

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

CRAWFISH, Y'ALL

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



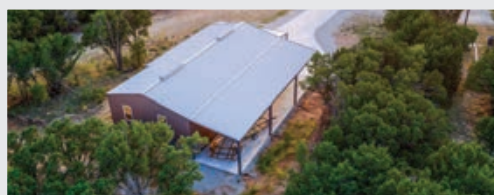
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Crawfish and good times at Repka's in Brookshire.

FEATURES

8 **Crape Murder** As healthy trees are hacked in the prime of their lives, an expert pleads: "Stop the madness!"

Story by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers | Illustration by Michael Koelsch

10 **A Tale of Texas Crawfish** Tasty crustaceans create a feasting frenzy every spring.

Story and photos by Eric W. Pohl

FAVORITES

5 Letters

6 Currents

18 **Co-op News**

Get the latest information plus energy and safety tips from your cooperative.

29 **Texas History**

Meat and Greet

By Wyatt McSpadden

31 **Recipes**

Forget Chocolate, My Sweetie Likes ...

35 **Focus on Texas**

Photo Contest: Power

36 **Around Texas**

List of Local Events

38 **Hit the Road**

The Height of Deceit

By Chet Garner

ONLINE

TexasCoopPower.com

Find these stories online if they don't appear in your edition of the magazine.

Texas USA

On Board the Elissa

By Joey Held

Observations

A Texan at Iwo Jima

By Gene Fowler

NEXT MONTH

Soul Music of South Texas Conjunto coaxes a unique sound and subculture from accordions and 12-string guitars.



29

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



31



35



38

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

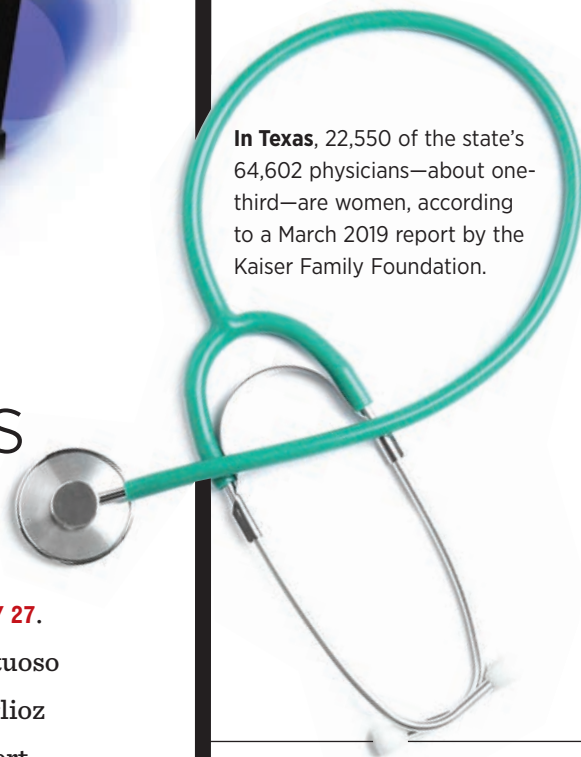
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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

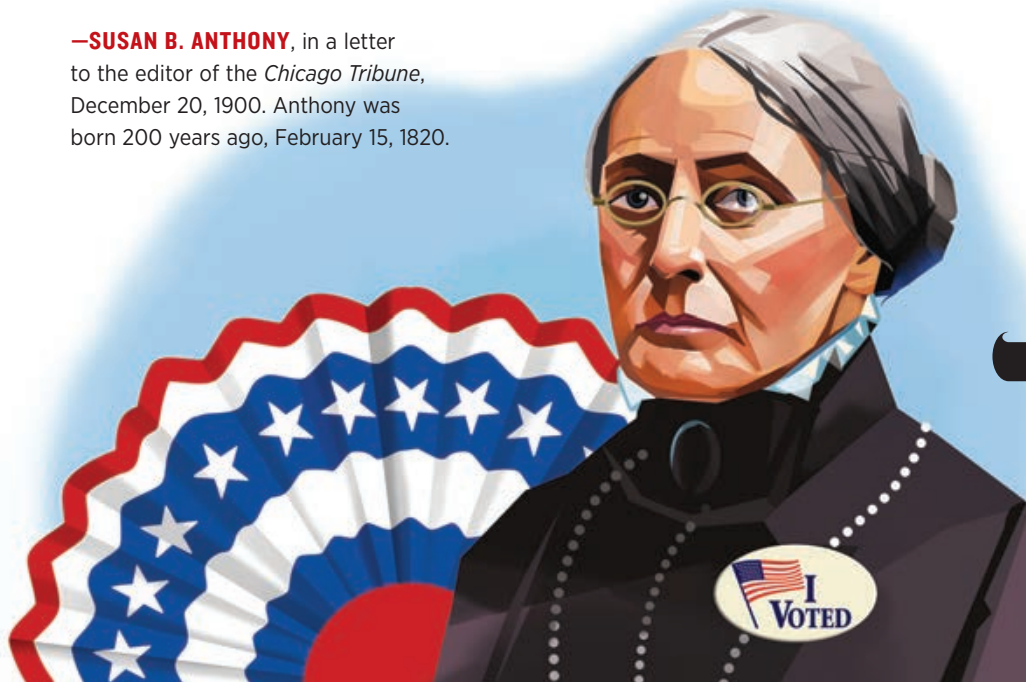
Cut It Out!

