

A MERKEL CARTOONIST'S
UNCOMMON CALENDAR

TOM LANDRY'S
FINEST SEASON

THE STARS BELOW
IN WEST TEXAS

Texas Coop Power

FOR HEART OF TEXAS EC MEMBERS

AUGUST 2022



Rodeo's Razzle- Dazzle

Texas Spirit Riders thrill
with precision and speed



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August 2022



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Drilled To Thrill

The Texas Spirit Riders' razzle-dazzle aims to rise above other rodeo performance squads.

*By Gene Fowler
Photos by Dave Shafer*

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Cartoonist Roger Moore marks his uncommon calendar with amusing tidbits.

Story and photos by Pam LeBlanc

ON THE COVER

Captain Erica Bednarz leads the Texas Spirit Riders around the arena.

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The Spirit Riders, who range in age from 8 to 60, with coach Rachael Kiowski.

Photos by Dave Shafer

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By Suzanne Featherston



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

THE SONG THAT TAKES ME BACK TO HIGH SCHOOL IS ...

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 June prompt: **My singing is so bad ...**

No one would ever believe that my name is Melodie.

MELODIE GREIDER
PEDERNALES EC
DRIPPING SPRINGS

My fifth grade teacher asked me to just move my lips when my class sang to the PTA.

GARY GALLOWAY
TRI-COUNTY EC
WEATHERFORD

In church my granddaughter said, "No sing, Granny."

ANN MOSELEY
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC
SHINER

My own mother, a music teacher, said, "Some people just shouldn't sing and, son, you are one of them."

PERRY JEFFERIES
HAMILTON COUNTY EC
GATESVILLE

I can't carry a tune in a bucket.

TERRY HOLDERNESS MCADAMS
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GRANBURY

To see more responses, read Currents online.

Tickle Kids Pink

FAMILIES AND TEACHERS are encouraged to ask managers of kid-friendly restaurants to save their discarded crayons during August, which is National Crayon Collection Month.

More than 150 million restaurant crayons end up in landfills each year, enough to span the contiguous United States three times if placed end to end.

Resource-strapped schools can use those crayons in classrooms.

TCP Contests and More

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120°

The hottest temperature ever recorded in Texas—120 degrees—first occurred in Seymour on August 12, 1936. It was matched in Monahans on June 28, 1994.

Keep Your Cool

Summer's hot days are wearing on many of us and keeping air conditioners humming. Before you set the AC even cooler, your electric cooperative reminds you to use fans—but only while you're in the room—to help you stay cool and save on energy costs.

“Thankfully, perseverance is a great substitute for talent.”

— STEVE MARTIN

Shortcut Shortfalls

THE SHORTEST WAY might not always be the best way.

So say Texas A&M University researchers who studied online navigation tools using Texas destinations. Mapping apps can help you drive the shortest and quickest routes, but research shows they might bypass some safety considerations.

Shortcuts over local roads can come with a higher risk of crashes because of poor design, drainage problems, inadequate lighting and a higher risk of collisions with wildlife.



Back to School

KidsHealth offers these tips for a fantastic school year:

Get enough sleep.

Eat a healthy breakfast.

Try your best.

Use good work habits, like writing down your assignments and turning in your homework on time.

Take your time with schoolwork. If you don't understand something, ask the teacher.

Keep a sense of humor.



JOHN JAY CABUAY

Speaking to Children

“Kudos to illustrator John Jay Cabuay for the lovely, colorful and expressive portrait of María Alma González Pérez. It took my breath away.”

MARTI M. BURNS
BLUEBONNET EC
BASTROP

Find Dining

I am one of the foraging experts [pictured below] interviewed for *The Grazing Craze* [June 2022], and I want to correct a couple points in it for your readers.

I was quoted as referencing “wood clover,” but it should have said “wood sorrel.”

Also, the article states it is illegal to forage on public land, which is not entirely accurate. Foraging in national parks and many state parks is generally not allowed, but those constitute a very small percentage of public land. There are vast areas of public land that are accessible to foraging legally.

Check out my Wild Foraging North Texas page on Facebook.

Courtney Taylor
Grayson-Collin EC
Weston

COURTESY COURTNEY TAYLOR



My mother, Evelyn Roffe, helped initiate the bilingual program in McAllen in 1937–38 [*Speaking to Children*, June 2022]. She had a one-room schoolhouse. She taught all ages of Mexican farmworkers' children.

PENNY HAULMAN
VIA FACEBOOK

Eating Wild

I am a regular “customer” of local dewberry patches and neighborhood mulberry trees, so I can relate. I also wanted to point readers to the Useful Wild Plants of Texas Project, which has a wealth of information. Check it out at usefulwildplants.org.

David Todd
Fayette and San Bernard ECs
Austin

Stirring Review

I saw your recipe for Beef and Green Bean Stir-Fry [June 2022], and that’s what was for dinner. As soon as I added the sauce mix—holy cow—I thought I was in a Chinese restaurant. It was simple and delicious, paired perfectly with white rice.

Paul Garcia
Medina EC
Castroville

Our 1.2-acre lot has chile pequins growing wild and quite a few black persimmons (nothing like regular persimmons).

I have devised a recipe for black persimmon jelly. It tastes like blackberry jelly.

Lamar Hankins
Pedernales EC
San Marcos

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor
Austin, TX 78701

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

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★ DRILLED
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TEXAS SPIRIT RIDERS' razzle-dazzle aims to rise above other rodeo performance squads



BY GENE FOWLER • PHOTOS BY DAVE SHAFER

LOOK GOOD. RIDE FAST. DAZZLE THE CROWD.

The moment the Texas Spirit Riders enter the arena, their motto becomes a force of nature.

“We! Are! TSR!” the riders chant as their horses trot into formation before breaking off and zooming past bleachers. The riders whoop and holler with joyful abandon.

The rodeo drill team based in Winnsboro, about an hour north of Tyler in East Texas, performs choreographed maneuvers on horseback for audiences all over Texas. The all-woman team appears most often at cowboy and cowgirl sporting events, and they’re part of a decadeslong tradition of rodeo drill teams in Texas that has included Terrell’s Cowgirl Congress, Magnolia’s Lone Star Cowgirls, Refugio County’s Independence Belles, Jack Sellers’ Bexar County Palomino Patrol and many more. But none, one might wager, embody their appellation more than the Texas Spirit Riders.

Every time these ladies swing into the saddle, they draw on the memory of a fallen teammate.

“We started out with huge dreams and lots of ambition,” explains Erica Bednarz of Bullard, who was named captain of the Spirit Riders in August 2020—about 24 years after the team was founded, in 1996. She picked her friend Lynsey Berger of Wills Point as co-captain. “We wanted to make a difference in the rodeo industry and really grow the sport of equestrian drill teams.”

After the team’s first organizational meeting with its new

leaders, however, Berger, 29, was killed in a head-on collision. Bednarz was on the phone with her friend October 2, 2020, when another car drifted into her lane. “There was a loud noise,” she recalls, “and then everything went silent.”

The Spirit Riders’ first performance under Bednarz’s captaincy was for Berger’s funeral. “The team was shaken,” she says. “Our world was forever changed, and I wasn’t sure if I could find the strength to keep the riders going.

“In the midst of tragedy, we found strength in each other. We vowed to honor Lynsey by following her dream of making it all the way to the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas.”

