

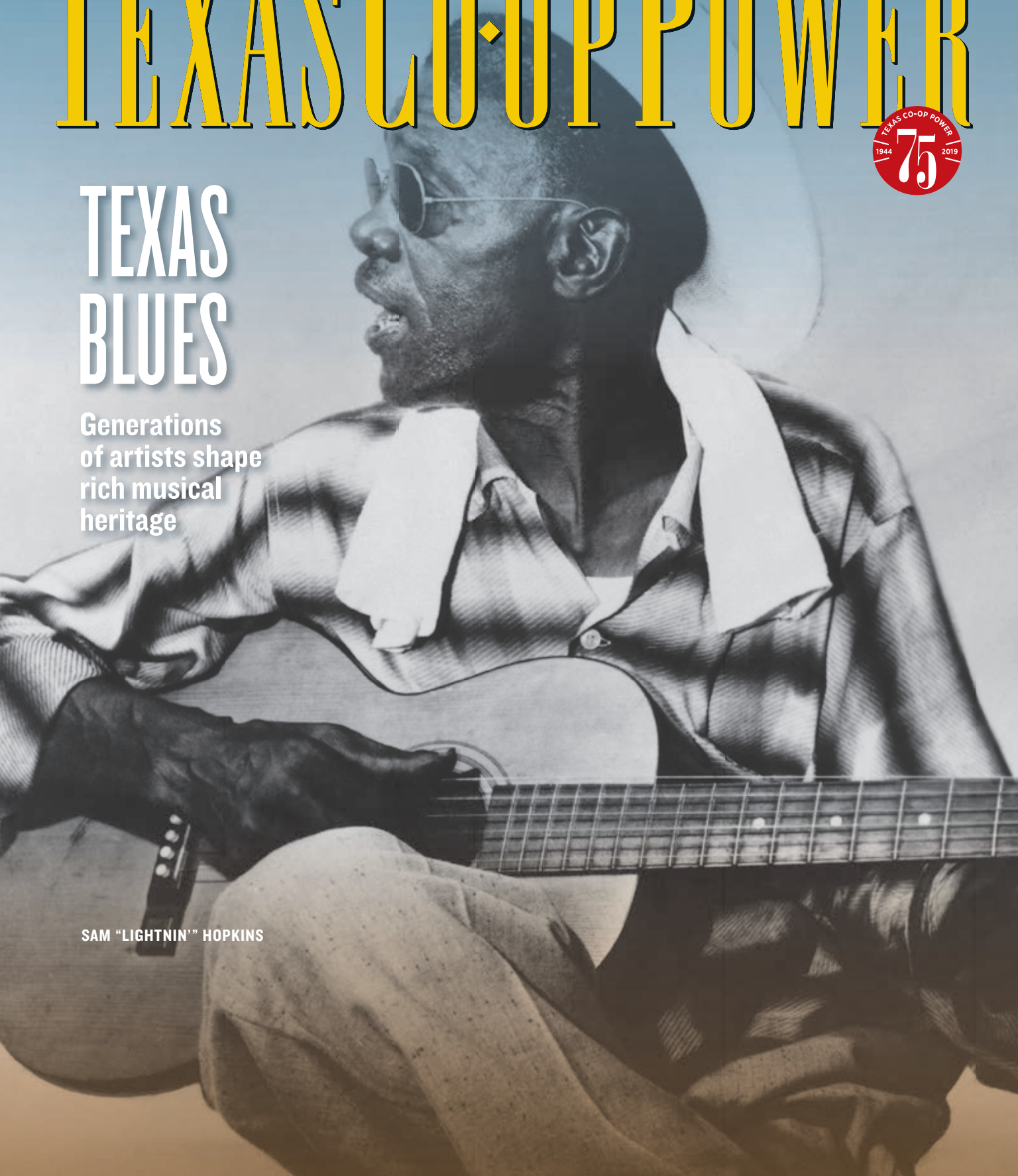
TEXAS CO-OP POWER



TEXAS BLUES

Generations
of artists shape
rich musical
heritage

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1875-1900

Electrification begins

In the early years, linemen learn basic principles and hazards in real time. Safety standards are non-existent, and most line equipment is handmade.



Beginning of lineworkers' safety gear.

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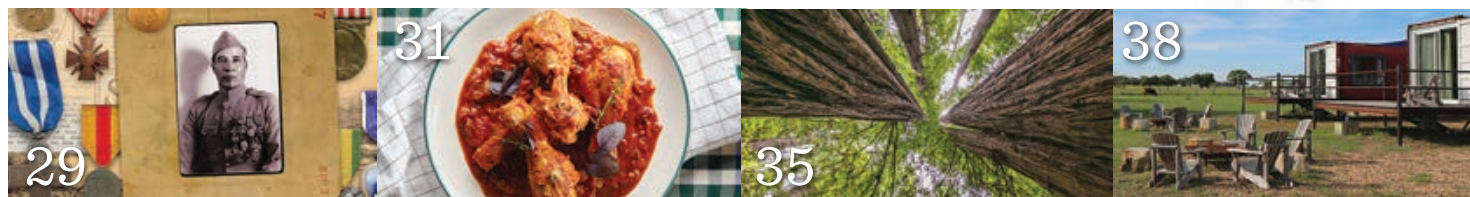
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By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

NEXT MONTH

What Moves You? A special travel feature tells the many ways to make seeing Texas be about the experience, not the destination.



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ON THE COVER Centerville bluesman Lightnin' Hopkins in a 1959 publicity photo shot in Houston. Photo by Michael Ochs Archives | Getty Images

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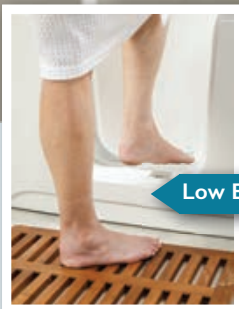


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Love Those Burgers

My husband, Bob, and I married in 1954. We moved to Cleburne [North Texas Rail Yard, January 2019], and as soon as he got his paycheck, we went to the little hamburger place and bought six hamburgers for \$1. They were so good.

Lots of miles and years later, we went back to the little hamburger place. I told the lady our story, and the hamburgers were just as good as they had been years ago.

LAURA HONEA | GATESVILLE
HAMILTON COUNTY EC

Legend of the Lone Ranger

I am 81 years old and as a young boy was an avid follower of *The Lone Ranger* on radio. I sent in numerous Cheerios box tops for various Lone Ranger stuff.

I also had several novels by Zane Grey, and one of them told the story of how the Lone Ranger came to be. He was the sole survivor in his group after a battle with outlaws. He was nursed back to health by Tonto and then became the Lone Ranger. He wore the mask to conceal his identity as a member of the group thought to have been all killed by the outlaws. So, I agree with the letter writer from Bandera EC [Hitched to a Fable?, Letters, January 2019].

BEN F. DAVIS II | GRAND SALINE
WOOD COUNTY EC

Wreaths' Reach

I also was deeply touched by the article on Wreaths Across America, so much so that I went online to donate and ended up volunteering for the wreath-laying ceremony at

Kleb Woods Is a Must See

Just visited Kleb Woods for the first time in September 2018

[A Hidden Man's Gem, January 2019].

Dozens of hummingbirds were at the feeders outside the nature center. This is must see for bird-watchers and so close to Houston. Thanks for the fantastic article.

ALICIA EISSLER | VIA TWITTER



Texas State Cemetery [Wreaths Across America, Letters, January 2019].

LYNN BISHOP | MARTINDALE
BLUEBONNET EC

Recalling Aquarena Springs

My husband, Robert Brown, took our grandson, Carson, to Aquarena Springs [Thirst for Knowledge, January 2019] at San Marcos four years ago. Carson got his basic open-water scuba diving certification there. I'd purchased a coffee cup showing Ralph the diving pig at a yard sale years before Carson was born, and we'd used it as a



pencil holder. Pretty cool that 10 years later it would all come together and that you'd have such an informative article about it.