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 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. 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.

A top-down view of a large pile of cooked crawfish, corn on the cob, and potatoes. The crawfish are bright red and glistening. The corn is yellow and cooked. The potatoes are red-skinned and cut in half. The food is piled on a surface covered with newspaper, with some text visible in the background. 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.

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.

WEB EXTRAS

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

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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TEARS FROM A VOLCANO

Uniquely American stone ignites romance

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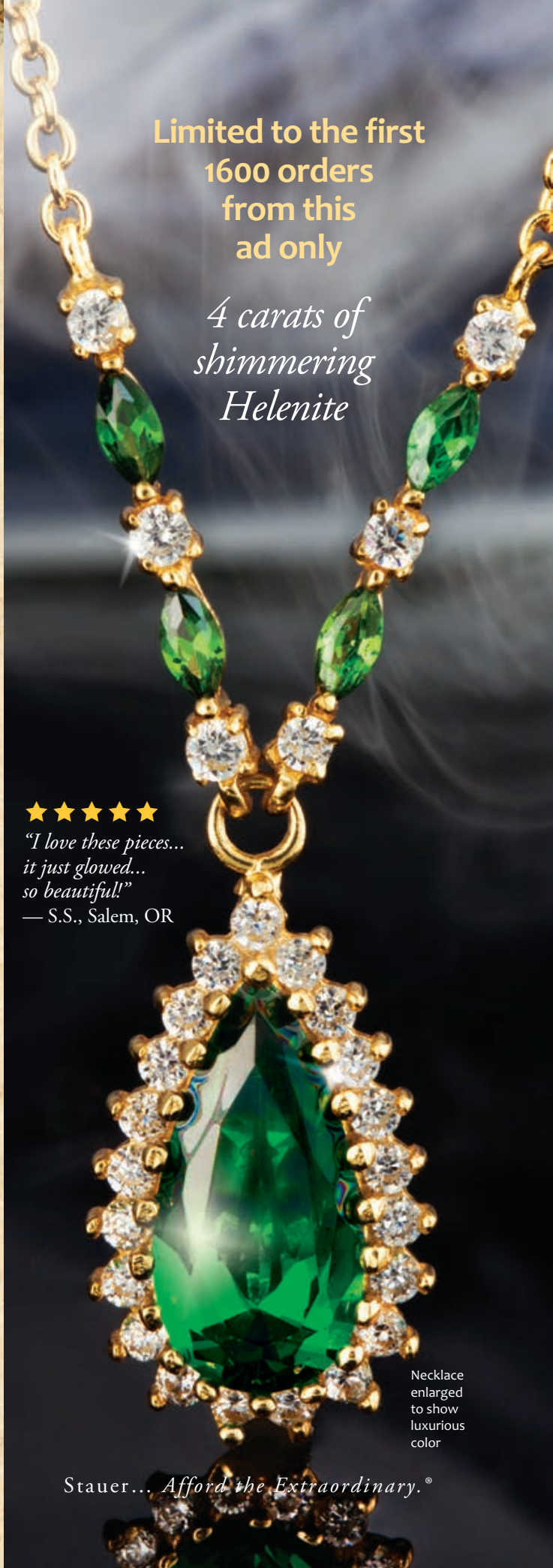
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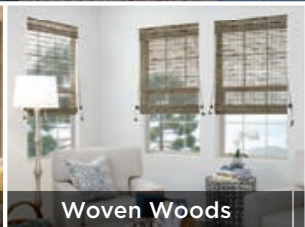
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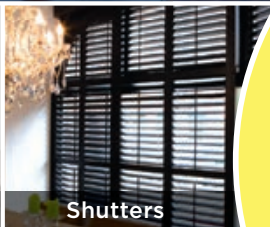
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Smooth Out Winter Bills



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER/CEO JEFF LANE

AS WE TRUDGE THROUGH WHAT CAN BE THE coldest and dreariest part of winter, the season's chilly temperatures and shortened days frequently lead to increased electricity usage at home. That can cause uncomfortable spikes in electric bills. You can soften the blow by expecting at least a modest increase in power bills compared to bills from the fall, of course, and, if possible, adjusting your household's monthly budget to make up the difference.

