landscaping can beautify your home while helping you control energy costs for years to come.

According to researchers at the Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory, carefully positioned trees can save a household as much as 25% on its heating and cooling costs. Foundation shrub plantings can also help control energy costs by diffusing solar heating or wind to moderate temperature transfers.

No matter how much you love trees, give them some room. Don't plant too close to foundations, pavement or plumbing because root systems and maturing branches can damage foundations, roofs and pipes. And always make sure trees will be well clear of power lines when they reach their full size.

But planted in the right place, within five to 10 years, a fast-growing shade tree can reduce outside air temperatures near walls and roofs by as much as 6 degrees on sunny days. Surface temperatures immediately under the canopy of a mature shade tree can be up to 25 degrees cooler than surrounding shingles or siding exposed to direct sunlight.

According to the Department of Energy, deciduous trees—those that lose their leaves in autumn—are great options for summer shade. Tall varieties planted to the south of a home can help diffuse sunlight, providing shade for the roof.

Shorter varieties of deciduous trees can be planted near exposed west-facing windows to help shade homes on sultry summer afternoons. Mass plantings of evergreens—selected for their adaptability to regional growing conditions—can be planted farther away, on a north or northwestern section of a yard to form a windbreak, which helps shield a home from frigid winter winds.

Deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns (i.e., leaves and branches) can be planted to the south of your home to provide maximum summertime roof shading. Trees with crowns lower to the ground are more appropriate to the west, where shade is needed from lower, afternoon sun angles. Trees should not be planted on the southern sides of solar-heated homes in cold climates because the branches of these decidu-



NRECA

ous trees will block some winter sun.

Trees are available in appropriate sizes, densities and shapes for almost any shade application. To block solar heat in the summer but let much of it in during the winter, use deciduous trees. To provide continuous shade or to block heavy winds, use dense evergreen trees or shrubs.

Although a slow-growing tree may require many years of growth before it shades your roof, it will generally live longer than a fast-growing tree. And because slow-growing trees often have deeper roots and stronger branches, they are less prone to breakage by windstorms or heavy snow.

Trees, shrubs and ground cover plants can also shade the ground and pavement around a home. This cover reduces heat radiation and cools the air before it reaches your home's walls and windows. Use a large bush or row of shrubs to shade a patio or driveway. Plant a hedge to shade a sidewalk. Build a trellis for climbing vines to shade a patio area.

To ensure the durability of energy-saving landscaping, use plant species that are adapted to the local climate. Native species are best, as they require little maintenance once established and sidestep the dangers of invasive species.

**Deciduous trees—those that lose their leaves in autumn—are great options for seasonal summer shade. Tall varieties planted to the south of a home can help diffuse sunlight, providing roof shading.**

# Give friends and family the Best of Texas.



*Texas Co-op Power* presents a collection of best-loved recipes from two of our most popular cookbooks ever, the *Typically Texas Cookbook* and *The Second Typically Texas Cookbook*.

This cookbook is filled with more than 700 recipes, including more than 300 dessert recipes.

Order online at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com) and put *The Best of Typically Texas Cookbook* in your kitchen for only \$29.95 (price includes tax, shipping and handling).

To order by mail, send a check or money order payable to TEC for \$29.95 to Best of Typically Texas Cookbook, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701.

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From the publishers of *Texas Co-op Power*

Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.



# Beachcombing at home.

*Texas Co-op Power* presents an illustrated *Seashells of Texas* poster by artist Aletha St. Romain, 20x16 inches, suitable for framing.

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\$30**

Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

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# On Board the Elissa

Sailing the historic tall ship out of Galveston is a hands-on experience

BY JOEY HELD

IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY, A CARGO ship like the Elissa, now the Galveston-based official tall ship of Texas, sailed with a crew of fewer than 20. The Elissa hosts a sail training program that draws groups of up to 120 for six-hour training cruises.

In its permanent home at Galveston's Pier 21, the Elissa is maintained year-round by certified volunteer crew members who upgrade their skills by working the annual cruises. Others interested in learning the techniques required to sail the ship can take part by invitation.