DEB GOODSON | SUNSET
WISE COUNTY EC

The Best Medicine

I have been a side-walker in several equine therapy locations and know the truth of Julia Robinson's observations [The Healing Power of Horses, December 2018]. The healing changes between horses and humans defy description. They remind us that oftentimes caring relationships are the best and longest-lasting medicine.

JANE BOUTERSE | POWDERLY
LAMAR EC

Recipes Feedback

I feel compelled to tell you how delicious the Brown Butter Oatmeal Raisin Cookies are [All Hail the Cookie Jar, September 2018]. Everyone who tried them raved, including my "I don't eat sweets" husband.

ANITA HARBOR | AUSTIN
PEDERNALES EC

I really enjoy the recipes in your magazine. However, while searching online through the recipes, I noticed that there are no pictures. I really think the addition of a picture of the finished product would be very beneficial. I am much more tempted to try a recipe for the first time when a nice picture captures my attention.

VICKI BECKER | HICO
HAMILTON COUNTY EC

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Texas Co-op Power

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HAPPENINGS

Snuggle Time

The 2017 Quilting in America Survey estimates as many as 8.3 million households in the U.S. include a quilter—part of a \$3.7 billion industry. How's that for a hobby that provides great comfort during and after the activity!

No wonder, then, that there is a National Quilting Day, March 16 this year. Two weeks after that, the **GEORGETOWN QUILT SHOW** takes place on the downtown square. The show, **MARCH 29-30**, is a fundraiser for Handcrafts Unlimited, a retail store and nonprofit where senior artisans market their crafts.

INFO ▶ (512) 658-6973, handcraftsunlimited.com



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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

MILITARY ZENITH

The Medal of Honor, created in 1861, is the highest military honor in the U.S. On March 25, 1863, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton presented the first Medals of Honor to six members of the Andrews' Raiders for their voluntary participation during a Union hijacking of a Confederate train in an attempt to destroy bridges and railroad tracks.

March 25 is National Medal of Honor Day. There have been 3,522 recipients of the medal.

Mary Edwards Walker, the Army's first female surgeon, became the only woman to receive the medal, in 1865. It was rescinded in 1917 because she wasn't a combatant but was restored in 1977.

Willie Johnston, 11, served as a drummer boy during the Civil War and became the youngest to receive the medal, in 1863.

◀ LOOKING BACK AT POLITICS THIS MONTH



TEXANS HAVE MADE HISTORY in public office and in courtrooms in Washington, Austin and even across the Red River in Oklahoma. Pardon us if some of these mentions get your goat:

1940s

1946 Heman Sweatt applies to the University of Texas School of Law but is denied admission on the basis of race. Sweatt sued UT, and the case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in 1950 that the university must admit Sweatt.

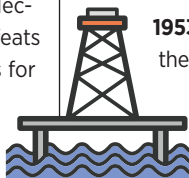
1948 In a hotly contested election, Lyndon B. Johnson defeats Coke Stevenson by 87 votes for the Democratic nomination to the U.S. Senate in a primary runoff.

1950s

1950 The U.S. Census Bureau reports that, for the first time in the state's history, more Texans live in cities than in the country.

1953 Dwight D. Eisenhower becomes the first Texas-born U.S. president. He was born in Denison.

1953 Eisenhower signs the Tidelands Oil Bill, giving Texas the rights to its offshore oil.



1960s

1963 President John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson becomes the 36th U.S. president.

1966 Barbara Jordan of Houston becomes the first black woman elected to the state Senate. Six years later, she becomes the first African-American from Texas to win a U.S. House seat.





CO-OP PEOPLE

Helping Hands—With Snacks

SWISHER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EMPLOYEES recently gathered after work in an elementary school cafeteria in Tulia to prepare bags of food for the Snack Pak 4 Kids program.

Snack Pak 4 Kids benefits Tulia elementary school students who are identified by their teachers as food-insecure and in need of snacks for the weekend.

Swisher EC employees were happy to prepare Snack Paks last fall. “I’m so proud of the co-op and the willingness of its employees to pitch in and help prepare sacks for these children,” says Sharon Thompson, Swisher EC’s manager of member services and one of the volunteers. “I live in a wonderful, caring, helpful community. When a need is identified, my community works to find a solution.”

Every Friday of the school year, these students find a Snack Pak discreetly placed in their lockers to be taken home after school. Each bag contains juice boxes, milk, fruit pouches or cups, cereal bars, cereal boxes, crackers, beef sticks and peanuts.

BY THE NUMBERS

1,500

There are roughly 1,500 registered Little Free Libraries in communities around Texas.

Little Free Library is an organization that grew from an idea Todd Bol had when he built a 2-foot replica schoolhouse in 2009, put books in it and placed it in his front yard in Wisconsin with the hopes he would start a neighborhood book exchange.

Since then, 75,000 Little Free Library boxes, in myriad designs, have popped up in all 50 states and in 88 countries. Bol, 62, died in October 2018.

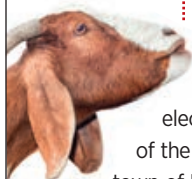


1970s

1971 Federal Judge William Wayne Justice of Tyler orders the Texas Education Agency to assume responsibility for desegregating public schools and to prohibit districts from assigning students to schools on the basis of race.

1979 Bill Clements becomes the first Republican governor of Texas since Reconstruction.

1980s



BURP

1986 Clay Henry Sr., a beer-swilling goat, is elected mayor of the West Texas town of Lajitas. He holds office until his death in the mid-1990s.

1988 Houstonian George H.W. Bush is elected president. He died Nov. 30, 2018.

1990s



1990 Ann Richards defeats opponent Clayton Williams to become the second female governor of Texas and the first elected in her own right.

1991 Charles Bilal is elected mayor of Kountze, becoming the first Muslim mayor in the U.S.

1993 Republican Kay Bailey Hutchison becomes the first woman to serve as U.S. Senator from Texas.

LOOKING BACK AT MUSIC NEXT MONTH ▶

2000s

2000 Texas Gov. George W. Bush is elected president.

2003 Fifty-two Texas House Democrats hole up for three days in a conference room at the Holiday Inn in Ardmore, Oklahoma, to prevent a quorum and block a Republican-drawn redistricting plan that could cost them five seats in Congress.



Gearing Up

EVOLUTION OF SAFETY EQUIPMENT

BY VICTORIA A. ROCHA

Modern bucket trucks rumbled into the electric utility industry starting in the 1950s, but it wasn't until the late 1970s that McCulloch Electric Cooperative in Brady saw its first such vehicle.

Danny Williams, manager of the Loss Control Program at Texas Electric Cooperatives, was a young McCulloch groundman back then.

"We might have been one of the last co-ops in the state to get a bucket truck," he recalls. "Everything we did was off the wood."

Delayed adoption of such industry advancements was not unique to McCulloch. Common use of key safety- and productivity-enhancing equipment such as rubber gloves, grounding and hard hats often took decades. Experts say many factors were at play. Humid southern summers discouraged rubber sleeves. Difficulty climbing up and over pole structures made safety harnesses hard to sell. In many cases, training was limited.

In the industry's infancy, about 1 in 3 linemen—called "boomers" back then—died on the job, according to Alan Drew, senior vice president for research and development at Northwest Lineman College, which has a campus in Denton.

With better equipment and training, the industry's safety record dramatically improved. In 2017, there were 26 fatalities among electrical power line installers and repairers, a fatality rate of 18.7 per 100,000 employees, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

As the head of safety and lineworker training for Texas cooperatives, Williams oversees nearly 60 schools for 100 co-ops, municipal utilities and contractors. "You can have all the equipment in the world, but if they're not trained to operate it and operate it safely, you're back to square one."