Comfort at home is important, but the reality is that home heating is one of the largest energy expenses for most homes. This is especially true for homes with inadequate insulation and non-heat pump central heat systems. Upgrading either of those is a major expense, but there are other things you can do to get the most value from your energy budget this winter.

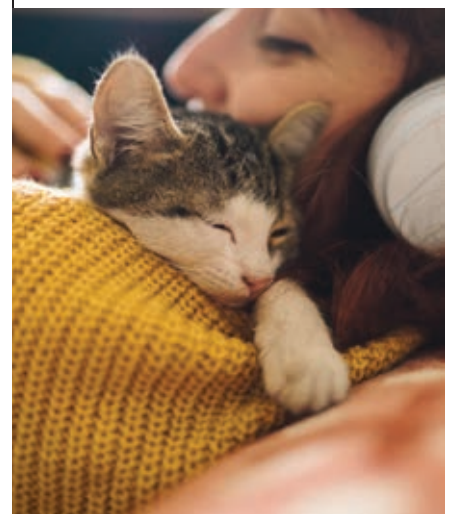
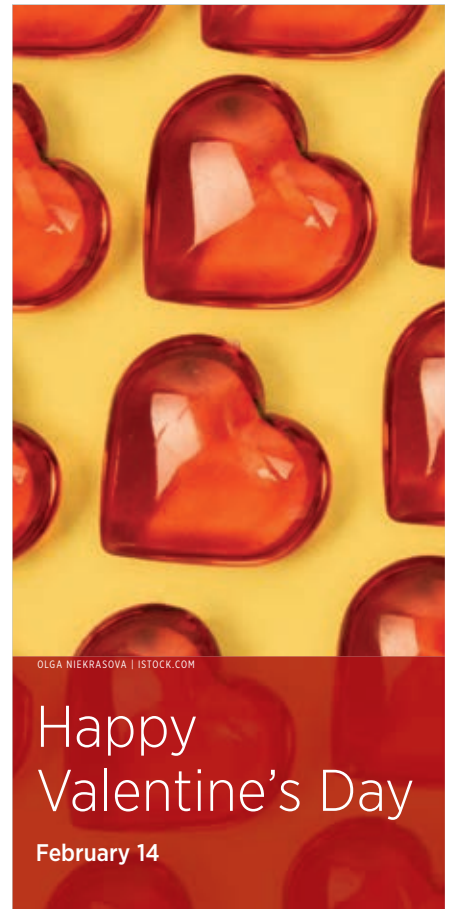
If you don't use a smart thermostat to control your home's heating and air conditioning system, install one. If that's not practical at the moment, make a habit of decreasing the temperature in your home by up to 10 degrees before leaving for work in the morning and before turning in for the night. When the decrease in energy used for heating your home is sustained for eight hours, the savings really can add up. The thermostat will be helpful again in the summer when you will want to program it to make similar adjustments for air conditioning.

Space heaters can add a spot of comfort, but they are not efficient for heating large spaces. Using space heaters sparingly and only in occupied rooms is key to both maximizing efficiency and safety.

Blocking air gaps at doors, windows, ceilings and floors can also make a big impact, both on heater use and how the room feels. Weatherstripping around doors, caulking windows and blocking any other openings keeps your warmth inside.

If you are using heat lamps to warm spaces for animals or pets, be sure to turn them off whenever possible. These are generally higher-wattage bulbs that can add significantly to your energy usage.

As your nonprofit cooperative, TVEC wants to partner with you in minimizing your energy spending while maximizing the value you derive from it. Be sure to check out your options for daily energy usage alerts on the TVEC Member Portal or myTVEC mobile app.



Power Tip

Give your home time to warm up once the heater is turned on or you raise the temperature. Setting the temperature higher than needed won't make it warm up your home any faster, but it will waste electricity.