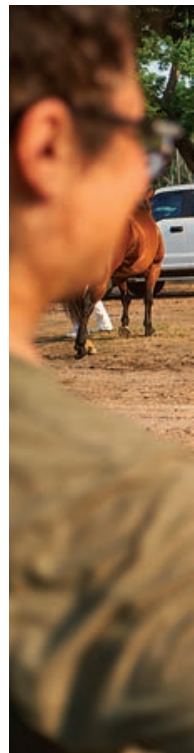
The “rodeo road,” as the drill team calls it, is a long, hard one. Heck, it’s a long, hard road to just make the rodeo in Mesquite or Wichita Falls. The Spirit Riders rely on their reputation to land bookings. The NFR would be the ultimate gig.

“What we do is not easy,” Bednarz explains. “We travel hundreds of miles—some riders haul their horses that far just for a practice—and spend countless hours away from our families. The drills require exquisite horsemanship and trust in 11 other horses and 11 other riders, who at any moment could make a wrong move and seriously injure you or your horse.”

As the Spirit Riders burst into the arena for an official rodeo performance, lights flashing off their shiny, Texas-themed outfits, the horse-savvy crowds recognize equine athletes who, in many cases, have been livin’ large in the saddle since they were toddlers. Former captain Rachael Kiowski of Lone Oak, who passed the TSR torch to Bednarz and now serves as a coach for the team, first perched on horseback at the tender age of 2. Senior rider Ellen Larue, 60, of Cooper waited till the advanced age of 7 to mount up, acquiring her first horse, a Welsh pony named Lightning, at 10.

Larue currently rides a 16-year-old sorrel mare named Reba. “She’s a little spoiled and doesn’t like to get her feet dirty,” Larue says. Reba will retire from drills after this year but will serve as a flag horse in military rides. Most drill horses, Larue says, are 3–10 years old, though the younger the better. The drills are such a workout that older horses can develop arthritis. “And it’s generally quarter horses, thoroughbreds and mustangs. Gaited and saddle horses, not so much.”

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Riders feed off energy from the crowd at Winnsboro Rodeo Arena in May. Jennifer Keahey makes sure Maddy Farem’s knot is just right. Katrina Czarnecki sprinkles glitter on a horse. Shelby Woolly sports a personalized belt buckle. Erica Bednarz parades the Stars and Stripes.



As the Spirit Riders burst into the arena for an official rodeo performance, lights flashing off their shiny, Texas-themed outfits, the horse-savvy crowds recognize equine athletes who, in many cases, have been livin' large in the saddle since they were toddlers.

In a practice session in March, Larue participates in a flag drill that pays tribute to every branch of the armed forces. “We Support The Troops,” reads the flag of the next-to-last rider who solos through the arena to join the other riders carrying flags of each branch. The last rider, 19-year-old Savannah Nichols of Leesburg, stands on her horse’s saddle and holds the Stars and Stripes aloft as her mount gallops across the arena. It’s a stirring display.

Nichols says it’s an adrenaline rush to ride into the arena for a roaring crowd. Even the horses get pumped up, Larue says. “They start dancing in the alleyway, and their ears perk up,” she says. “And the louder the crowd whoops and hollers, the faster they run.”

The Texas Spirit Riders’ performance style, Larue says, is

more intense, with faster riding and two to three times as many maneuvers in a drill as other teams. “Even our music is different,” Bednarz says. “In addition to pop and country, we ride to heavy metal.”

The team incorporates cross, charro and pinwheel maneuvers into its routines. In the standard cross, riders crisscross the arena diagonally, each passing through just as another has moved on. A more complex variation is a box cross. “That’s when you have four horses to a ‘box,’ ” Kiowski explains, “and they cross other boxes in the center of the arena. It’s scary to watch, and the riders really have to be on their toes.”

The charro is a drill in which the horses all line up behind a lead rider, each horse’s head tucked at the knee of the



CATCH THE SPIRIT RIDERS NEAR YOU

In August they will perform at rodeos in Paris, San Saba, Wolfe City and Wichita Falls. In September they will dazzle at the Palomino Fest & Pro Rodeo in Uvalde and end the season with their Disney in the Dirt extravaganza at the Winnsboro Rodeo Arena.



rider in front of it. “Teams generally include several standard drills, mixed with elements of their own choreography,” Kiowski says. “We still have Lynsey’s handwritten drills, and we’ll be honoring her with those.”

The team’s leaders have also worked toward Berger’s desire to grow the Spirit Riders. A team of just six riders appearing at five rodeos a year has expanded to four teams with a total of 32 riders, with performances for at least 14 rodeos booked this year.

“Doors opened left and right,” says Bednarz, “and riders just began falling from the sky.” The 2022 Texas Spirit Riders team includes a novice team, ages 4–8; a junior team, 8–13, which trots through maneuvers; a semipro team; and a pro team that usually performs with 12 riders. Most of the pros are in their 30s. All four teams have performed in (or are scheduled to perform in) at least three appearances this rodeo season, which began in May.

“Erica’s a dreamer with big goals,” Kiowski says. “And she doesn’t stop until she reaches them. She’ll make it to the NFR.” ■

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE Bednarz, atop Blue, has led the Spirit Riders since August 2020. A young fan gets a celebrity pic with some of the riders. Casey Partanen, left, and Keahey perfect their makeup early in the morning before a parade through Winnsboro.



Bringing Texans UP TO Date

Cartoonist **ROGER MOORE** marks his uncommon calendar with amusing tidbits

The Bona Fide Original Real Texas Calendar doesn't start with January like most calendars, but why should it?

Texas didn't start in January, either.

At least that's how cartoonist Roger Moore, a third-generation Texan who has been making the calendar since 1997, sees it. In classic maverick style, Moore's calendar begins on March 2, the date in 1836 when Texas settlers famously declared their independence from Mexico. A lot has happened in Texas since then, of course, and Moore addresses much of it with humorous and history-packed notations.

Besides the calendar, Moore has written *The Handy Pocket Tex-Book: A Pocket-Sized Guide to Essential Information That Every Good Texan Must Know About Texas*, which informs readers about such necessary facts as the official state dog breed (blue lacy), the official state vehicle (not the pickup truck but the chuck wagon) and the official state snack (tortilla chips and salsa). Kids can read his *Critters of the Lone Star State*, filled with trivia about javelinas, armadillos and rattlesnakes, and *Slim's Hat*, which teaches the proper uses of a cowboy hat beyond decorating the top of a person's head. And Moore has produced a collection of his favorite cartoons, *Texas, My Texas*.

But the calendar remains his biggest seller.

Each month features a full-page cartoon celebrating an important Texan or poking irreverent fun at something that happened on Texas soil. Interesting factoids about the Lone Star State and the people who have lived here pepper every page.

Flip through a few copies and you'll learn that Emma Banister of Coleman County became the first female sheriff in the U.S. on

August 1, 1918; Popeye the Sailor was born in a comic strip by Elzie Crisler Segar in the *Victoria Advocate* on January 17, 1929; and Texan Van Cliburn won his first international piano competition in Moscow on April 14, 1958.

Moore, 77, lives on a small farm near Merkel, west of Abilene, with his wife, Martha. On a cool spring morning, he wore a cowboy hat, red bandana, blue jeans and boots as he sat at a lighted drawing table in his home office and used an archival fine-tip black pen to sketch out a quick cowboy. A pair of tiny boots doubled as a lamp base behind him; a wooden roll-top desk stood in one corner; and a framed Texas flag hung on the wall.