Victoria A. Rocha is a staff writer and editor at National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

1875-1900

Electrification begins

In the early years, linemen learn basic principles and hazards in real time. Safety standards are nonexistent, and most line equipment is handmade.



1951-1970

New heights and faster communication

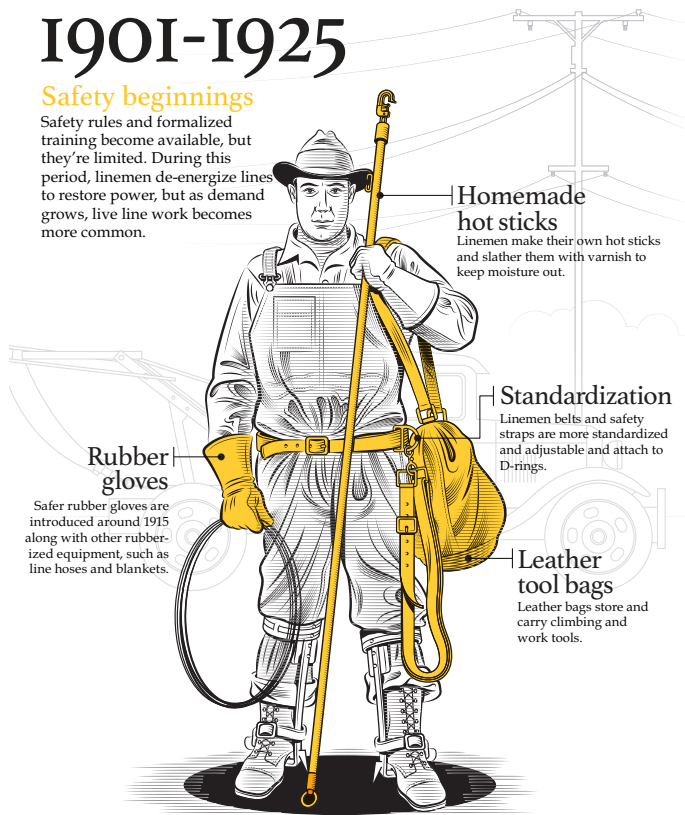
Fiberglass sticks evolve to "rubber gloving," with more formalized rules and training. The advent of the bucket truck, utility undergrounding and improved communications are major steps.



1901-1925

Safety beginnings

Safety rules and formalized training become available, but they're limited. During this period, linemen de-energize lines to restore power, but as demand grows, live line work becomes more common.



Homemade hot sticks

Linemen make their own hot sticks and slather them with varnish to keep moisture out.

Standardization

Linemen belts and safety straps are more standardized and adjustable and attach to D-rings.

Rubber gloves

Safer rubber gloves are introduced around 1915 along with other rubberized equipment, such as line hoses and blankets.

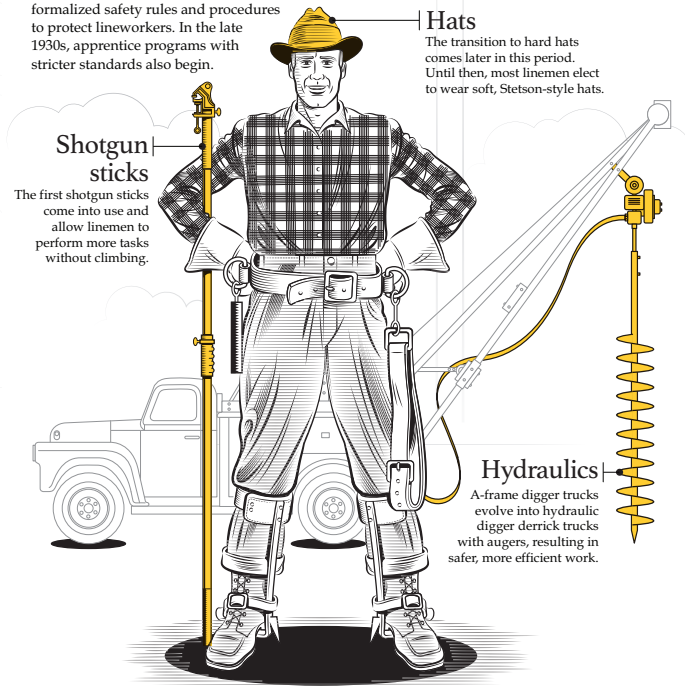
Leather tool bags

Leather bags store and carry climbing and work tools.

1926-1950

Safety training improves

The electric industry develops more formalized safety rules and procedures to protect lineworkers. In the late 1930s, apprentice programs with stricter standards also begin.



Hats

The transition to hard hats comes later in this period. Until then, most linemen elect to wear soft, Stetson-style hats.

Shotgun sticks

The first shotgun sticks come into use and allow linemen to perform more tasks without climbing.

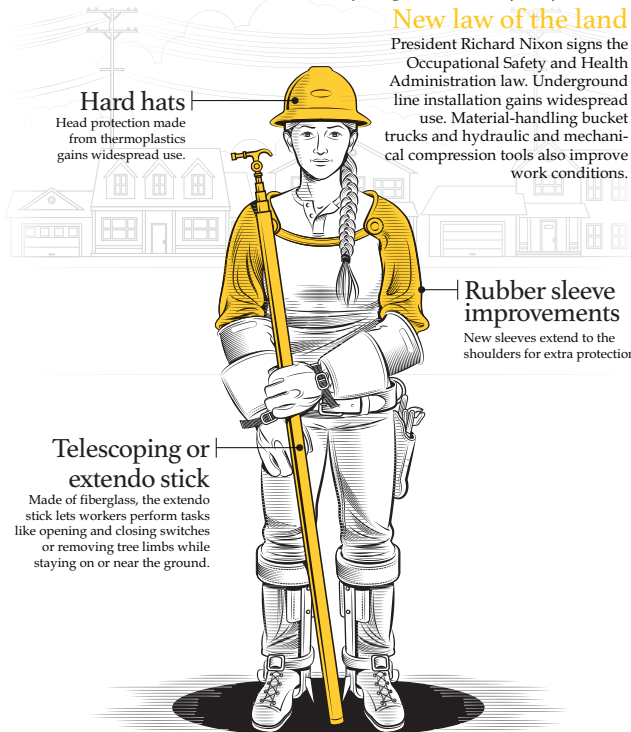
Hydraulics

A-frame digger trucks evolve into hydraulic digger derrick trucks with augers, resulting in safer, more efficient work.

1971-1990

New law of the land

President Richard Nixon signs the Occupational Safety and Health Administration law. Underground line installation gains widespread use. Material-handling bucket trucks and hydraulic and mechanical compression tools also improve work conditions.



Hard hats

Head protection made from thermoplastics gains widespread use.

Rubber sleeve improvements

New sleeves extend to the shoulders for extra protection.

Telescoping or extendo stick

Made of fiberglass, the extendo stick lets workers perform tasks like opening and closing switches or removing tree limbs while staying on or near the ground.

1991-present

Watching out for workers

OSHA begins requiring utilities to provide lineworker clothing to protect from arc flashes and "fall protection" devices like body harnesses and fall-arrest lanyards.



Insulated hard hats

Linemen now wear hard hats insulated with a special polyethylene that protects against blows to the head.

Harnesses

Linemen aren't climbing as much, so body harnesses and lanyards are valuable backup support.

Clothing

Arc-rated clothing is written into OSHA-required personal protective equipment.

Battery-operated crimper

Lightweight mechanical crimpers mean no more squeezing connectors by hand.

Tablets

Mobile devices help lineworkers troubleshoot problems using SCADA and meter data instead of climbing a pole or going up in a bucket.

TEXAS: A BLUES STATE

WIDESPREAD INFLUENCES CREATED
'A SORT OF INTERNATIONAL BLUES,'
A UNITED NATIONS GUMBO OF SOUNDS'

BY JULIA ROBINSON

On a sunny October day in Elgin, east of Austin, the Hogeye Festival is in full swing. The historic town center, in Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's service area, closes streets to make way for a car show, a barbecue cook-off and an art fair along with blues music. The Peterson Brothers—Glenn Jr., 21, and Alex, 19—of nearby Bastrop captivate the audience with classic Texas blues customized with their unique riffs.