Three DIY Efficiency Projects To Tackle Today

YOU MAY THINK ENERGY

efficiency upgrades require a great deal of time and expense, but that's not always the case. If you're interested in making your home more efficient but don't want to break the bank, there are several do-it-yourself projects you can tackle to increase energy savings. Let's take a look at three inexpensive upgrades that can save energy throughout the year.

Trim Dryer Vent Hose

Level of difficulty: easy.

Supplies needed: tin snips, gloves, measuring tape and masking tape.

Estimated cost: about \$25 depending on the supplies you already have.

If your dryer vent hose is too long, your dryer is working harder than it has to and using more energy than necessary. The vent hose should be long enough for you to pull the dryer out a couple feet from the wall and should form a line—it should not have a lot of slack, twists or curves. A shorter, unobstructed vent hose increases the efficiency of your dryer, allows for faster drying and reduces the buildup of lint, which is a potential fire hazard.

Simply measure, mark and trim the hose to the desired length, then reattach the hose to your dryer and exterior vent.

Seal Air Leaks

Level of difficulty: moderate.

Supplies needed: caulk and caulk gun, weatherstripping, gloves, putty knife, and paper towels.

Estimated cost: \$25–\$50 depending on the materials you purchase.

Sealing air leaks in your home can help you save 10%–20% on heating and cooling bills. Apply caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring and plumbing to seal in conditioned air. You should also add weatherstripping around exterior doors, which can keep out drafts and help you control energy costs. Types of caulking and weatherstripping materials vary; ask your local hardware or home store for assistance if you're unsure about the supplies you need. For more information, the U.S. Department of Energy provides step-by-step instructions



for caulking and weatherstripping online at bit.ly/howtoseal.

Insulate Attic Stairs Opening

Level of difficulty: moderate.

Supplies needed: rigid foam board, faced blanket insulation, tape for foam board, measuring tape, utility knife, caulk and caulk gun, and plywood.

Estimated cost: \$50–\$100.

A properly insulated attic is one of the best ways to optimize energy savings and comfort in your home, but many homeowners don't consider insulating the attic stairs or the opening to their attic space. Even a well-insulated attic can leak air through the stairs opening. Luckily, there's an easy fix.

An insulated cover box can seal and insulate the attic stairs opening. You can build your own insulated cover box or purchase a prebuilt box or kit from a local home improvement store for about \$60. If you decide to build your own, check out step-by-step instructions from the Department of Energy online at bit.ly/atticstairscover. If your attic opening is located in a garage that you do not heat and cool, this upgrade will not be as effective.

TVEC Department in Focus: Mapping Lays Foundation For Service

TUCKED INTO AN OFFICE IN THE BACK OF

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative's Kaufman operations building, the mapping department may be about as behind-the-scenes as you can get. But when it comes to everyday work and productivity, mapping plays a key role in almost every aspect of what the co-op does.

"We are a support mechanism, really, to help everyone here support the members," said Gary Nix, TVEC's mapping supervisor. "Our goal is to provide accurate information that gets our people out to the right location to take care of whatever needs to be done, and current technology is really making that better than ever before."

As late as 1999, the co-op was still dependent on paper maps, which meant updates were slow and field employees did not always have the latest information. Over the last two decades, the entire system has been updated to modern technology. 4577001

"It is saving a lot of time and making the work more efficient," Nix said. "We take pride in knowing that what we do helps provide great service. In an outage situation, of course, but also in getting lines and equipment inspected and replaced to take care of problems to prevent outages. The next step is to move towards web interfaces, allowing us to receive input back from the field and giving us the ability to collaborate directly with crews as they go along."

Mapping also provides graphics and digital maps to keep members informed about upcoming work and outage updates. During the 2017 tornado outbreak from Eustace to Fruitvale, TVEC's mapping department was able to use National Weather Service map data and TVEC location data to speed up the restoration process while keeping members up to date.

While members benefit most from the operational efficiencies, there are other aspects of mapping that are important to the co-op, including documenting easements and keeping up with ever-changing municipal boundaries and regulations.

"Different municipalities have certain requirements regarding inspections, for example, and as cities grow our guys really need to know where they are working," Nix said. "It is also important to be accurate regarding franchise fees that are collected in certain areas. This presents a

challenge since not every county or municipality has the same resources for getting the information to us. In these cases, we have to be really proactive in reaching out to them for updates if available."

With rapid growth near the DFW metroplex, steady development throughout the TVEC service area and a constantly changing technological landscape, the TVEC mapping team will remain a foundational element that improves every area of service for the co-op.