"I can't remember when I wasn't drawing," he says with a wisecrack. "I tell people I drew before I walked when I was 13."

Moore was born in Beaumont and later moved to Merkel. His mother, who liked to make delicate pencil sketches, encouraged him to draw.



OPPOSITE Roger Moore sketches a cowboy at his home near Merkel. RIGHT Moore hopes his cartoons "make you giggle a little bit."

“Everything happens in my pickup. It’s a think tank.”

Moore



“She told me it was all right to be an artist, even when I took some heat for it at school,” Moore says. “I got some paddlings for drawing in class.”

Moore was a standout athlete in high school. After college, he briefly coached at a high school in Hamlin, about 30 miles north of Merkel. He went on to work as a foreman for Texas Instruments, then began selling textbooks. He launched his own advertising agency, called Moore & More, after moving to Austin in 1971. About that time, he began selling editorial cartoons to newspapers.

“I went to a couple of newspapers and said, ‘Y’all need a cartoonist,’” Moore says. At first, he drew political cartoons but eventually switched to less controversial topics. “I gave up on politics. I really wasn’t all that into it, but they liked my style and my price, which was damn near nothing.”

His cartoons—now focused on topics near to Texans’ hearts, like Stetson hats, barbed wire, pink grapefruit and cowboys (football and otherwise)—still appear in about 25 small newspapers around the state. A binder filled with hundreds of sketches rests on his desk.

“I’m not very good, but I’m real fast,” says Moore, a Taylor Electric Cooperative member. In his heyday, he could whip up a cartoon in a couple of hours. “The hard part is the idea, and it needs to be mildly amusing. It’s stupid to have a cartoon that doesn’t make you giggle a little bit.”

But cartoons, he says, are much more than drawings.

“Cartooning is not artwork; it’s enhancing the words,” Moore says. “First, you’ve got to come up with the idea. I think of an event and try to come up with a play on words. That usually leads to an idea. Some come easy, some don’t.”

Moore says he gets his best inspiration while driving Texas back roads and highways.

“Everything happens in my pickup. It’s a think tank,” he says, adding that he was driving between Austin and Abilene when the idea for a calendar first popped into his head. He and an assistant researched the state’s history and picked out people and events to highlight.

Lou David Allen, a retired NASA engineer and former mayor of Merkel, met Moore when they were high school students, but they became friends after the cartoonist moved back to Merkel in 2008.

“I say every person is a poem waiting to be written. Roger thinks every circumstance is a cartoon waiting to be expressed in his iconic way,” Allen says. “He understands people. He reads them pretty quickly—and sometimes will announce their faults.”

Moore was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease two years ago, so cartooning takes longer now. Lines start out squiggly, getting smoother as his muscles warm up. He’s trying to shift to a slightly different style of drawing, without as many curves, dots, and dashes—anything that requires fine precision.

“It takes about 10 times as long,” he says. “It’s frustrating, to say the least.”

But Moore plugs on, digging deep into the can-do spirit that makes Texans Texan.

“It’s the only thing I can do that provides a release,” Moore says. “I’ve got creative ideas about a lot of things, but I can only cartoon. And I know I can do that, even with Parkinson’s.” ■

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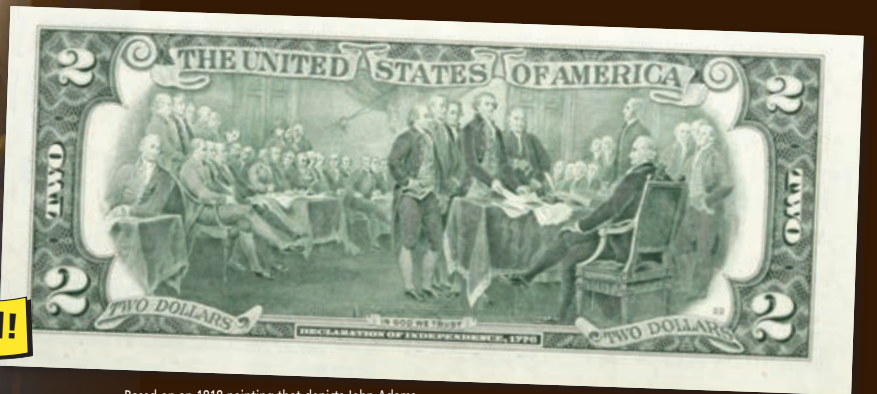
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MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER BRANDON YOUNG

Stay Back and Stay Safe

WORKING WITH ELECTRICITY can be a hazardous job, especially for lineworkers. In fact, *USA Today* lists power line repairers and installers among the most dangerous jobs in the U.S. That's why, for Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative, safety is the No. 1 priority.

This is not empty talk. Over time, we have created a culture of putting our crews' safety and that of the community above all else.

Our mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, our members, but it's equally important that our employees return home safely to their loved ones each night. This requires continuous focus, dedication and vigilance—and your help!

Distractions Can Be Deadly

While we appreciate your kindness and interest in the work of our crews, we ask that you remain outside of their work zone and let them focus on the task at hand when they're out in the community. Even routine work has the potential to be dangerous, and it takes crew members' full attention to ensure their safety and that of their colleagues. Distractions can have deadly consequences for them.

If a lineworker is on or near your property during a power outage, for vegetation management or for routine maintenance, please allow them ample room to work. These small accommodations help protect our crews—and you.

If you have a dog, try to keep it indoors while lineworkers are working near your property. While most dogs are friendly, some are defensive of their territory and can't distinguish between a burglar and a utility worker. Our crews work best without a pet "supervising" the job.

We recognize that for your family's safety, you want to make sure only authorized workers are on or near your property. You'll recognize Heart of Texas EC employees by their uniform and the service trucks with our name and logo on them. You may also recognize our lineworkers because they live right here in our local community.

Move Over or Slow Down

In addition to giving lineworkers space, we also ask that you move over or slow down when approaching any utility vehicle on the side of the road. That extra buffer of safety helps those who help all of us. ■



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Electric Meter Tampering Can Kill

TAMPERING WITH YOUR electric meter can cost you your life.

No, the crime won't land you on death row when the electric cooperative—whose technicians are trained to spot electricity theft—reports you to the police. In that case, you'll be charged with theft, possibly sent to jail and likely incur fines of about triple the money you thought you could save by rigging your meter.

But an attempt to bypass or alter an electric meter can result in shock, fire, explosion and even electrocution. And if you're lucky enough not to get hurt, you'll still leave the tampered meter in a state that's dangerous to others, including the electric cooperative employee who has to fix or replace it.

Plus, you're driving up electric costs for your neighbors, just as shoplifters force stores to increase the price of their products to cover losses from theft.

The cooperative doesn't have to catch you red-handed to turn you over to the authorities. In fact, the law assumes that a person who benefits from the use of stolen electricity has tampered with the meter.

If you suspect a meter on our lines has been tampered with, please let us know. You could save a life. ■

HOTEC Awards \$12,250 in Grants to Community Nonprofits

THE OPERATION ROUND UP board of trustees approved grants to several non-profit organizations in the second quarter of 2022.

Community groups receiving funds are Basque Genealogical Society, \$250; Davilla Community Center, \$2,500; Lott Volunteer Fire Department, \$2,500; McGregor High School band, \$500; Moody Community Library, \$1,500; Salvation Army, \$2,500; and Turnersville Volunteer Fire Department, \$2,500.