The Peterson Brothers are furthering the blues tradition in their own way. "T-Bone Walker is a big influence along with Johnny 'Guitar' Watson, Freddie King and Albert Collins," Glenn says. "Their sound and even their arrangements, especially live, had lots of things mixed in. T-Bone had some jazz and a little bit of everything mixed in."

A few months earlier, the Peterson Brothers performed their modern brand of Texas blues at a whole other kind of function, Preserving Historic Texas' Real Places conference in Austin, addressing the creation of the Texas Music History Trail. The Petersons' presence at this event is significant: The soulful, indigenous music they play is directly connected to many of the people and places that will be featured on the Texas music history

virtual driving tour and specifically to four musicians who poured the foundation of what the world knows as Texas blues.

Along with the Mississippi Delta, Texas is a seminal source for blues music, which evolved from field hollers first articulated by enslaved African-Americans seeking relief from the drudgery of forced labor and from gospel music in African-American churches, both of which had connections to musical traditions in West Africa.

But Texas blues has a unique sound. "Texas blues is different because of the vastness of the geography of Texas and the different cultural groups that have settled here," says Alan Govenar, biographer of Texas blues legend Sam "Lightnin'" Hopkins. "This cross-fertilization of musical styles includes the Cajun and Creole music of Louisiana, the music of Mexico to the south, and dance sounds lifted from German, Czech and Polish immigrants."

Thanks to audio recordings dating back to the beginning of electronic reproduction in the 1920s, the trajectory of Texas blues is easy to trace.

It starts with Lemon Henry "Blind Lemon" Jefferson,

Bastrop's Peterson Brothers—Glenn Jr., left, and Alex—have been playing music for about a decade, since they were 12 and 10.

JULIA ROBINSON





Blind Lemon Jefferson, left, was Texas' first blues star. Like Jefferson, Lead Belly, right, played on the streets of Deep Ellum in Dallas.



Lonesome Blues and *Got the Blues*, a 78 rpm disc he made for Paramount Records in Chicago in March 1926.

A skilled guitarist and evocative vocalist who expressed his pain with a lonesome moan, Jefferson, born blind, found acclaim by singing songs narrating troubled relationships underscored by loss. He was hardly the only one. According to Govenar, rural Central and East Texas brimmed with bluesmen and -women, many who embraced recording technology and made records. These folks included Henry Thomas from Big Sandy, who played a handmade cane flute he called the quills and achieved fame with songs about railroad-ing; Blind Willie Johnson from Marlin, whose *Motherless Children* and *Nobody's Fault But Mine* continue to get covered; the Houston singers Sippie Wallace, Victoria Spivey and Elvie Thomas, who all enjoyed national fame as recording artists in the 1920s; and Washington Phillips, who constructed and played a unique instrument he called a manzarene that resembled two autoharps welded together.

"The brilliance of the great African-American blues artists in Texas is that their ears were wide open," explains Bill Minutaglio, author of *In Search of the Blues: A Journey to the Soul of Black Texas*. "They were listening to these other forms of music and then weaving it in," he says. "The Texas blues is a sort of international blues, a United Nations gumbo of sounds."

Jefferson's acclaim caught the attention of others. Huddie Led-

better moved to Dallas from his native Bowie County to accompany Jefferson on the streets of Deep Ellum and sang about it. In 1933, the world finally heard Lead Belly, Ledbetter's performing name. University of Texas folklorist John Lomax traveled to Louisiana's Angola Prison to record prison field songs. When he heard Ledbetter, who was serving time for murder, Lomax was so taken that he delivered a recording of Ledbetter and an appeal for the blues singer's release to the governor of Louisiana. After Ledbetter was released from Angola for good behavior in 1934, Lomax hired him as an assistant and eventually became his manager.

As Lead Belly's manager, Lomax exposed him to audiences who embraced the singer as a folk artist rather than as a bluesman. A charismatic multi-instrumentalist who sang songs about work, Hitler, prison, sailors and cowboys, Lead Belly was the first Texas bluesman to travel from the streets of Deep Ellum

"I USED TO BLOW OUT THE LIGHTS IN A LOT OF PLACES.

**THEY WEREN'T REALLY UP ON ELECTRICITY
LIKE THEY ARE NOW."**

to perform concerts in New York and Paris.

Soon, Texas blues musicians took the next leap forward by electrifying the guitar. Eddie Durham of San Marcos and Charlie Christian from Bonham are considered the first to experiment with amplifying guitars in the 1930s. "With those big bands, you couldn't hear the guitar," Durham said in a 1984 interview with Govenar.

Christian secured a microphone between his knees to boost the volume on his guitar solos. Durham carved out the inside of an acoustic guitar and inserted a resonator made from a tin pan. He also experimented with steel guitars and drilling phonograph amplifiers into the body of an acoustic guitar. "I used to blow



Lightnin' Hopkins, above, became a prolific recording artist in Houston. T-Bone Walker, left, is known as the father of electric blues guitar.

out the lights in a lot of places," Durham said. "They weren't really up on electricity like they are now."

Durham and Christian set the table for another Texas blues player who would become known as the father of electric blues guitar. Aaron "T-Bone" Walker, born in Linden in East Texas, grew up in Dallas' Oak Cliff neighborhood in the 1910s. Walker's earliest recordings carry on Jefferson's traditional guitar style, but when he went electric in the 1930s, he created a brand-new sound. His guitar is "really out front, the engine driving the train," Minutaglio says. "T-Bone made the electric guitar really cool, and a lot of people wanted to play it after seeing him. You can connect the dots to Keith Richards, Eric Clapton and John Lennon and everybody else that comes after."

Lightnin' Hopkins, a singer and guitarist from Centerville, has a Jefferson connection, too. An 8-year-old Hopkins witnessed Jefferson at a church picnic in Buffalo and fell in love with Jefferson's blues; Jefferson returned the favor by letting the younger Hopkins play alongside him, something he didn't let anyone else do.

Hopkins played electric guitar but usually solo or as part of a small combo, a marked contrast to the big band ensembles



Walker preferred. Hopkins started as a street bard. His original songs were free-associating commentary, often made up on the spot, accompanied by a stinging, jangling six-string sound. “Lightnin’ had this floating encyclopedia of blues lyrics in his head, and he could put them together in different combinations at will, so if you put down the money, he’d make you a song,” says Govenar.

Hopkins moved to Houston in the 1940s and played bars, street corners and city buses. He recorded prolifically, more than 800 songs. Recording engineer Bill Quinn built his Gold Star Studios in Houston, now SugarHill Recording Studios and the oldest continuously operating recording studio in Texas, primarily to record Hopkins.

W.C. Clark, born in 1939 in Austin, started playing gigs at 16.

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to find links where you can listen to songs by noted Texas blues artists.

A parade of notables followed Jefferson, Ledbetter, Walker and Hopkins. Hopkins’ cousin, Mance Lipscomb, helped his Navasota birthplace earn the title, “Blues Capital of Texas.” W.C. Clark grew up singing gospel music in the rural enclave of St. John’s in 1940s north Austin. He now plays his own repertoire of blues, rhythm and blues, and soul songs, combining original music with tunes from B.B. King, Al Green and Otis

Redding. Texas blues created Don Robey’s Duke-Peacock recording empire in Houston; the blues soul of Dallas’ Johnnie Taylor and Fort Worth’s Delbert McClinton; the Houston guitars of Albert Collins, Johnny “Guitar” Watson and Johnny Copeland;

PUTTING BLUES ON THE MAP

In 2017, the Texas Legislature called for a Texas Music History Trail. Though there is no Texas Blues Trail, the consultants helping build the music history trail are doing their part to ensure Texas blues gets it due.