Last spring, I accepted an invitation to join the group aboard the Elissa. Launched in 1877 in Aberdeen, Scotland, the three-masted, iron-hulled Elissa is one of just three ships of its kind in the world. Its 19 sails cover more than a quarter acre; and from the tip of the stern's boom to the tip of the boom on the bow (sparred length), it measures 205 feet.

The crew that helps maintain the Elissa (40 members of our group) undertakes the seven-month course and spends 130 hours with the Galveston Historical Foundation, training on board and taking proficiency exams. The volunteers put in almost a million dollars' worth of labor annually, according to port captain Mark Scibinico.

Mast captain Todd Grove offered a tutorial on technique and the meaning of basic commands. For example, stop pulling on ropes when you hear, "That's well on the halyard." I jumped at the chance to pull one of the ship's 183 lines.

"Every single rope and sail work to-

gether," says crew member David Bowers of Galveston. "You really have to stop and listen to the people bark these orders to understand what they're saying."

"It was amazing to watch all that manpower, watching them quickly climb up the masts," says Ashley Shaw, a passenger from Birmingham, Alabama. "Not knowing the lingo made me appreciate their work even more."

On our cruise, there was plenty of opportunity to explore the ship. I mostly hung out on the main deck admiring the teamwork. As we sailed down the Galveston Channel, Grove pointed out a small buoy in the distance. When we passed it, we would be sailing the Gulf of Mexico.

That buoy also signified rougher waters. The trick for avoiding seasickness is to look at the horizon, but that's not easy on a cloudy day. While conversing with a passenger, I felt my stomach rumble, as I sometimes experienced as a child. Back then, my mother was prepared with Dramamine or BioBands to combat motion sickness. I had neither.

During orientation, we were told to let loose over the edge if we felt nauseated. The only request? Do it downwind. As I neared the ship's edge, I glanced at volunteer Aaron Stephens.

"Is this a good spot to throw up?" I asked.

"Yeah, not too bad," Stephens said.

I leaned over the edge while he brought me some crackers and an apple. Eating was the last thing on my mind, but he'd seen this before. "It sounds counter-intuitive, but if you get sick, keep eating



and drinking,” Stephens said.

About halfway through the voyage, trainees unfurled the sails so we could head back toward Galveston. Despite my queasy stomach, I marveled at the sight. Volunteers scaled the rigging, navigated narrow walkways, leaped from one platform to another, untied ropes and let the sails fly. Commands bounced across the deck, and the passengers ceased talking and watched in awe.

After we reversed course, my seasickness returned. I went to my familiar spot

but soon felt a tap on my shoulder.

“When you’re able, can you move to the other side?” a volunteer asked. She reminded me I was now facing upwind. I groggily thanked her and went across the deck.

Even though my stomach was dancing, I loved the trip. Between the tall sails, the crew working together and hearing stories from the passengers, a ride on the *Elissa* is an exceptional experience.

Captain John Svendsen commends the volunteers for their work. “All the living

history comes to life only with people,” he says. “This ship is a static piece of iron, rope and canvas without people.”

The visitors came from all walks of life, with their sunscreen, long sleeves and closed-toe shoes, to sail the *Elissa*. “That was really neat,” Shaw says. “You see older generations next to teenage kids, and they’re all so nice and friendly. They’ve got some great stories to share.”

Writer **Joey Held** looks forward to more rope-pulling adventures—though next time he sets sail, he’ll remember his Dramamine.

# A Texan at Iwo Jima

RGV native among the immortals in the famous photo from 75 years ago

BY GENE FOWLER

THE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS ON THE 1942 Weslaco Panthers football team formed a bond even stronger than most brothers of the gridiron. All eight of the young men finished their final year of high school in one semester so they could enlist in the Marines and fight for Uncle Sam in World War II. All but one survived the global conflict.

That Marine, Harlon Block, appears in one of the most reproduced images in history, the raising of the American flag on Mount Suribachi on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima on February 23, 1945. The photograph by The Associated Press' Joe Rosenthal won a Pulitzer Prize, but because Block's back was to the camera—he's crouching on the far right—he was at first misidentified by military authorities as another Marine.