These donations were possible because of the generosity of Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative members who volunteer to have their monthly bills rounded up. The extra nickels, dimes and quarters are hardly missed by each member, but pooled together, they benefit organizations in our service area in a big way.

Operation Round Up uses local dollars to meet local needs. The average cost per participating member per year is about \$6. These funds are then awarded to community organizations in Bell, Bosque, Coryell, Falls, Hamilton, Milam and McLennan counties.

The intent of the Operation Round Up program is to aid the community and emergency service providers in their efforts to improve the quality of life for our less fortunate neighbors and support each community's health, safety and well-being.

Applications for the next quarterly round of Operation Round Up grants are due August 26.

Nonprofit organizations interested in applying for funds can visit our website, hotec.coop, or call 1-800-840-2957 to request an application. ■



Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative

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CONTACT US

P.O. Box 357
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Toll-Free 1-800-840-2957
Web hotec.coop

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ABOUT HEART OF TEXAS EC

HOTEC owns and maintains more than 3,800 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 16,500 members in Bell, Bosque, Coryell, Falls, Hamilton, McLennan and Milam counties.

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ATTENTION TEACHERS: APPLY FOR A MINIGRANT

Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative will award \$500 minigrants to teachers. Applications will be accepted October 1–November 30. Visit hotec.coop for more information.

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What's Under the Dirt? Call Before You Dig

AUGUST 11 IS NATIONAL Safe Digging Day, also known as 811 Day. The observance reminds anyone considering an outdoor project to get underground utilities marked before digging. Doing so is free and easy; simply call 811 at least two full business days prior to starting a digging project.

If you don't take the time to call before you dig, you could become one of the people in this statistic: Someone digs in an unmarked yard and strikes an underground line every nine minutes in the U.S., on average, according to safeelectricity.org. Striking an unmarked power line can lead to fines, serious injury, a power outage and even death.

People are tempted to skip calling in advance because they think striking a buried line won't happen to them. They assume they won't dig too deep or that they'll be lucky. But underground lines are unyielding. Their path is unpredictable, and hitting one can happen with one strike of a shovel or other tool.

Examples of projects that require locating utilities include putting up a fence, installing a mailbox post, building a deck or patio, and planting trees and shrubs; however, this is not an all-inclusive list. Any project that breaks ground requires that underground utilities be marked.

After submitting a request, underground lines will be marked by their respective utilities; however, locators do not mark private lines such as service to outbuildings, underground sprinkler systems or a gas line to a grill. Private lines are the responsibility of the property owner.

If you're only digging in a small area of your yard, you can outline the area in white spray paint or with white flags to ensure that only that part of your yard will be located and marked.

There are five steps to safer digging:

- 1.** Mark the proposed dig area with white paint or flags.
- 2.** Call 811 or visit texas811.org to submit your locate request before you dig. There is no charge for the service.
- 3.** Wait the required amount of time (typically about two business days).
- 4.** Respect the markers and do not move any flags.
- 5.** Dig with care. Avoid digging on top or within 18–24 inches on all sides of utility marks, which may mean moving your project to another part of your yard. ■

Check on Your Neighbors

NOT EVERYONE CAN afford central air conditioning for their homes, and not everyone can tolerate the summer heat well enough to leave their air-conditioned homes for necessities like groceries.

Extreme heat kills more Americans each year than hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes and floods combined, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. So keep an eye out this summer for neighbors who might be living without air conditioning or who are elderly or have medical conditions.

Medical experts say the following symptoms could mean your neighbor is suffering from heat-related illness: confusion, fatigue or weakness, and mail piling up outdoors when they're at home.

Anyone can suffer from heatstroke if they get too hot or from dehydration if they don't drink enough water, but elderly and sick neighbors are at higher risk.

If you can:

- ▶ Call or visit an at-risk neighbor twice a day.
- ▶ Invite the neighbor to stay with you in your air-conditioned home on the hottest days and even overnight if you have room.
- ▶ Remind your neighbor to drink plenty of water. Bring pitchers of cold water, lemonade and caffeine-free iced tea as gifts.
- ▶ Offer to go grocery shopping for your neighbor or to drive them to the store so there's no need to wait outside for transportation.
- ▶ Find indoor events and community- or church-sponsored activities that neighbors could participate in as a way to stay cool during the day.
- ▶ Give and set up a portable fan that can help alleviate warm temperatures indoors.
- ▶ Find out if your at-risk neighbor has pets. If so, tend to the animals as well by filling water bowls frequently and making sure plenty of pet food is on hand.

Research shows that just about 17% of us check on neighbors during the summer. Make your family one that increases that statistic. ■



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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting

October 18, 7:30 p.m.
Frank W. Mayborn Civic & Convention Center, Temple

Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative's annual meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 18, at the Frank W. Mayborn Civic & Convention Center in Temple.

The annual meeting provides an excellent way for you, as a member, to learn about programs offered by Heart of Texas EC. It also gives our staff a chance to gather feedback from you by providing a forum where you can let us know how we can better serve you and your family.

Brandon Young, general manager, will be the speaker this year. Informational booths will be set up, and special activities for our young members will be available prior to the meeting.

Members also will be eligible to win one of the many door prizes to be awarded during the evening.

Heart of Texas EC remains dedicated to providing our members with safe, reliable and affordable electric service. Members are encouraged to take part in helping us improve how we deliver that service by joining us October 18 at our annual meeting.

We hope to see you there!



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DID YOU KNOW?

Fans cool people, not rooms. In the summer, turn fans off when leaving a room to save electricity.

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Stay Cool During August Heat

UNLESS YOU KEEP your thermostat so low that you send your cooling bill through the roof in August, it's a good idea to find some energy-friendly ways to keep your cool during the hottest month of the year.

Here are five tips:

Take cool showers. If your house isn't cold—and there's no reason it should be, even with the air conditioner on—ease up on the hot showers. A cool shower will lower your body temperature and get you just as clean.

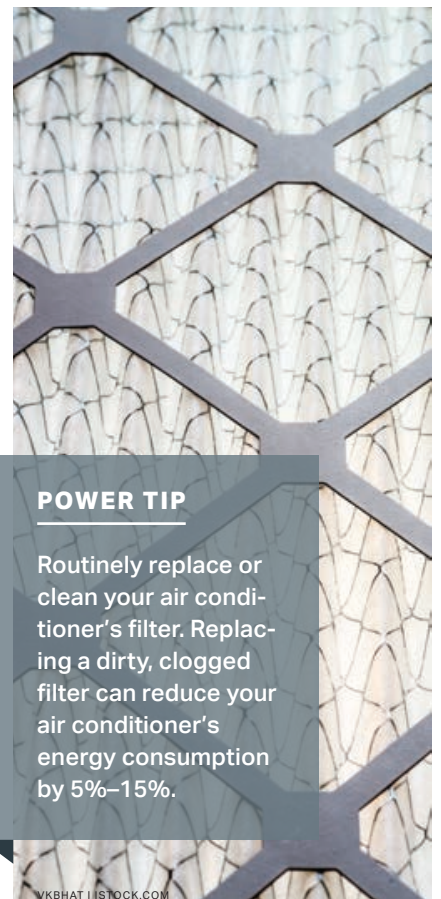
Chill the meal plan. Instead of baking, broiling, boiling, sautéing or frying every night, opt for chopping fresh veggies, making colorful salads and satisfying your family's hunger with healthy raw foods that will fill them up and give your stove and oven a break. Cold desserts? That's the easy part. You can't go wrong with sorbet or ice cream straight from the freezer.