Jason Mellard, director of the Center for Texas Music History at Texas State University, suggests the trail include the grave of Blind Lemon Jefferson in Wortham along with the statue of Lightnin’ Hopkins in Crockett and room 414 in San Antonio’s Gunter Hotel, where Robert Johnson recorded *Cross Road Blues*.

Govenar, who is leading the restoration of the Paramount building in downtown Dallas where Johnson made his only other recordings, wants to see a historic marker at the corner of Elm Street and Central Expressway in Dallas, the spot in Deep Ellum where Blind Lemon Jefferson played for tips. “You hear the rumbling of the freeway overhead, and you imagine those blocks of Deep Ellum and that corner where Blind Lemon stood, and there’s something very haunting as the ghosts of the past come forward,” Govenar says. “It’s that nothing-and-everything feeling. It’s that haunting sound of the past roaring up and confronting you.”

Mellard and Minutaglio are pushing to include active blues clubs on the Texas Music History Trail, including the Silver Slipper and Eldorado Ballroom in Houston, RL’s Blues Palace in Dallas and Antone’s in Austin. Because in Texas, blues isn’t some extinct artifact—it’s a living, breathing part of our culture.

and the new generation of blues articulated by ZZ Top, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Freddie King, Jimmie Vaughan and the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Gary Clark Jr., and a whole lot more—all the way up to those kids from Bastrop, the Peterson Brothers.

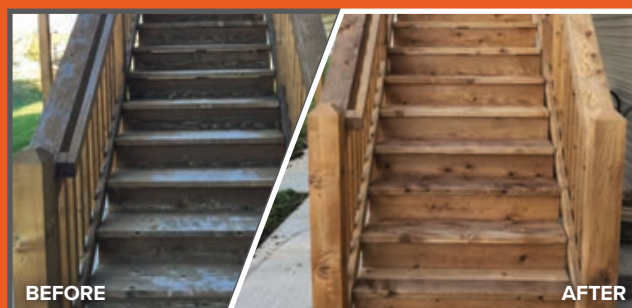
“The blues is our heritage,” Alex Peterson says. “It’s important to keep it going.”

See more of **Julia Robinson**’s work at juliarobinsonphoto.com.



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This knife boasts a full tang blade, meaning the blade doesn't stop at the handle, it runs the full length of the knife. According to Gear Patrol, a full tang blade is key, saying "A full tang lends structural strength to the knife, allowing for better leverage ...think one long steel beam versus two."

With our limited edition **River Canyon Bowie Knife** you're getting the best in 21st-century construction with a classic look inspired by legendary American pioneers. What you won't get is the trumped up price tag. We know a thing or two about the hunt—like how to seek out and capture an outstanding, collector's-quality knife that won't cut into your bank account.

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• Full tang 4 1/4" stainless steel blade, 9" overall length • Genuine horn, wood and bone handle • Polished brass guard and spacers • Includes leather sheath

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Thank a Farmer

Celebrate National Ag Day



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER ALAN LESLEY

MARCH 14 IS NATIONAL AG DAY, HOSTED FOR THE 46TH YEAR BY the Agriculture Council of America. It's a good time to reflect on and appreciate the contributions of American farmers, who receive just 14.8 cents, on average, of every food dollar consumers spend throughout the year, according to the National Farmers Union. The remaining 85 percent of food revenues go to marketing, processing, wholesale, distribution and retail costs.

National Ag Day coincides with the beginning of cotton, corn, sorghum and soybean planting season for many Texas farmers. Think of the wide variety of commodities and products those crops alone make possible—clothing and other textiles, animal feed, renewable fuels such as ethanol, and many

convenience food products.

With each U.S. farmer feeding an average of about 165 people in exchange for a modest financial reward and, frequently, a lack of recognition, let's take a moment to honor the hard work they do for our country's benefit and that of others around the world. Agriculture is America's No. 1 export, a vitally important contributor to sustaining a healthy economy, and these stewards of our nation's bounty deserve our gratitude and support.

Here at Comanche Electric Cooperative, we honor and appreciate the hardworking individuals who continue to bless us with their rich bounty and ask you to join us as we do so.

Thank a farmer today!



Generator Safety

Know the rules

AS WE HEAD INTO SPRING STORM SEASON, Comanche Electric Cooperative encourages you to review these safety rules for portable generator use.

Never connect a standby generator to your home's electrical system. Following are the only two safe ways to connect a standby generator to your equipment.

Stationary generator: An approved generator transfer switch, which keeps your home's circuits separate from the co-op's, should be installed by a professional.

Portable generator: Plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator.

Set up and run your generator in a well-ventilated area outside the home. Make sure it's away from your garage, doors, windows and vents. The carbon monoxide generated is deadly.

Use a heavy-duty extension cord to connect electric appliances to the outlet on the generator.

Start the generator before connecting appliances.

When the weather creates wet or damp conditions, use a generator only when necessary. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopylike structure on a dry surface where water cannot pool or drain under it.

Be sure the generator is turned off and cool before fueling it.

Keep children and pets away from portable generators. Many generator components are hot enough to cause burns during operation.

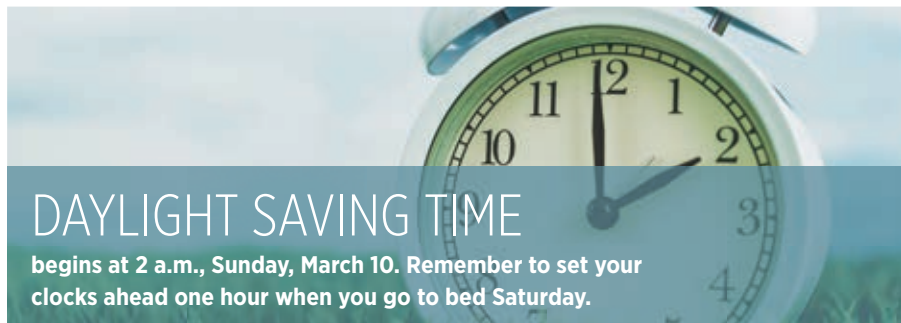
Contact our member services department at 1-800-915-2533 for advice on how to safely connect your generator.



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OFFICE HOURS

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Early Office: Monday, Wednesday
and Friday, 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., closed
1–2 p.m.

Eastland Office: Tuesday and
Thursday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.

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by calling 1-800-915-2533.

Contact Us

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FUTURE LEADERS TO TOUR WASHINGTON, DC

KAYLEAH HALL AND K'LEIGH HARLIN HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO represent Comanche Electric Cooperative on the Government-in-Action Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.

Hall, a junior at Bangs High School, is the daughter of Louis and Rachel Hall. She plays volleyball and basketball and runs cross-country and track. She is a 4-H member, a member of the band and competes in various UIL activities. Hall is also the junior class officer and participates in numerous community activities.

"Being given the chance to visit Washington, D.C., would affect my future in a tremendous way," Hall wrote. "America is a nation of strength, pride, resilience and determination. She has been shaken by many trials and tribulations but has never been shattered. Throughout war and great hardship, the American flag has always kept flying. This being said, America is only as strong as her leaders, [who] have proven themselves to be strong leaders, indeed. Washington, D.C., fosters numerous steadfast leaders that would serve as an inspiration for me. Seeing their example firsthand would spur me to be a more confident and decisive leader in the future."

Harlin, a junior at De Leon High School, is the daughter of Julie and Larry Harlin. She is a member of the band; UIL one-act play; student council; National Honor Society; Future Teachers of America; and Family, Career and Community Leaders of America. Harlin also participates in a multitude of community events.