When Harlon's mother, Belle Block, saw the photograph on the front page of



HARLON BLOCK



the *Weslaco Mid-Valley News* on February 25, she exclaimed, "That's Harlon!" Her intuition was affirmed in 1946, when Ira Hayes, a surviving flag raiser, visited Harlon's father, Ed Block, in Weslaco and told him that his son was indeed in the photograph. Ed Block wrote his congressman, and an investigation confirmed the identity. Hayes, a member of the Pima tribe, is

BLOCK, COURTESY MARINE MILITARY ACADEMY



further immortalized in the Peter La Farge song *The Ballad of Ira Hayes*, recorded by Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan and others.

Block died in combat on Iwo Jima, just six days after the flag raising. He was 21. Block was first buried in the 5th Marine Division Cemetery at Mount Suribachi, then he was reinterred in Weslaco in 1949. He was reburied a second time in 1995, on

the grounds of the Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, beside the academy's Iwo Jima Monument.

According to the son of one of Block's high school teammates, all seven of the surviving football players served as pallbearers at both of his reinterments.

Writer and author **Gene Fowler** specializes in art and history.

IWO JIMA: GETTY IMAGES

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Chief Science Researcher

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# Meat and Greet

Two of Texas' legendary pitmasters meet for the first time

STORY AND PHOTO BY WYATT MCSPADDEN

ON AN OVERHEATED SATURDAY IN EARLY October, I drove Roy Perez, the venerable pitmaster at Kreuz Market in Lockhart, and Kreuz Market owner Keith Schmidt to Snow's BBQ in Lexington. Snow's, a tiny barbecue joint in a tiny town, is often mentioned as one of the best barbecue destinations in the state. Of course, Kreuz Market vies for the same title and has been a legendary barbecue purveyor for more than a century.

Roy is the first pitmaster I photographed nearly 25 years ago. Since then, as I created images for two photography books on Texas barbecue, I've had the honor to make more pictures of Roy along with photographs of dozens more folks who do the hot, hard work of making Texas barbecue the best in the world.

Even though Roy remains one of my favorite subjects, I will admit that in the past six years, a rival for my lens's attention has charmed me through several sessions. She is a grand woman named

Tootsie Tomanetz, who handles much of the cooking in the early hours of every Saturday in Lexington. Now in her 80s, Tootsie's fame rivals that of Roy. But

#### WEB EXTRAS

► Win a copy of Wyatt McSpadden's photography book *Texas BBQ*. Go to [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/contests).



neither one lets the acclaim go to their head.

Tootsie arrives at Snow's well before sunup each Saturday and works through lunchtime, exhibiting her natural work ethic as well as a genuine love of people and the pit skills she has honed over decades.

I had set the goal to deliver Roy to Snow's for lunch, so he could meet his fellow barbecue icon, Miss Tootsie. Roy is not widely traveled but agreed to go along.

Once Roy, Keith and I arrived in Lexington, we were greeted by Snow's owner, Kerry Bexley. We enjoyed a brilliant sampling of Snow's smoked goodies.

After lunch, we took a few minutes to capture this image of two barbecue legends who will live forever in the barbecue museum that exists only in my mind.

Wyatt McSpadden's two photography books on Texas barbecue are *Texas BBQ* and *Texas BBQ: Small Town to Downtown*.

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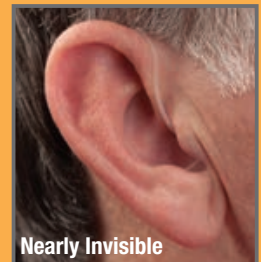
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# Forget Chocolate, My Sweetie Likes...



I MOVED TO TEXAS 14 YEARS AGO AND was surprised at first by the amount of fresh, local produce available. Eager to expand my cooking horizons, I embraced all of it in my cooking. On my recipe blog, Stetted, I look to everything that Texas has to offer each season, from summer peaches to winter citrus.

When it comes to desserts, my family gravitates toward anything with fruit—my kids are especially fond of strawberry shortcake any time of year. But when strawberries aren't in season, I look to other ingredients.

Meyer lemons are perfect for celebratory desserts because they are sweeter and less acidic than standard lemons. This Meyer Lemon Meringue Pie is suitable for all tastes, including the littlest valentines in your house. Gingersnaps are used in the crust for a contrasting kick, but you can swap in graham crackers.