"Whenever I meet a co-op member, I like to know that I can shake their hand and honestly say that if they have an outage or issue, our guys will absolutely be able to get there as quickly as possible and get them taken care of," Nix said. "It is what drives what we do—that electricity is not just a convenience but is really essential in the lives of our members."



From left: the TVEC Mapping Department consists of Joey Martin, Shane Tischler, Gary Nix and J.D. Oldham.

Win \$25 Just for Reading

Somewhere, hidden on Pages 18-23, is a TVEC account number. Read closely. If the account number is yours, contact the Member Services Department by February 28 to receive a \$25 credit on your electric bill. Don't miss out—you could be a winner!





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Ways To Make Your Home Safer

IF YOU HAVE SMALL CHILDREN, MAKE SURE UNUSED WALL OUTLETS HAVE SAFETY coverings. Unprotected wall outlets can be a hazard. Also:

- ▶ Check that outlets and wall switches are cool to the touch. Unusual warmth may indicate unsafe wiring and should be checked by an electrician.
- ▶ Ensure all outlets and switches are working properly. Faulty equipment may mean unsafe wiring.
- ▶ All outlets and switches should have faceplates. Exposed wiring is a shock hazard.
- ▶ Check that extension cords are correctly rated for the amount of electricity they are going to carry and are approved by a reputable safety standards organization.
- ▶ Screw lightbulbs in securely. Loose bulbs may cause a fire or shock.
- ▶ Check all electric cords for visible damage. Frayed cords can be dangerous.
- ▶ To avoid excessive wear and cord damage, ensure that cords don't run under rugs and don't have furniture resting on them.
- ▶ Do not nail or staple electric cords in place. Cord damage can result in a fire and shock hazard—and extension cords should only be used for temporary purposes.
- ▶ If you have wet hands or are standing on a wet surface or in water, don't touch or use any electrical device.
- ▶ Small appliances (hair dryers, toasters, etc.) should be unplugged when not in use. Unattended, connected appliances create unnecessary risk.
- ▶ Keep all appliance cords away from hot surfaces (toasters, range tops, ovens, etc.). Cords can be damaged by excessive heat.
- ▶ Check that all appliances and electric equipment are located away from the sink and bath. Appliances can kill if they come into contact with water.
- ▶ In kitchens, bathrooms and anywhere there is water nearby, standard outlets should be replaced with ground-fault circuit interrupters. GFCIs provide shock protection by quickly cutting off the circuit and preventing injury.
- ▶ Never insert any metal object, such as a fork, into an appliance.
- ▶ Make sure you're using the correct wattage and proper kind of lightbulb in all lighting fixtures. The wrong type of bulb can lead to overheating or fire.
- ▶ Never leave space heaters unattended when in use.

Don't Ignore Flickering Lights

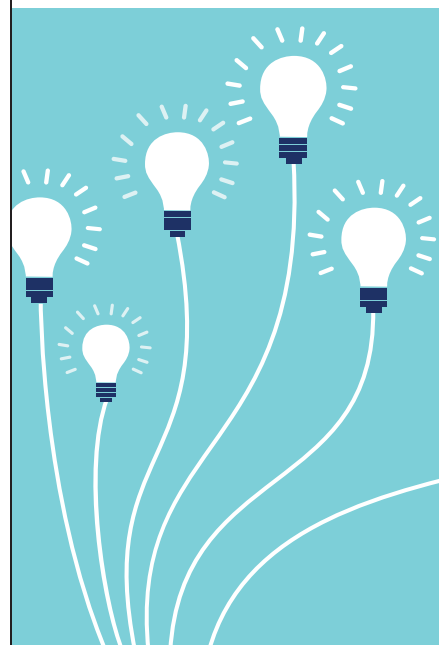
JUST AS AN AMBULANCE'S FLASHING lights alert you to an emergency, so should a flickering lightbulb get your attention.

It may be that the bulb is simply about to burn out. But sometimes a flickering bulb is a sign that the light fixture is damaged or the electrical connection is faulty. Don't ignore these signs!

Turn off the power immediately and check the connection to the fixture and its internal wiring. If you're not confident in your abilities, call an electrician. Leaving a flickering light on could present a risk of electrical fire.

The same is true for a lamp that burns too hot. You may have installed the wrong wattage lightbulb. If the wattage is too high, the heat builds up and cannot escape. Check the rating on your lamps and light fixtures to make sure you're using the right size and kind of bulb.