Filter the sun. Install solar screens or window films on east- and west-facing windows so you can keep the heat out while still allowing light in.

Seal leaks and cracks. You'll find them all over your home—around windows, doors, and electrical and cable outlets. It's easy to caulk and weatherstrip, and it's an activity you can do with your kids as you teach them to use energy responsibly.

Schedule a checkup. Even if you skipped your air conditioner's spring maintenance, go ahead and schedule it now. Your HVAC tech can tell you if your air conditioning unit is running efficiently—and can tweak it so it does. It's important to raise the thermostat a bit during the summer—but also to make sure the cool air that does come into the home gets there efficiently.

Bonus tip: Set your thermostat 1 degree warmer to save up to 5% on your air conditioning costs. ■



POWER TIP

Routinely replace or clean your air conditioner's filter. Replacing a dirty, clogged filter can reduce your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5%–15%.

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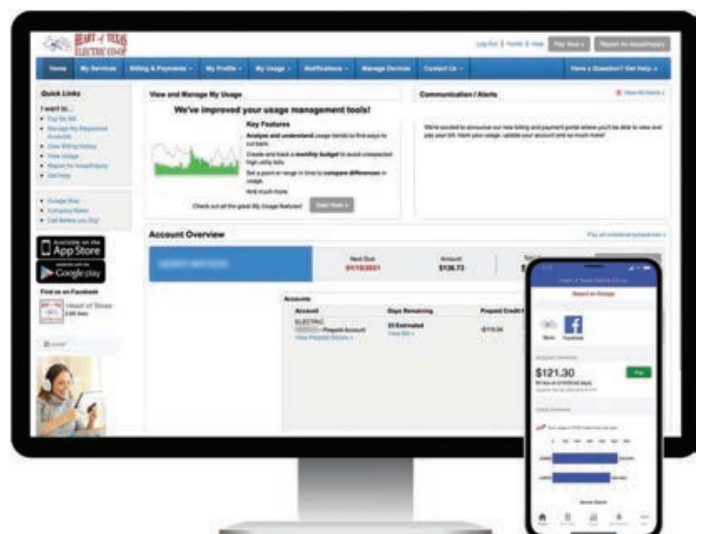
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The Old Ballgame

More than 150 years since Texas' first game, sandlot baseball is still finding new fields

STORY AND PHOTO BY RANDY MALLORY

AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, Maj. Gen. Abner Doubleday landed in Galveston in 1866 to command Union forces in that important Texas city. Surely he didn't imagine his mission would lead him to being wrongly credited with inventing the game of baseball.

Two decades earlier, a New York sports enthusiast named Alexander Joy Cartwright Jr. helped write new rules for the old English game of rounders, thus formalizing the basics of modern baseball. Double-day, like many Civil War leaders on both sides, endorsed "base ball" (originally spelled as two words) as a way for troops to exercise and build morale.

On April 11, 1861, a Houston newspaper announced the formation of Texas' first team, the Houston Base Ball Club. Players who joined the club were asked to meet at an open field in town at 5 a.m. three days a week, weather permitting, for "field exercise," *The Weekly Telegraph* wrote.

The day after this news account, Confederate troops bombarded Union forces at Fort Sumter near Charleston, South Carolina. The war was on, and the effort to start baseball teams ceased. At prisoner-of-war camps, however, Union troops taught the game to captured Confederate soldiers. After the war, they brought the game home to the South. A few games might have been played during the war, but the first baseball diamond in Texas was marked off on Galveston Island's east end, in large part thanks to Doubleday's enthusiasm for the game, according to the Galveston Historical Foundation.

That's where the newly formed Galveston Base Ball Club held its first game, in early 1867. A year later, the *Daily Telegraph* reported the first intercity game in Texas. The Galveston Robert E. Lees took on the Houston Stonewalls (both named for Confederate generals) at the San Jacinto Battleground near Houston.

More than 150 years later, that original spirit of camaraderie—tempered by a healthy dose of competition—remains alive and well for those who play a version of the sport called sandlot baseball.

Hal Rochkind, who runs an insurance agency on Galveston Island, is one such player. Wearing No. 14, Rochkind plays second base for a 10-year-old sandlot team called the Gulf Coast Sugar. Its players are baseball lovers of various ages from Galveston and Houston. Like many sandlot teams, the Sugar play

only a few games a year. Team members have families and day jobs, after all. They play home games at a city park not far down the island from that first Texas ballfield.

"We all grew up playing baseball as kids, some in Little League and some even in high school or college," Rochkind explains. "Sandlot is a way we hold on to our baseball memories while enjoying a healthy activity out of doors. We bring our families to watch the games so maybe they'll keep the tradition alive."

Texas sandlot baseball began to take off in 2006 after architect and baseball fan Jack Sanders and friends formed a team in Austin called the Texas Playboys, named after music legend Bob Wills' Western swing band. They challenged friends in Austin and other cities to form pickup teams to play the game they loved.

After several years of rising interest in sandlot, Sanders built a field just east of Austin called the Long Time. His 5-acre field of dreams hosts games played against a family-friendly backdrop of live music and beer. The games are generally played on the second Saturday of the month from March to October.

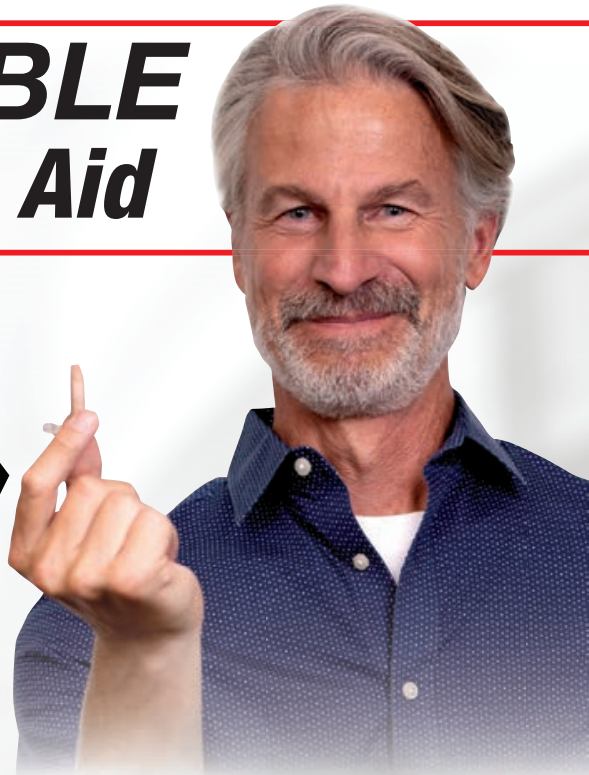
The sandlot phenomenon remains a loosely organized group of teams that play largely by standard hardball rules. The goal is to keep play flowing in a fun-loving way without runaway scoring or injuries. Home-field rules, for example, stipulate that if a player hits a home run, then that player should bat from the other side of the plate on his or her next at-bat. Pitchers may wear a cowboy hat if they so choose.

Over the past decade or so, other sandlot teams have formed across Texas and beyond to join in on the fun. In addition to the Gulf Coast Sugar, other Southeast Texas sandlot teams include the Houston Buffs, Memorial Moonshots, Houston Gamblers, Space City Baseball Club and the Texas Oil Dawgs.