"I would love to broaden my horizons," she wrote. "I love traveling, exploring new places and learning about the many different states in the United States. I am very excited to have



Kayleah Hall, left, and K'Leigh Harlin are headed to Washington, D.C.

the chance to explore our nation's capital and learn further history of our nation. I attended the Texas 4-H Congress as a member of the House of Representatives this past summer in Austin and learned a lot about how the government works. I am very intrigued about our government and its many branches. After my trip to Congress, I would love the opportunity to learn more about our government. I have been thinking a lot lately about what I would like to do once I graduate high school. A trip to Washington, D.C., would open a world of possibilities for me after high school."

Congratulations to these two outstanding young ladies.

MEET THE NEWEST MEMBERS OF YOUR CECA TEAM

PLEASE JOIN US IN WELCOMING THE NEWEST MEMBERS OF OUR team to the Comanche Electric Cooperative family.

Dylan Powell, pictured left, is an Early High School graduate and attained the Eagle Scout rank. He graduated from Northwest Lineman College in 2013 and resides in Early with his two dogs, a basset hound named Waylon and a German shorthaired pointer named Louie.

Austin Baugh, center, is a Brownwood native raised by his mom Teresa and his grandmother, Irene. Baugh attended Early High School, and after graduation, he joined the Marine Corps, in which he honorably served our country from 2012 to 2016. He now resides in Early with his wife, Kassie, their son, Jaxtyn, and his dog, Bud.



Matthew Majors is an Eastland High School graduate. He enjoys going to the lake with his family and hunting and fishing. In his time off from CECA, Majors also farms and ranches, cultivating his hay crop during the summer.



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Five \$2,000 Scholarship for Excellence, and two \$1,000 Operation Round Up Scholarships will be awarded.

Deadline: March 22, 2019

Application Process: Visit our website at www.ceca.coop. Click on the Scholarship drop down box under "Youth Opportunities," and fill out the online application.

**For additional information
contact the Member Services
department at 800-915-2533, or
email memberservices@ceca.coop.**



Work zone safety is everyone's responsibility.

Slow down and move over when passing a work zone.

Respect the **ZONE.** Get everyone **HOME.**

ORANGE CONES, FLASHING LIGHTS AND WARNING SIGNS all indicate a roadway work zone. Within these zones are men and women who may be doing road construction, power line maintenance or tree trimming.

Unfortunately, hundreds of these workers are injured every year from work and road hazards. The Texas Move Over/Slow Down law requires drivers approaching an emergency vehicle stopped on the roadway with emergency lights flashing to do one of two things: Move out of the lane nearest to the emergency vehicle or slow down to 20 mph below the posted speed limit. While lineworkers are not specifically included in this law, we ask everyone to apply the Move Over/Slow Down guidelines when approaching Comanche Electric Cooperative work zones.

Distracted driving is another hazard our linemen face when working along roadsides. CECA urges

motorists to slow down and pay attention in work zones while driving.

“Keeping a safe distance between your car and the utility workers and equipment, driving the posted work zone speed limit and using your four-way flashers when stopping or traveling slowly can help reduce accidents in work zones,” says Eddie Strube, CECA director of outside operations.

“Power poles and electrical equipment line our streets and highways, and narrow roadways often require crews to place their equipment in traffic lanes,” Strube says. “Their work activities are often taken for granted but benefit us all, and like everyone, they deserve a safe workplace, especially when working to restore power during storms. Be alert to utility crews and other work zone workers for their safety as well as yours.”

Don't make their jobs more dangerous. Drive safely.



To help prevent fatalities and injuries, CECA recommends the following while driving:

- Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and traffic barriers, trucks, construction equipment and workers.
- Be patient. Traffic delays are sometimes unavoidable, so try to allow time for unexpected occurrences in your schedule.
- Obey all signs and road crew flag instructions.
- Merge early and be courteous to other drivers.
- Use your headlights at dusk and during inclement weather.
- Minimize distractions. Avoid activities such as operating a cellphone or the radio or eating while driving.
- Be aware of the laws in your area. Many states levy hefty fines or even jail time for violating traffic laws in work zones.

Go Paperless With E-Bill From CECA

About e-bills

Electronic bills, or e-bills, are a convenient, secure and environmentally friendly way of delivering many of the bills you pay. Because of that, more and more Comanche Electric Cooperative members are choosing to have their bills delivered electronically.

What's an e-bill?

An e-bill is an electronic version of a paper bill that you can view and pay online. Instead of being sent to your home mailbox, your bill will be delivered to your email inbox.

E-bills contain all of the same information you're used to seeing on your paper bills.

How do I sign up?

Simply access your online account by going to www.ceca.coop and logging in.

Don't have a login yet? Contact a member services representative at 1-800-915-2533 for first-time login instructions. They will provide you with a temporary login to get you started on an easier, better way to pay your bill.

Once you have signed up to receive e-bills, you can turn off your paper bill and streamline your bill-paying routine. Plus, e-bills can be printed or filed online for record keeping if needed.

When you're ready to pay, all you need to do is log in to your CECA account online, enter the amount, schedule the date you want the bill paid and click to pay. It's that easy. With the rising cost of postage, it's a great way to save a few dollars. And no more messy bills cluttering your space!

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64445/64446

BLACK
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| 14,000 CU. IN. STORAGE CAPACITY | 14,529 CU. IN. |
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\$479.99 PRICE \$2,605

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**Width not including handles

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- 9 LED
- Compact, Lightweight

COMPARE TO RAYOVAC \$350

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NOW \$529.99

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NOW \$5.99

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10" SLIDING COMPOUND MITER SAW

- Powerful 15 amp motor

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14" ELECTRIC CHAIN SAW

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$39.99

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Limit 4 - Coupon valid through 7/1/19*

Bauer **SUPER COUPON**

10 AMP DEEP CUT VARIABLE SPEED BAND SAW KIT

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$99.99

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MODEL: DWM120

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

Customer Rating ★★★★★

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1500 WATT DUAL TEMPERATURE HEAT GUN (572°/1112°)

Customer Rating ★★★★★

NOW \$8.99

COMPARE TO BLACK & DECKER \$28.06

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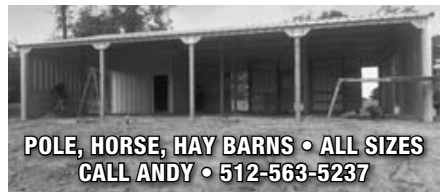
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A Hero in Any Language

Mexican immigrant Marcelino Serna became the most decorated Texan of World War I

BY MARTHA DEERING

AROUND 1915, AN UNASSUMING LAD named Marcelino Serna traveled 220 miles from his home in Chihuahua City, Mexico, to El Paso. He was searching for work and a better life in the United States. Not only would he find work, but he also would give his adopted country a gift of uncommon valor.

Serna was born in a mining camp April 26, 1896, and he yearned for a piece of the American dream. He found railroad work that took him to Kansas, but two years later, he was working in Colorado's sugar beet fields when federal officials arrested him. To avoid deportation and prove he wanted to be a U.S. citizen, Serna volunteered for the Army.

World War I was raging in Europe when the U.S. entered the fray in 1917. After three weeks of training, Serna was shipped to England. Sent to fight in the trenches of France, he learned through an interpreter that his superiors offered him a discharge because his papers stated he was a Mexican citizen. He declined.

As Serna's unit moved toward the Meuse River and Argonne Forest in northeastern France, a German machine gunner shot down 12 soldiers. Serna, the scout for his unit, advanced.

"I jumped up and ran about 10 yards and then hit the dirt," he told the *El Paso Times* in 1962. "I kept this up until I was on the machine gunner's left flank. He had hit my helmet with bullets twice during the run. When I got close enough, I threw four grenades into the nest. Eight Ger-

mans came out with their hands up. Another six were in the nest—dead."

During a second scouting mission at Meuse-Argonne, Serna captured 24 German soldiers. He then shot a sniper at 200 yards and lobbed three grenades into a trench. The survivors came out with their hands up.