You should be especially concerned about warm or hot bulbs if you've made the smart move to energy-efficient LED or CFL bulbs, which typically produce very little, if any, heat when in use.



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Lighten Your Laundry Load

LAUNDRY ISN'T A TASK THAT MANY PEOPLE RELISH. BUT IF THE PROCESS CAN BE tweaked to save money, conserve electricity and prolong the life of your clothes, some minor adjustments may be worth your time. Here are some suggestions from *Consumer Reports*.

Opt for cold water. Hot water is only needed for laundering oily stains, cloth diapers, and sheets and towels used by a family member who has been sick.

Use high-efficiency detergent for front-loaders, high-efficiency top-loaders and where otherwise recommended by the machine's manufacturer. Conventional detergents create more suds, which can cause the washer to repeatedly rinse laundry, wasting water and time.

Increase the spin speed to extract more water from your laundry, reducing dryer time. Shake clothes out before transferring them from the washer to the dryer to avoid wrinkles.

Clean the dryer's lint screen before every load. This improves air circulation and prevents fires. Dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, so if you use them, scrub the filter with a brush monthly.

Clean the dryer duct regularly to increase airflow, which dries your clothes faster and prevents fires.

Clean the dryer's moisture sensors. Dryer sheets can leave residue on the sensors that affects their ability to gauge how dry laundry is. Check the owner's manual for instructions on how to clean them.

Dry similar items together. Don't mix heavy cottons with lightweight fabrics. Wash and dry towels and sheets separately, for example.

Use the automatic cycle instead of timed drying. If the moisture sensors are working properly, the automatic cycle avoids overdrying, which shortens the life span of clothes and can shrink them.

And for the least expensive, most efficient method, dry your laundry on a clothesline or use a drying rack indoors. This approach takes a bit more time but is gentler on your clothing, keeping it nicer looking for longer—a savings in itself.



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Member Donations Making a Difference

THE TVEC CHARITABLE FOUNDATION recently awarded nine grants totaling \$25,500. Recipients of the grants include:



Henderson County Rainbow Room, \$3,000



Kaufman County Children's Shelter, \$4,500



Tool Community Food Pantry, \$3,000



Jefferson Street Boxing Club, \$1,500



The Library at Cedar Creek Lake, \$3,000



Wills Point Intermediate Backpack Program, \$3,000



The Refuge - Tolosa \$2,000



Mabank ISD Education Foundation \$3,000



Still Waters - Kaufman \$2,500



In December, 57 area fire departments were supported by the TVEC Charitable Foundation. Your Operation Round Up™ donations funded grants of \$2,500 for each department, totaling \$142,500.

Founded in 2013, the TVEC Charitable Foundation is an independent, nonprofit organization. The foundation was created to serve the community and help improve the quality of life for residents in our service area. **The foundation is funded entirely by donations from TVEC members who participate in Operation Round Up.** For more information, please call 1-800-766-9576 or visit tvec.net.

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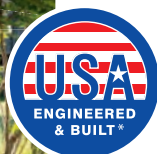
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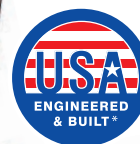
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On Board the Elissa

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.

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steering lever so it's simple to operate, and its exclusive footrest swings out of the way when you stand up or sit down. With its rugged yet lightweight aluminum frame, the **Zinger** is sturdy and durable yet convenient and comfortable! What's more, it easily folds up for storage in a car seat or trunk— you can even gate-check it at the airport like a stroller. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life. It folds in seconds without tools and is safe and reliable. It holds up to 275 pounds, and it goes up to 6 mph and operates for up to 8 miles on a single charge.

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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.



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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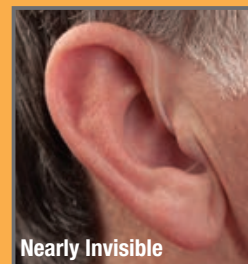
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Forget Chocolate, My Sweetie Likes...



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



Recipes

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
 - ⅓ cup (¼ stick) butter
 - 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
 - 2 teaspoons coconut extract, divided use
 - 2 cups heavy whipping cream
 - ⅓ 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.

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; 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
- 1½ 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

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JULY EXPLORATION	DUE MARCH 10
AUGUST ON THE WATER	DUE APRIL 10

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

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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, lonestarcowboypoeetry.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



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

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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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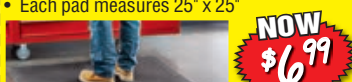
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