The newly formed Oil Dawgs generally follow Long Time home rules, says Houston photographer Mark Champion, the team's manager and a player. "We have players 50 years or older, so if former college players show up, we ask them to tone it down," Champion says. "We don't want anyone to get hurt. Fun is the name of the game." ■



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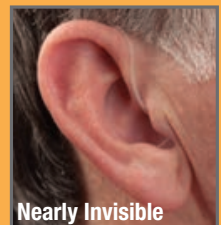
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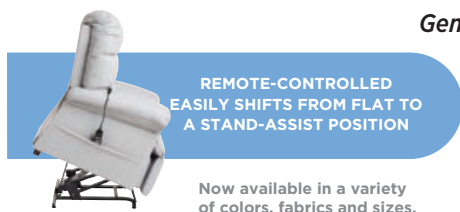
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TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



volunteered to join the Army Air Corps and flew 30 missions over Europe, crash-landing once in Belgium.

To get to his best season ever, we must go all the way back to his high school years in Mission, in the Rio Grande Valley.

It was Landry's senior year, 1941. He played quarterback and defensive back and led the Mission Eagles to a perfect 12-0 season. In those 12 games, they gave up only one score: Donna High School managed to eke out one touchdown.

The Eagles went all the way to the regional championship, which was as far as they could go (there was no state championship then). In the regional game, they demoralized Hondo 33-0.

"That autumn of glory, shared with my boyhood friends ... remains perhaps my most meaningful season in my fifty years of football," Landry wrote in his 1980 autobiography. "The game was never more fun, the victories never sweeter, the achievement never more satisfying."

Landry's nearly flawless season and his professional career were honored in 1975 when the Mission school district named its football stadium for the coach.

After Landry's coaching days were over, he developed a sterling reputation as an inspirational speaker. He was fond of saying, "As of today, you have 100% of your life left."

He took his own words to heart. After he was fired by the Cowboys in 1989, while fans were livid about the way he was sacked, Landry was already moving on.

With characteristic optimism, he saw a silver lining. "As a boy growing up in Mission, Texas, I always dreamed of being a cowboy," he said. "For 29 wonderful years, I was one." ■

The Most Glorious Autumn

Tom Landry's finest season came in Mission, years before his reign in Dallas

BY W.F. STRONG

TOM LANDRY and Charles Schulz died on the same day: February 12, 2000. Mike Thompson of the *Detroit Free Press* honored the legendary football coach and cartoonist with a drawing showing them entering the Pearly Gates together. Schulz was depicted as Charlie Brown, and Landry had his arm around him, saying, "Now a few pointers on kicking a football ..."

For coach Landry, at least, I can't imagine a finer eulogy.

Known as the man in the hat, Landry was the stoic leader on the Dallas Cowboys sidelines, always impeccably dressed, sporting his fedora. "If there were a Mount Rushmore for the NFL," former commis-

sioner Paul Tagliabue said, "the profile of Tom Landry would have to be there, wearing his trademark hat."

In his 29 years as Dallas' head coach, Landry led the Cowboys to more playoff seasons than they've had since. His team won 13 division titles and played in five Super Bowls, winning two. They enjoyed 20 consecutive winning seasons.

As glorious as those years were, none equaled Landry's finest season in football.

Sure, he played for the New York Giants and was All-Pro one year, but that wasn't his finest season either. Landry also played for the University of Texas, but after only one semester, his career there was put on hold by World War II. He

Best Burgers

Beyond the beef lie flavorful options that are sure to sizzle

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

I love exploring new burger recipes, and that includes patties made from chicken, fish or vegetarian substitutes. Bean burgers are a great meatless option that can take on various spices and flavor additions. My family loves falafel, so we often opt for making them burger-style. Note that they are a bit more finicky than meat patties. Be sure to let the mixture rest before cooking to let the breadcrumbs absorb excess liquid, and take care handling the patties because they can crumble easily.



Falafel Burgers

1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, rinsed and well drained
½ onion, quartered
½ cup packed parsley leaves
2 cloves garlic
¼ cup breadcrumbs
2 teaspoons cumin
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon paprika
½ teaspoon pepper
Pinch ground cayenne pepper
¼ cup vegetable or olive oil

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a food processor, add chickpeas and pulse until well chopped and somewhat smooth. Transfer to a bowl. Add onion, parsley and garlic to food processor and pulse until finely chopped, then transfer to the bowl with the chickpeas. Add the breadcrumbs and spices and mix until uniformly incorporated. Let mixture rest 20 minutes.

2. Pour cooking oil into a skillet and heat to medium. Divide chickpea mixture into 4 patties and gently place in hot pan. Cook 4 minutes, then carefully flip and cook another 4 minutes.

3. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet and bake 15 minutes, until cooked through. Let burgers rest 10 minutes to firm up before serving. Serve with hummus, cucumber, tomato, lettuce, pickled onions or other favorite toppings.

SERVES 4

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Hatch Chile Turkey Burgers.



Homemade Popper-Topped Burgers

MARIA PENNER
LAMAR ELECTRIC

If you love jalapeño poppers, this burger is for you. Jalapeños can vary a lot in heat level, so feel free to reduce or increase the amount of peppers used.

TOPPING

- 8 ounces bacon, chopped**
- 3 jalapeño peppers**
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened**
- ¼ cup heavy cream**

BURGERS

- 1 egg**
- 1 jalapeño pepper**
- ⅓ onion**
- 1 pound ground beef**
- ⅓ cup finely ground saltine crackers**
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable or olive oil**
- Mustard**

1. TOPPING In a skillet over medium heat, cook bacon until crispy. Drain on paper towels. Broil or grill the jalapeños until skins are slightly charred on all sides. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Dice jalapeños, removing seeds first for less heat if preferred.

2. In a bowl, combine bacon, jalapeños, cream cheese and heavy cream until well blended. Scoop into a small baking dish and bake until heated through, about 15 minutes.

3. BURGERS Meanwhile, in a food processor, pulse together egg, jalapeño (removing seeds if preferred) and onion until smooth. Pour into a large bowl and

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

Spicy Bacon Burgers

DANIEL BATES
COSERV



Full of flavor thanks to chorizo and added spices, these burgers are sure to be a hit fresh from the grill. If you don't have smoked paprika on hand, substitute your favorite variety.

SERVES 8

COOK'S TIP Bates suggests pressing a shallow divot into meat patties with a spoon or thumb so they come out flat after cooking.

- 1 pound 80% lean ground beef**
- 1 pound Mexican-style chorizo**
- 8 ounces thick-cut bacon, chopped into small pieces**
- 1 egg**
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce**
- 1 tablespoon light brown sugar**
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika**
- 1 tablespoon onion powder**
- 1 tablespoon dried minced garlic**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh garlic**
- 1½ teaspoons salt**
- 1½ teaspoons pepper**
- ½ teaspoon crushed red chile flakes**
- 1 tablespoon liquid smoke (optional)**

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine all ingredients except liquid smoke. Mix by hand until evenly blended and smooth.

2. Divide mixture into 8 even portions, about ⅓ pound each. Form each portion into a patty and set onto a baking sheet lined with waxed paper. Press a spoon into the center of each patty to create a divot. If using liquid smoke, add 3 drops into each divot.

3. Preheat grill or a stovetop skillet to medium heat. Cook the burgers 3–5 minutes per side, depending on thickness. Serve with your favorite toppings.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

GLUTEN-FREE RECIPES DUE AUGUST 10

Gluten-free cooking isn't a trend; it's here to stay.