After months of combat in which he didn't get so much as a scratch, Serna was shot in both legs by a sniper four days before the armistice. He hobbled toward his lines using his rifle as a crutch. He spent several months in an Army hospital in France where Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, pinned a Distinguished Service Cross on him.

Serna's uniform eventually bore two French Croix de Guerre with bronze palm medals, an Italian Croce al Merito di Guerra, a French Médaille Militaire, French Commemorative Medal, World War I Victory Medal with five stars, Victory Medal with three campaign bars,

St. Mihiel Medal, Verdun Medal and two Purple Hearts, which made him the most highly decorated World War I soldier in Texas.

"Marcelino Serna is remarkable for the many combat decorations he received, and for the one he did not receive—the Medal of Honor," says Andrés Tijerina, professor of history at Austin Community College. Serna did not speak French when he received the Croix de Guerre, Tijerina says, nor did he speak Italian when he received the Croce al Merito. Yet U.S. Army superiors told him he was not eligible for the American Medal of Honor due to his limited English.

After the war, Serna settled in El Paso, where he and his wife raised six children. In 1924, he became a citizen and participated in Veterans Day parades until his death in 1992 at the age of 95. In 2017, the Tornillo Port of Entry in El Paso was renamed the Marcelino Serna POE.

Martha Deering, a member of Heart of Texas EC, lives near McGregor.





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Winner, Winner, Chicken Dinner!

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE REDUX IS chicken cacciatore, a classic Italian-American dish that appeared in the magazine in August 1949. "Did you ever stop to wonder whether that old Sunday standby—roast chicken—is boring your family to death?" the recipe's introduction inquires. I never tire of roast chicken, but I love this classic preparation in which chicken is first browned and then finished in a fragrant tomato sauce. To suit contemporary tastes, I pan-fry the chicken in olive oil (instead of shortening) and use thighs or drumsticks instead of the whole bird because it's easier. Adding more vegetables and introducing white wine and fresh herbs creates an aromatic braising liquid for the chicken.

PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR

Chicken Cacciatore

- 8 chicken thighs or drumsticks
- Salt and pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 celery stalks, diced
- 2 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 1 large can (28 ounces) crushed tomatoes
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 bay leaves, fresh or dried

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Heat a Dutch oven over medium-high heat and add the olive oil. When the oil is hot and shimmering, add the chicken pieces and cook, turning once, until well-browned on each side. Transfer the chicken pieces to a plate.
3. Add the celery, carrots, onion and garlic to the Dutch oven and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32



See a video online to watch Paula make this recipe.

Retro Recipes

Winner, Winner, Chicken Dinner



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

ABBIE ARGERSINGER | BLUEBONNET EC

This recipe is a reminder that sometimes the most straightforward preparations yield the most satisfying results. "This dish is deceptively simple but so delicious," Argersinger writes. The key, she says, is using a pan small enough that the thighs fit snugly, so the chicken cooks in the rendered fat and juices while the skin crisps up.

Sort-of-Confite Chicken Thighs

- 2 sweet onions, chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 8 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs
- 2 lemons
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground pepper

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Combine the onion and olive oil in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, toss to combine and spread evenly over the bottom. Lay the thighs in the dish, skin side up, then use a zester to grate lemon zest over them. Squeeze the lemon over the

chicken, then sprinkle with salt and pepper, using your fingers to evenly distribute seasonings.

3. Place the pan in the oven. After 10–15 minutes, when you see the juices begin to release from the thighs, start basting them every 10 minutes or so. Continue basting periodically until the onions are soft and the chicken skin is browned and crispy, about 50–60 minutes, allowing the thighs to crisp in the oven for at least 5 more minutes after the last basting. Let the dish rest for a few minutes, then serve over rice or pasta, spooning the onions and juices over each portion. ▶ Serves 4–6.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

cook until the vegetables are browned and begin to caramelize, about 6–7 minutes, stirring once halfway through. Add the tomato paste and cook 1–2 minutes more. Add the wine and stir to scrape up the browned bits on the pot bottom. Add the tomatoes, chicken stock, thyme and bay leaves, and bring the liquid to a simmer. Return the chicken to the pot, cover, and bake until the chicken begins to pull away from the bone, 45–60 minutes. To serve, remove the thyme sprigs and bay leaves. Serve the chicken and sauce over steamed rice, pasta or polenta, as desired. ▶ Serves 4.

COOK'S TIP If you like a spicy sauce, add crushed red pepper flakes or a pinch of cayenne when you add the tomato paste.

Herbed Cream Chicken

MARIAN EVONIUK | PEDERNALES EC

What's not to love about spiced chicken that's browned and roasted until tender, then topped with a cream sauce flavored with fresh dill, parsley and thyme? Feel free to swap your favorite herbs into the mix—oregano, marjoram or rosemary would also be delicious.

CHICKEN

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup flour
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon smoked paprika
- 3–4 pounds chicken legs and thighs (see Cook's Tip)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, lard or shortening
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup coarsely chopped yellow or white onion

HERBED CREAM SAUCE

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coarsely chopped yellow or white onion
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh dill
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons finely chopped fresh thyme leaves
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt



\$100 Recipe Contest

August's recipe contest topic is **Here's the Beef**. We're looking for inspired recipes, including burgers, fajitas and tenderloin, from beef-loving Texans. The deadline is **March 10**.

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.

1. CHICKEN: Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a 9-inch pie dish or medium mixing bowl, combine the flour, salt, pepper, garlic powder, onion powder and paprika. Coat the chicken legs and thighs in the seasoned flour and set aside.

3. Heat the oil in a large, nonstick frying pan over medium-high heat and add the chicken. Fry until just golden brown, about 3–5 minutes per side, reducing heat to medium if necessary to prevent scorching. Transfer the chicken to a large roaster or baking pan with a tight-fitting lid, reserving the drippings in the pan. Sprinkle the chicken with the onion, cover, and roast in oven until the chicken is cooked through, about 1 hour and 15 minutes.

4. HERBED CREAM SAUCE: While the chicken is roasting, prepare the sauce. Using the same frying pan, add the butter to the pan drippings and melt over medium heat. Add the onion, cover and cook until tender, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Stir in the dill, parsley and thyme and cook an additional 30 sec-

onds. Add the whipping cream and salt and cook uncovered over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until mixture boils and becomes slightly thickened, about 2–3 minutes. Set aside. When chicken is done, remove from oven and drain juices (you can save it for future gravies or dressings). Pour the sauce over the chicken, cover and return to oven. Reduce heat to 325 degrees and cook an additional 15–20 minutes, until cream mixture is thick and bubbly. Remove from oven and serve over pasta, potatoes, rice or cooked cauliflower. ▶ Serves 4–6.

COOK'S TIP Feel free to substitute chicken breasts for legs and thighs. To do this, reduce roasting time to 30 minutes before adding the herbed cream sauce and cook an additional 15–20 minutes until sauce is thick and bubbly.

WEB EXTRAS

▶ Read these recipes on our website to see the original Chicken Cacciatore recipe from August 1949 and find a recipe for Indian Cilantro Chicken.

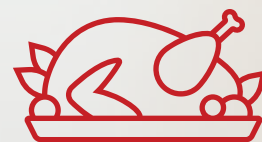
Words for Better Birds

Season all cuts of chicken with salt and pepper (and if you'd like, a drizzle of olive oil) and let them marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes before cooking.

When using ground poultry: A mix that includes thigh meat, with its higher fat content, will have the richest flavor.

Whether you're grilling, searing or roasting, allow chicken to rest 10 minutes after cooking to let the juices to settle.

We're often told chicken is "done" when the juices run clear, but the best and safest indicator of doneness is a temperature of 165 degrees. Digital, instant-read thermometers yield the quickest, most accurate results. —PD



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

◀ **MIKE PRESTIGIACOMO**, Bartlett EC: Redwoods



▲ **SHARMAN BROWN**, Fannin County EC: Cardinals seek refuge in an icy crepe myrtle tree next to a bird feeder.