**MEGAN MYERS**, FOOD EDITOR

## Meyer Lemon Meringue Pie

- 1¾ cups crushed gingersnap cookies
- ¼ cup (½ stick) melted butter
- 1⅓ cups plus ¼ cup sugar, divided use
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup water
- ½ cup Meyer lemon juice
- 4 eggs, separated

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mix together gingersnaps, melted butter and ¼ cup sugar until well combined. Press mixture into a 9-inch pie dish, using the bottom of a measuring cup or glass to press down, making sure to keep the crust even. Bake crust 10 minutes, then set aside.
3. In a small saucepan over medium

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32



## Forget Chocolate, My Sweetie Likes...



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

LAMONT PETERSEN | NAVARRO COUNTY EC

Our testers enjoyed the winning pie so much that one said it was her new favorite dessert (and she loves chocolate!). It's got everything you want in a coconut pie: rich filling with plenty of coconut flavor, a lightly sweet whipped cream topping and the added kick of freshly toasted coconut on top. Petersen makes it for the senior citizen residents at Brookdale Corsicana. "They rave about this pie," Petersen says, "and the facility administrator thinks it is over the moon!"

### Oma's Dreamy Coconut Pie

- 1 9-inch pie crust, premade or homemade
  - 2 cups sweetened coconut flakes, divided use
  - 1½ cups coconut milk (not low-fat)
  - 1½ cups half-and-half
  - 5 egg yolks
  - ¾ cup sugar
  - 4 tablespoons cornstarch
  - ¼ teaspoon salt
  - ⅛ cup (¼ stick) butter
  - 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
  - 2 teaspoons coconut extract, divided use
  - 2 cups heavy whipping cream
  - ⅛ cup powdered sugar
1. Prebake pie crust and set aside. Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees.
  2. Spread ½ cup coconut flakes evenly on a baking sheet. Place sheet in oven 8–10 minutes or until coconut begins to toast. Remove from oven to cool and set aside.

3. Pour coconut milk and half-and-half into a medium-size bowl. Add egg yolks and whisk together. Set aside.
  4. Combine sugar, cornstarch and salt in a medium-size saucepan. Whisk egg mixture into pan and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the custard thickens and boils, about 15 minutes. Boil 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in remaining untoasted coconut flakes, butter, vanilla and 1 teaspoon coconut extract.
  5. Pour filling into pie crust and refrigerate until cool.
  6. Whip cream in a stand mixer on high speed. Once it begins to thicken, add powdered sugar and remaining coconut extract. Mound whipped cream on top of cooled pie. Sprinkle with reserved toasted coconut. Refrigerate until ready to serve.
- Serves 8.

**COOK'S TIP** A graham cracker pie crust works well, too.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

heat, whisk together 1 cup sugar, flour, cornstarch, salt, water and lemon juice, and cook until dissolved.

4. Beat egg yolks in a small bowl, then slowly whisk in ¼ cup of the warm sugar mixture. Once combined, slowly whisk egg mixture into the saucepan.
5. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook about 5 minutes, whisking constantly, until mixture is thick and coats the back of a spoon. Pour filling into prepared crust.
6. In the bowl of a stand mixer, beat egg whites until frothy. Turn mixer to high and pour in remaining ⅓ cup of sugar. Beat until stiff peaks form.
7. Spoon meringue onto pie filling, spreading to the edges of the crust to prevent shrinkage. Return the pie to the oven and bake 10–15 minutes, until meringue is lightly browned. Let cool completely before serving. ► Serves 8.

**COOK'S TIP** Meringue pie is best served as soon as it has cooled but can be stored in the refrigerator. Meringue may release moisture (weep) after being exposed to humidity.

Follow along with **Megan Myers** and her adventures in the kitchen at [stetted.com](http://stetted.com).

### Pecan Pie Muffins

SHARI MCWILLIAMS | UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup brown sugar
- ½ cup flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, melted
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a medium-size bowl, stir together pecans, brown sugar, flour, baking powder and salt.
2. Add melted butter, eggs and vanilla to bowl and stir to mix well.
3. Spoon batter into a foil-lined muffin pan. (Batter will stick to regular paper muffin cups.) Fill each cup about ¾ full. Bake 20–25 minutes. ► Makes 12 muffins.