What's a fixture in your kitchen? Submit your recipes on our website by August 10 for a chance to win \$500.



RECIPES CONTINUED

add ground beef, ground saltines, garlic salt and pepper. Mix by hand until evenly blended. Form into 4 large patties or 6 thinner patties.

4. Heat a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat and add oil. Cook patties 3 minutes, then drizzle mustard onto uncooked side, flip and cook another 3 minutes. Serve with warm popper topping.

SERVES 4-6

Spicy Lamb Burgers

CINDY JOHNSON
COSERV

Fresh herbs are a great addition to burgers, especially combined with the unique flavor of lamb. Serve on brioche buns or tuck into a pita along with greens, tzatziki sauce, tomato slices and cucumbers.

- 1 pound ground lamb
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint leaves



- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 teaspoon sherry
- 1 teaspoon white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon molasses
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- ½ teaspoon crushed red chile flakes
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- Feta cheese
- Baby spinach
- Tzatziki sauce
- 4 brioche buns or pitas, for serving

1. Preheat grill to medium heat. Place ground lamb into a large bowl. In a smaller bowl, combine mint, cilantro, oregano and garlic. Mix into lamb. Add sherry, vinegar and molasses and mix again. Add cumin, allspice, chile flakes, salt and pepper and mix until evenly blended.

2. Divide meat into 4 portions and shape into patties. Lightly brush grill grates with oil. Grill burgers 5 minutes per side, then place on buns or into pitas and immediately sprinkle with feta. Serve with baby spinach and tzatziki sauce.

SERVES 4

TCP You'll find more burger recipes on our website that are sure to help turn your cook-outs into grand successes. Most of them are from the kitchens of *Texas Co-op Power* readers just like you.

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35	10	9	11	10	15	12	21	19	62	42	32	77	54	138	99	260	181
40	10	10	14	12	19	16	28	25	63	46	36	86	60	156	112	292	204
44	12	11	17	15	26	22	42	35	64	50	41	96	67	174	126	327	227
45	13	11	18	16	29	24	47	38	65	55	46	107	75	195	142	365	253
46	14	11	19	17	31	26	50	41	66	61	50	118	86	214	152	403	274
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48	15	13	21	19	35	30	59	48	68	76	61	147	115	260	176	500	325
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50	16	14	25	21	41	34	70	58	70	94	74	183	150	318	205	619	389
51	17	15	27	22	45	37	78	63	71	104	84	208	162	367	239	712	450
52	18	16	29	24	50	40	87	69	72	116	96	236	175	423	276	818	519
53	19	17	32	26	55	43	99	76	73	129	110	271	191	493	323	949	604
54	20	18	35	28	61	47	110	83	74	144	125	307	207	565	371	1086	693
55	22	19	39	30	68	51	124	91	75	161	142	349	226	647	427	1242	794
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Heaven Beyond Hell's Gate

Possum Kingdom Lake offers a scenic slice of paradise

BY CHET GARNER

ON THE SHORT LIST of places I never wanted to find myself, Hell's Gate sounded like it should be near the top. And yet there I was, about to pass through its ominous opening to see what might lurk on the other side.

Ironically, I found a slice of Texas paradise—refreshing water, warm sunshine and great tunes. Did I cheat death? Am I writing this article from the great beyond? Oh no! Hell's Gate, on the banks of Possum Kingdom Lake, is simply heavenly.

While the Hill Country west of Austin gets all the attention, there's a hidden hill country in North Texas that encompasses the sprawling Palo Pinto Mountains. And in the middle of it all lies a meandering lake named Possum Kingdom, about an hour west of the Metroplex. Its name dates to the early 1900s, when a prominent fur trader would refer to locals as the "boys of Possum Kingdom" due to an abundance of the furry varmints.

Today the lake is best known for the towering limestone cliffs that mark its banks and the countless boaters who flock there on weekends. Many of them congregate behind the stone walls of Hell's Gate and around Devil's Island. It's a narrow opening of water flanked by 90-foot cliffs.

The cliffs are so sheer they have hosted the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series, which attracts hundreds of spectators who watch professional divers dance with the devil. And while brave novices may be tempted to jump, it's extremely dangerous and illegal.

I could feel a swell of Texas courage welling up in my chest, but I wasn't about to break the law. Luckily, my buddy knew of other cliffs within the legal limit for jumping (20 feet or less), and so we sped off and spent the afternoon jumping from much less hellish heights. ■

ABOVE Chet and the 90-foot cliffs at Possum Kingdom Lake.

TCP What the heck is Chet doing at Hell's Gate? See his latest video on our website to find out. Watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

AUGUST

07

D'Hanis Holy Cross Catholic Church Homecoming Picnic, (830) 363-7269, holycross-dhanis.org

11

Uvalde [11-14] Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, (830) 278-4184, uvaldeoperahouse.org

12

Boerne Movie in the Park: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, (830) 249-9511, ci.boerne.tx.us

Cedar Park [12-13] Rodeo, (512) 600-5000, hebcenter.com

Junction [12-13] Hill Country Fair Association Rodeo, (325) 446-3190, junctiontexas.com

Plano [12-13] Quilt Plano, 1-800-817-5266, qgplano.org

Sonora [12-13] Outlaw Rodeo and Sutton County Days, (325) 387-2880, sonorataxas.org

Levelland [12-14] World Series Team Roping Qualifier, (806) 894-4161, wstroping.com

13

Cedar Park Treasure of the Hills Senior Center Senior Expo, (512) 331-6000, toth-seniors.com

Grand Prairie Hatch Chile Fest, (972) 237-8084, grandfungp.com/farmersmarket

Junction Car Show, (325) 446-5658, junctiontexas.com/car-show

Kerrville Kids Triathlon,
(830) 257-7300,
kerrvilletx.gov

**Fredericksburg [13-14,
27-28] Live Pari-Mutuel
Horse Racing,**
(830) 997-2359,
gillespiefair.com

17

**Johnson City [17-20] Blanco
County Fair and Rodeo,**
bcfra.info@gmail.com,
bcfra.org

19

**Palacios [19-20] Fish Fest
Family Fishing Tournament,**
(361) 972-2615,
palacioschamber.com

**Fredericksburg [19-21]
Trade Days,** (210) 846-4094,
fbgtradedays.com

**Denton [19-27] North
Texas Fair and Rodeo,**
(940) 387-2632, ntfair.com

**Ingram [19-21, 26-28,
Sept. 2-3] The Nerd,**
(830) 367-5121, hcfa.com

20

**Grand Prairie Lost '80s
Live,** (972) 854-5076,
texasrustcutheatre.com

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

Temple Touch-a-Truck,
(254) 298-5690,
templeparks.com

**Washington Giants of
Texas History at Washing-
ton-on-the-Brazos,**
(936) 878-2214,
thc.texas.gov

**Junction [20-21]
Up & Back Boat Race,**
(325) 446-3190,
junctiontexas.com/
up-back-boat-race

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your November event by September 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

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Pick of the Month

AIA Sandcastle Competition and Viewing

Galveston, August 20-21
(409) 797-5000, visitgalveston.com

Dozens of teams swarm East Beach to create sculptures that get judged on concept, artistic execution, technical difficulty, carving technique and utilization of the site. The competition is a fundraiser for the Houston chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Architecture Center Houston Foundation.