▼ **BOBBY NORRIS**, Pedernales EC: Aspens turn golden orange in Wyoming.



▲ **MARK LOWTHORP**, Cherokee County EC: A canopy of tree limbs contrasted against a blue and white sky.

▼ **GARY OTT**, Pedernales EC: "Bald cypress trees draped with Spanish moss tower over the slough of Caddo Lake State Park in East Texas."



UPCOMING CONTESTS

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| JULY TRUCKS | DUE MARCH 10 |
| AUGUST FAMILY TIES | DUE APRIL 10 |
| SEPTEMBER TEXAS VACATION | DUE MAY 10 |

All entries must include name, address, daytime phone and co-op affiliation, plus the contest topic and a brief description of your photo.

ONLINE: Submit highest-resolution digital images at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.
MAIL: Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We do not accept entries via email. We regret that *Texas Co-op Power* cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.

Pick of the Month St. Paddy's Texas Style

Lewisville March 16

(972) 219-3401, cityoflewisville.com

Lewisville celebrates St. Patrick's Day with a nod to Texas Independence Day. The event at Wayne Ferguson Plaza features Irish music and dance, Texas music, beer and an outdoor movie. Plus, there are activities for kids, including a 50-foot zip line.



March 7

La Grange [7-9] Best Little Cowboy Gathering in Texas, (979) 249-3033, bestlittlecowboygathering.org

Waco [7-9] Round Up, (281) 785-7372, tassd.org

Irving [7-10] Texas Steel Guitar Association Jamboree, (817) 558-3481, texassteelguitar.org

9

Bastrop Bastrop County Master Gardeners Plant Sale, (512) 957-1443, bastropcountymga.org

Victoria Run the Night 5K, (361) 578-8182, theridingtherapycenter.org

Huntsville [9-10] Rusty, Chippy, Vintage, Hippy & Garden Show, (936) 661-2545, huntsvilleantiqueshow.com

San Antonio [9-10] Fiesta of Gems, (830) 387-1766, swgms.org

Conroe [9, 13-16] Rising Stars & Legends of Texas, (936) 828-6881, greaterconroeartsalliance.com

March 9-10
Huntsville
Rusty, Chippy, Vintage,
Hippy & Garden Show



11

Hamilton Spring Fling, (254) 372-4572

12

Nederland [12-17] Heritage Festival, (409) 724-2269, nederlandhf.org

15

Granbury [15-16] Junkin' in the Hood and FUMC Market, (817) 408-7687

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16

Burton Texas Ranger Day, (979) 251-4078, burtonheritagesociety.org

Gonzales Master Gardeners Spring Plant Sale, (830) 203-0311, gonzalesmastergardeners.org

Jasper Azalea Festival, (409) 384-2762, jaspercoc.org

Temple Bell County AgriLife Extension Education Association Luncheon & Style Show, (254) 933-5305

22

Hallettsville [22-24] South Texas Polka & Sausage Fest, (361) 798-2311, kchall.com

23

Coldspring Garden Club Spring Fling, (407) 754-5063, coldspringgardenclub.org

Weslaco Texas Onion Fest, (956) 968-2102, weslaco.com

Brenham [23-24, 30-31, April 6-7] Spring Bluebonnet Wine and Cheese Trail, (979) 337-7580, texasbluebonnetwinetrail.com

26

Winnsboro Hooves and Halos Playday, (903) 563-1449, hoovesandhalos.org

29

Llano [29-30] Wildflowers in Bloom Quilt Show, (325) 423-5487

30

Bonham Fannin County Master Gardeners Garden Expo, (903) 583-7453



March 26
Winnsboro
Hooves and Halos
Playday

Burnet Lawn and Garden Show, (254) 498-6009, burnetcountyhighlandlakesmastergardener.org

Goliad [30-31] Goliad Massacre and Living History Program, (361) 645-3752, texasarmy.org

Round Mountain [30-31, April 6-7] Bunkhouse Gallery Art Show and Sale, (512) 517-3453, bunkhousegallery.com

April
6

Crockett Lee Ann Womack, (936) 544-4276, pwfaa.org

Denton Opening Day for Denton Community Market, (940) 268-4326, dentoncommunitymarket.com

Waxahachie Waxahachie Symphony Association Presents Pianist Sean Chen, (210) 865-6185, waxahachiesymphony.org

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Small Wonder

Tiny Round Top in east Central Texas packs striking inspiration

BY JESSICA RIDGE

MY HUSBAND'S FAMILY GOES BACK GENERATIONS in Round Top. His great-grandparents, Friedrich and Katarina Kuehne, raised six children in a white farmhouse bought in 1898 that stands just steps from the town's bustling Henkel Square and time-capsule fire station. Despite this connection, he and I had never explored the area until a recent stay spent ferreting out some of its less trumpeted attractions.

Though many are aware of Round Top's famous pies and semiannual antiques show, some of the town's gems hover just under the radar. With its gently rolling hills, array of cultural outposts and proximity to three major cities, Round Top offers a tranquil, chic respite for the skyscraper-weary.

Flophouze Hotel, a member of Fayette Electric Cooperative, on Round Top's outskirts, provides a stylish antidote to frazzled urban pilgrims who make the sub-two-hour trek from Austin, Houston or San Antonio. Most wouldn't consider staying overnight in a shipping container, the lodging for the hotel's guests, a luxurious affair. From the outside, after all, it looks like a metal box.

But the container's exterior camouflages the thoughtful, efficient design within. Featuring plenty of natural light, reclaimed wood, high-design furnishings and a portable turntable next to an eclectic selection of vinyl and board games, the modest square footage takes on airy, surprising dimensions. The 8-foot-wide "flophouzes" forgo TV (though there is Wi-Fi for those panicky about disconnecting), but windows bookending the unit offer their own peaceful programming: expansive views of the pasture that hosts the containers along with roaming cows, which seemed to register our presence with a ruminant's equanimity. The hotel's pool (also fashioned out of a shipping container), hammocks and fire pits ringed by



Flophouze Hotel's fire pits lure guests outdoors to stargaze.

Adirondack chairs—perfect for moon-gazing—round out the full analog recreational complement.

In the town's center, **Round Top Family Library**, a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member, proved another example of good things flourishing in small spaces. The state's smallest accredited library, its story unfolds like a fairy tale: Founded in 1999, it's housed in the former Hope Lutheran Church, built in 1925. The building was dismantled and moved in seven pieces from nearby Milam County before ultimately being reassembled. The vestibule's stained glass hints at the space's former identity. Bookshelves are stationed where parishioners would have gathered almost a century ago—poetic placement for any bibliophile. "Books are special treasures," said Barbara Smith, library director. The cozy yet sweeping scale of the interior makes an elegant backdrop for the library's trove.

Perhaps the centerpiece of local cultural gems, **Round Top Festival Institute**—nestled in the woods down a nondescript road—hosts a jewel box of a performing arts venue, with intricate handcarved wooden panels, sumptuous red brocade seats and sublime

acoustics that eschew microphones. For decades, it has provided education and scholarships to young musicians from around the world, and its Bybee Library boasts a formidable collection of 40,000-plus rare books and architectural artifacts.

The Bybee's noncirculating collection is open for tours and research by appointment, with free admission. Associate curator of collections Pat Johnson showed us several highlights, including books inscribed by Lady Bird Johnson and J. Frank Dobie and a pair of Italian Baroque armchairs from Arturo Toscanini's New York residence, Villa Pauline—alongside a photo of the famed conductor seated in one of the chairs at home. We saw imposing cast-iron doors and a transom from Texas' 1917 General Land Office building and a massive brass dinner gong from a 19th-century English manor that Johnson noted, correctly, my husband was just itching to strike. Said Johnson, a clay artist, "I don't come out of here without having something inspire me."

Texas native **Jessica Ridge** is a TEC communications specialist. She lives in Austin.



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