**COOK'S TIP** These will not rise much and the finished product will be flat on top.

### \$100 Recipe Contest

July's recipe contest topic is **Hot Off the Grill**. Tell us your favorite way to fire up a dinner of shrimp, steak, ribs, chicken thighs or fish. The deadline is **February 10**. Readers whose recipes are featured will receive a special *Texas Co-op Power* apron.

ENTER ONLINE at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](http://TexasCoopPower.com/contests); MAIL to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; FAX to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.



## Valentine Stack

MARION EVONIUK | PEDERNALES EC

### FILLING

- 8 ounces mascarpone cheese, softened
- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons heavy whipping cream, divided use
- 2 ounces white chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- ½ cups raspberries, plus 5 for garnish

### PANCAKES

- 2 cups flour
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 1½ cups milk
- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, divided use
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

**1. FILLING:** Add the mascarpone, cream cheese and vanilla into a medium-size glass mixing bowl. Beat with a hand mixer on medium speed until soft and creamy, about 1–2 minutes.

**2.** Into a small, microwave-safe bowl, add the 2 tablespoons whipping cream and microwave on high 25 seconds. Add the white chocolate and stir until creamy. If necessary, microwave an additional 15–20 seconds to melt chocolate. Immediately add to the cream cheese mixture and beat on medium speed until incorporated, 15–20 seconds.

**3.** Add the powdered sugar and remaining cup of whipping cream and continue beating an additional 1–2 minutes until mixture is thick and creamy. Do not beat on high or overmix—the mascarpone can separate. Gently fold in 1½ cups raspberries and set aside.

**4. PANCAKES:** In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Set aside.

**5.** In a medium-size glass mixing bowl, whisk the eggs slightly, then add the

milk, ¼ cup vegetable oil and vanilla, and whisk to combine. Pour over dry ingredients and, using a large spoon, stir briefly to just incorporate. There will be lumps of dry ingredients. Set aside 10 minutes.

**6.** If using a griddle to prepare pancakes, preheat it to 350 degrees. Gently stir pancake batter just until combined. Pour 1 tablespoon oil onto griddle or into nonstick pan over medium-high heat and spread it evenly, then pour ½-cup portions of the batter onto the griddle or pan and cook until golden brown, about 2 minutes on each side. Remove pancakes onto a large platter and cover with foil to keep warm.

**7.** To serve, place one pancake onto a serving platter and spread it with ⅓–½ cup of the filling. Place another pancake on top and continue layering the filling and pancakes until you've used up the pancakes. Top with remaining filling and garnish with remaining raspberries. Serve immediately. ▶ Serves 4–6.

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WE KNOW THE POWER of a good country song, and rocker Huey Lewis knows the power of love—but we wondered how power moves Texans. Here are some of the ways. **GRACE FULTZ**

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

◀ **DANNY PICKENS**, Cherokee County EC: “A Ferris wheel at the East Texas Fair is powered up for fun.”

▼ **LAUREN MCCLAIN**, PenTex Energy: “Abigail McClain, 6, shows Mom how a pushup is done.”



▼ **JIM BROWDER**, HILCO EC: “A woodpecker inspects a HILCO power line.”



◀ **JACQUELINE ACUFF**, Nueces EC: “Lightning shows the power of nature right in my backyard.”

▼ **MARK HUSFELD**, Navasota Valley EC: Near a substation in Navasota after a thunderstorm.



## UPCOMING CONTESTS

JUNE STATE PARKS	DUE FEBRUARY 10
JULY EXPLORATION	DUE MARCH 10
AUGUST ON THE WATER	DUE APRIL 10

Enter online at [TexasCoopPower.com/Contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/Contests).

## Pick of the Month Michael Carbonaro Magic Show

**Victoria February 15**  
(361) 788-9271, visdfoundation.org

Michael Carbonaro is known for his hidden-camera magic. His illusions, along with his absurd, matter-of-fact explanations, leave audiences bewildered. Proceeds from this show support the Victoria Independent School District.