28

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

SEPTEMBER

01

Belton [1-4] Central Texas State Fair, (254) 933-5353, centraltexasstatefair.com

La Grange [1-4] Fayette County Fair, (979) 968-3911, fayettecountyfair.org

02

Fredericksburg [2-3] Vereins Quilt Guild Show: Quilted Fields of Dreams, (325) 347-5515, vereinsquiltguild.org

Boerne [2-4] Kendall County Fair, (830) 249-2839, kcfa.org

Odessa [2-11] Permian Basin Fair and Expo, (432) 550-3232, pbfair.com

03

Brenham The Everly Brothers Experience by the Zmed Brothers, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Fredericksburg Pride in the Pacific, (830) 997-8600, pacificwarmuseum.org

Kerrville Kerr County Market Days & Hill Country Swap Meet, (830) 459-6198, kerrmarketcdays.org

Sunrise Beach Sip & Stroll, (713) 299-1728, sunrisebeachvfd.org/sipandstroll

04

Fayetteville St. John Annual Feast, (979) 378-2277, stjohnfayetteville.com

AUGUST EVENTS CONTINUED

25

Fredericksburg [25-28] Gillespie County Fair, (830) 997-2359, gillespiefair.com

26

Killeen [26-27] Crossroads to Texas Quilt Guild Quilt Show, (254) 702-2425, cttquiltguild.org

Corsicana [26-28] Hydroplane Classic, (903) 654-4850, visitcorsicana.com

27

Albany CareFest, (325) 762-2447, facebook.com/resourcecare

Kerrville River Roadster Show, (830) 257-7300, kerrvilletx.gov

Lakeway Cool Arts Show and Studio Tour, (512) 314-7509, lakewayartsdistrict.com/coolarts

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

Motor Sports

And they're off! Our readers love to rev and race. These were first across the finish line.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 DANNY PICKENS
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

"The rider appears to reach for the lights as he hangs in the air several feet off the ground at a motocross track in Swan."

2 RONALD HAVARD
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A jet engine dragster heads to the starting line for a quarter-mile race against a P-51 Mustang at an air show.

3 PAIGE LUECKEMEYER
TRI-COUNTY EC

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4 LISA BENNETT
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

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Upcoming Contests

- DUE AUG 10** Winter Wildlife
- DUE SEP 10** Nature's Colors
- DUE OCT 10** First Responders



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



The Stars Below

An abundant West Texas cactus garden sparkles in its own way

BY SUZANNE FEATHERSTON
ILLUSTRATION BY CARL WIENS

CLOUDS ROLLED IN the evening before a star party at McDonald Observatory in far West Texas, changing my plans for a summer night in Big Bend.

This was years ago, when a weeklong writers' retreat had taken me to Alpine, where I stayed in the dorms of Sul Ross State University. In our free time, the other writers and I explored the nearby Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center, marveled at the Marfa Lights, hiked to a hilltop at sunrise and drank wine at sunset in the Holland Hotel courtyard.

That night, my colleagues stuck with their itinerary for stargazing, but I stayed behind to tour the grounds at Sul Ross. A cactus garden in front of Lawrence Hall beckoned me to look down instead of up.

The demonstration garden showed off some of the flora produced by the

university's native plant propagation program that has been in operation since 1979. Cactuses were used for decoration and scientific investigations.

The garden showcased about 100 species of promising and already established native ornamentals. From the towering ocotillo scratching at the sky to the diminutive golf ball cactuses, the desert environment nurtures a variety of spiny succulents. The range of prickly pears alone amazed me—some with spines, others “blind”; some with round pads and others pointy; some towering and others cowering.

The cactuses' shapes and names captured my imagination. The resurrection plant resembled a crown of thorns. The living rock cactus looked like a tortoise shell buried in dirt. The eagle-claw cactus carried curved, talonlike needles.

Several cactuses were familiar. I'd seen the horse chiller, a sneaky low-lying succulent with merciless spikes, at what would become Garey Park in Georgetown. The claret cup reminded me of the Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center in Langtry that features a walking trail arrayed with native plants. Seeing ephedra took me back to the Davis Mountains, where I first recognized the medicinal plant.

Instead of studying the star-studded sky, I gazed at the spine-studded ground and gained an appreciation for the “stars” of this Earth.

The experience inspired the landscape around my home in Central Texas. I planted knobby, white mammillaria in the crevices of a large limestone landscaping rock. I used blue agave harvested from a construction site and white-striped agave to grace my meandering crushed granite pathways.

They reminded me that gazing at the ground can be just as awe-inspiring as gazing at the stars. ■



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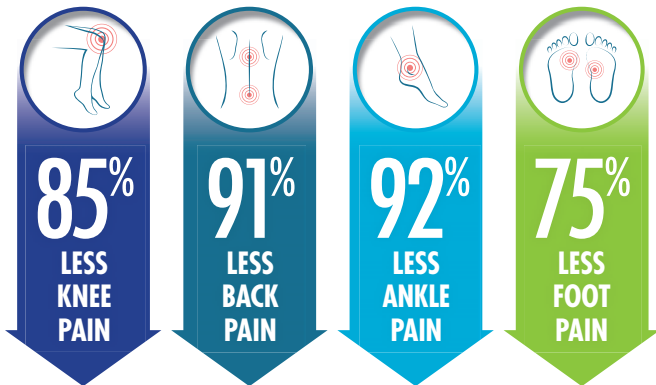
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Qualification: Advertised price requires credit qualification and 24-month commitment. Upfront activation and/or receiver upgrade fees may apply based on credit qualification. Offer ends 11/9/22. 2-Year Commitment: Early termination fee of \$20/mo. remaining applies if you cancel early. Included in 2-year price guarantee at \$69.99 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 (\$84.99 for AT120+, \$94.99 for AT200, \$104.99 for AT250), monthly fees for upgraded or additional receivers (\$5-\$7 per additional TV, receivers with additional functionality may be \$10-\$15). Regional Sports: RSN Surcharge up to \$3/mo. applies to AT120+ and higher packages and varies based on location. NOT included in 2-year price guarantee or advertised price (and subject to change): Taxes & surcharges, add-on programming (including premium channels), DISH Protect, and transactional fees. Premium Channels: 3 Mos. Free: After 3 mos., you will be billed \$30/mo. for Showtime, Starz, and DISH Movie Pack unless you call or go online to cancel. Remote: The DISH Voice Remote with the Google Assistant requires internet-connected Hopper, Joey, or Wally device. Customer must press Voice Remote button to activate feature. The Google Assistant Smart Home features require Google account and compatible devices. Google is a trademark of Google LLC. Other: Netflix streaming membership required. All packages, programming, features, and functionality and all prices and fees not included in price lock are subject to change without notice. After 6 mos., if selected, you will be billed \$9.99/mo. for DISH Protect Silver unless you call to cancel. After 2 years, then-current everyday prices for all services apply. For business customers, additional monthly fees may apply. Free standard professional installation only. Indiana C.P.D. Reg. No. - 19-08615. ©2021 GoDISH.com. All rights reserved. Internet speeds, prices, and providers vary by customer address. \$40 price refers to widely available plan from multiple providers. Restrictions apply. Nationwide availability of 25 Mbps plan is subject to change without notice. The application of "Unlimited Data with no Hard Data Limits" varies by provider, but commonly mean that your access to the internet will not be stopped by going over a data limit, but that speeds may be lowered. Call for details. Internet not provided by DISH and will be billed separately.