## February

7

**Alpine [7-9, 14-16] Nat Turner in Jerusalem,** (432) 837-8218, sulross.edu/theatre

**Fredericksburg [7-23] Wine Lovers Celebration,** (872) 216-9463, texaswinetrail.com

8

**Avoca Swedish Smorgasbord,** (325) 668-2796

**Lufkin The Choir of Man,** (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

9

**Bandera St. Stanislaus Church Faith Heritage Dinner,** (830) 460-4712, ststanislausbandera.com

14

**Luckenbach [14-15] Hug-In and Valentine Ball,** (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

**Port Lavaca [14-15] South Texas Square & Round Dance Association February Frenzy,** (361) 575-2665, stsrda.org

February 21-23  
New Braunfels  
Troutfest Texas



15

**Fredericksburg Cave Creek School Open House,** (830) 990-1017, historicsschools.org

**Richardson Mu Delta Alpha Changemaker Award Dinner,** (469) 712-7716, mudeltaalpha.org/events

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**WASHINGTON ON THE BRAZOS**  
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# 16

**Harlingen** Ms. South Texas Senior America Pageant, (956) 357-1636

# 20

**Edinburg** [20-23] Fiesta Edinburg, (956) 383-4974, edinburg.com/events

**Nocona** [20-23] Mardi Gras Nocona Style, (940) 825-3526, nocona.org

# 21

**Alpine** [21-22] Lone Star Cowboy Poetry Gathering, (432) 216-2167, lonestarcowboypoetry.com

**Brenham** [21-22] Nature's Blessings Quilt Show, (979) 525-1128, friendshipquiltguild.weebly.com

**New Braunfels** [21-23] Troutfest Texas 2020, (830) 964-3455, grtu.org/troutfest

# 22

**Crockett** *One Night in Memphis*, (936) 544-4276, pwfaa.org

**Boerne** [22-23] Spring Antiques Show, (830) 329-2870, visitboerne.org

# 27

**Boerne** [27-29] Just Between Friends Sale,

(830) 282-6133, nwsanantonio.jbfsale.com

**Brownsville** [27-29] Sombrero Festival, (956) 550-9682, sombrerofestival.com

# 28

**Luckenbach** Barbara Leatherwood Fight for the Cure Concert for Ovarian Cancer, (254) 833-2444, luckenbachtexas.com



February 27-29  
Brownsville  
Sombrero Festival

**New Braunfels Lone Bellow: Half Moon Light Tour**, (830) 606-1281, gruenehall.com

# 29

**Streetman** Southern Oaks VFD Chili Supper/Cake Auction, (903) 599-6022

**Wichita Falls** Red River Valley Square & Round Dance Association Teen Scholarship Dance, (940) 733-2782, rrvsda.org

# March

# 6

**Marble Falls** [6-7] Austin Square and Round Dance Association Square Thru the Wildflowers, (830) 613-9054, asrda.org

# 7

**Crockett** Jeanne Robertson, (936) 544-4276, pwfaa.org

## Submit Your Event!

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

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The 1968 television show *Elvis* – often called the '68 *Comeback Special* – marked Elvis' return to live performances for his fans and a reminder to the world that he was still the King of Rock 'n' Roll. Informal "jam" sessions mingled with spectacular sets to create a show that thrilled the audience – both live and on television. The result was a smash hit – the highest-rated show of the year.

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# The Height of Deceit

Oil boom scam created world's littlest skyscraper in Wichita Falls

WHETHER IT'S HATS, TRUCKS OR HAIR, WE Texans expect things to be big. So when I saw a building in Wichita Falls advertised as the world's littlest skyscraper, it piqued my interest in a Texas-sized way.

I was amazed at the revitalization in downtown Wichita Falls, which includes a craft brewery, a farmers market and a fancy chocolatier. At the northern edge of downtown, I found my destination: the Newby-McMahon Building.

From the street, the building looked like a well-kept, historic single-story structure. A glance down the alley identified the addition of a thin, four-story tower—like an elevator shaft built for floors never completed. The tower looks strange, but the story of its origin is even stranger.

To unravel the mystery, I walked into the building that now houses Hello Again, a consignment shop whose owner encourages visitors to climb the world's littlest skyscraper. I found the thin staircase with a sign directing me upward. Even though I felt like I had stepped into a large closet, I was actually inside the skyscraper. It measures only 9 feet by 12 feet. I climbed three flights of stairs and arrived at the top floor museum that recounts an epic tale of swindling, greed and manipulation.

The story began in 1918, when the oil boom hit nearby Burkburnett. The town was rocked by overnight success, but most of the deals took shape in Wichita Falls, which was desperate for office space. J.D. McMahon proposed a solution that included what he described as the business



**Chet makes sure you can't miss the world's littlest skyscraper.**

opportunity of a lifetime. McMahon pitched the city's residents on a skyscraper that would be 480 feet high—the tallest in Texas and rivaling the tallest in the world. Investors were eager, and McMahon raised \$200,000 (well over \$3 million in today's money).

Construction started and questions soon followed. The building was not as "Texas-sized" as promised. Instead of the monumental structure the investors expected, they received a skinny tower with no elevator or stairs. The investors were enraged and sued McMahon for fraud.

When the judge reviewed the approved blueprints, he found that everything was in order and that the building was being built exactly according to plan. The final plan was laid out and approved—in inches instead of feet. So, instead of getting the 480-foot skyscraper investors had dreamed of, builders erected a 480-inch embarrassment. McMahon had executed the con of the century by simply adding an apostrophe. Turns out that when people see dollar

signs, they tend to overlook punctuation.

The angry investors wanted to tear the building down immediately, but before the demolition took place, a nationally syndicated newspaper column called Ripley's Believe It or Not dubbed the ill-conceived project the world's littlest skyscraper. That publicity quickly transformed the eyesore into an international tourist attraction.

I stood at the top of the diminutive structure that now sits in the shadow of taller buildings and wondered how this skyscraper, if it had been built to expectations, might have changed the trajectory of Wichita Falls. Would it now sit abandoned? Or would Wichita Falls have become a city more like Dallas?

The world will never know. But what is certain is how much fun it is to climb the world's littlest skyscraper and take in one of the littlest views in Texas.

Chet Garner shares his Texplorations as the host of *The Daytripper* on PBS.

**WEB EXTRAS** ▶ Read this story on our website to see Chet's video of his visit to the world's littlest skyscraper.

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### TITANIUM SUPER COUPON

#### 4 PIECE ANTI-FATIGUE FOAM MAT SET

- Each pad measures 25" x 25"

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 MODEL: K2513-1

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### PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON

#### 40 PIECE, 1/4" AND 3/8" DRIVE SAE AND METRIC SOCKET SET

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COMPARE TO CRAFTSMAN **\$499.8**  
 MODEL: CMHT12918

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ITEM 69269  
 97080 shown  
 ITEM 61615/60637  
 95275 shown

60277251

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### OSHA/ANSI COMPLIANT SUPER COUPON

#### 17 FT. TYPE IA MULTI-TASK LADDER

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO NORSK **\$199.99**  
 MODEL: 001119346

**\$69.99** NOW **\$89.99**

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ITEM 40187/61607/62389  
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#### 18" x 12" MOVER'S DOLLY

- 1000 lb. capacity

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Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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 MODEL: 1125220

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### PREDATOR SUPER COUPON

#### 6.5 HP (212 CC) OHV HORIZONTAL SHAFT GAS ENGINE

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO HONDA **\$329.99**  
 MODEL: GX200UT20X2

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ITEM 60363/69730 shown  
 ITEM 68121/69727 CALIFORNIA ONLY

60283718

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### 10" PNEUMATIC TIRE SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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COMPARE TO FARM & RANCH **\$8.09**  
 MODEL: FR1055

ITEM 69385/62388/62409/62698/30900 shown

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### HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

#### 3/8" x 14 FT., GRADE 43 TOWING CHAIN

- 5400 lb. capacity

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

COMPARE TO MIBRO **\$64.99**  
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**\$19.99** NOW **\$39.99**

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60286092

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### CENTECH SUPER COUPON

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 MODEL: 55001

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