

OUTLANDISH CHARACTERS
OF BYGONE RODEOS

WHEN THE QUEEN
CAME TO TEXAS

CHET LOOKS AT
BUDDY HOLLY'S LEGACY

Texas Coop Power

FOR CECA MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2022

Esports Enters the Arena

Students play their way
to scholarships and careers
in video gaming





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February 2022



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The booming business of esports finds eager participants in rural schools.

By Chris Burrows

Stretching the Blanket

Outlandish characters and hard-to-believe yarns defined the early days of Texas rodeo.

By Gene Fowler
Illustration by Douglas Jones

ON THE COVER

At 100,000 square feet, Esports Stadium Arlington is the largest dedicated gaming facility in North America.

Photo courtesy Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau

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'Dillo Day

THE FOLKS IN BEE CAVE, just west of Austin, don't pay much attention to Punxsutawney Phil on Groundhog Day. Instead, they rely on an armadillo named Bee Cave Bob on February 2 to prognosticate the arrival of spring. Bob has served the role since 2012.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

THE BABY OF THE FAMILY ALWAYS ...

TCP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town.

Below are some of the responses to our December prompt: **The hardest job in the world has to be ...**

A single mom.

TISH CORTINAS
COSERV
MCKINNEY

That's easy. Utility lineman.

GINA SCHULTE HALLE
VIA FACEBOOK

Still being a rancher in Central Texas when you are 88 years old.

SCOTT SINGLETON
PEDERNALES EC
MARBLE FALLS

Taking care of your aging, ailing parents.

MARY DIAZ
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC
SHERMAN

The caretaker of a spouse with dementia.

SHARON MARTIN
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GRANBURY

To see more responses, read Currents online.

TWOSDAY

February flaunts a special Tuesday this year with a rare numerical alignment: 2/22/22. And twice that day, at 2:22, deuces are really wild.

(If you insist on using the 24-hour clock, the second instance of twos aligning that day will be 22:22.)

Best Dressed

The nation's
electric co-ops
have deployed
enough wind
and solar power
capacity to
serve nearly

2.7
million
homes.

A **TEXAS A&M** University professor has developed water-based nanocoatings that, when added to military uniforms, protect against fire and UV light and change color in the presence of certain chemicals.

The softness of cotton and the strength of nylon are typically compromised when a protective property is added, but Jaime Grunlan has come up with a nontoxic solution that can add protection without changing the structure of the fabric. He hopes this technology can also benefit nonmilitary protective clothing.



50 Years of Easy Joe

Mr. Coffee, the first automatic drip machine for home use, started making it a little easier to get going in the morning in 1972.



TCP Contests and More

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Industrial

RECOMMENDED READING
Chet Garner visited another West Texas spot with keepsakes from a musical legend, Roy Orbison, in *Wink's Spectacle* from September 2019.



A Wonderful Flick

"It is nice that this old black-and-white movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*, is still a treasure. I bet it will be for another 75 years."

STEPHANIE RIGGIN
BLUEBONNET EC
LOCKHART

Looking Out for Bison

I was born in the Ozarks at Evening Shade, Arkansas, but I got here as quickly as I could. I married a native Texas girl 20 years ago.

I am a true Texas history buff and love your monthly stories. I had never heard of the Texas State Bison Herd [*Last of Their Kind*, November 2021]. Please keep the stories coming.

J.D. Perkins III
Bluebonnet EC
Red Rock

What one animal said to another [*Safe Passage*, November 2021]: "Oh, let's don't cross here. Let's go down to the land bridge, which is 5 miles south of here. It's much safer."

JOHN PERRIN
VIA FACEBOOK

Snowbird Love

My husband and I are winter Texans. Your magazine teaches us about our winter home state and provides us with travel ideas while we are there.

Merlene S. DeZur
NEC Co-op Energy
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

True to Her Word

I live in the Maverick community [*Biography of a Word*, November 2021]. My house is near the old Maverick School, which I love to photograph. A roadside marker dedicated to Maverick is nearby. And, yes, I am a maverick.

Sherry York
Via Facebook

Reaching Readers

Carpe Diem, Mom [December 2021] so aptly expressed Babs Rodriguez's feelings in a clear and fun way. It also demonstrated her love of her parents and family, which is always nice to hear.

Greg Sethness
Central Texas EC
Sunrise Beach



ANNA GODEASSI

WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER Volume 78, Number 8 (USPS 540-560). *Texas Co-op Power* is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC). Periodical postage paid at Austin, TX, and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 75 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power's* website is TexasCoopPower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or email editor@TexasCoopPower.com.

SUBSCRIPTIONS Subscription price is \$4.20 per year for individual members of subscribing cooperatives and is paid from equity accruing to the member. If you are not a member of a subscribing cooperative, you can purchase an annual subscription at the nonmember rate of \$7.50. Individual copies and back issues are available for \$3 each.

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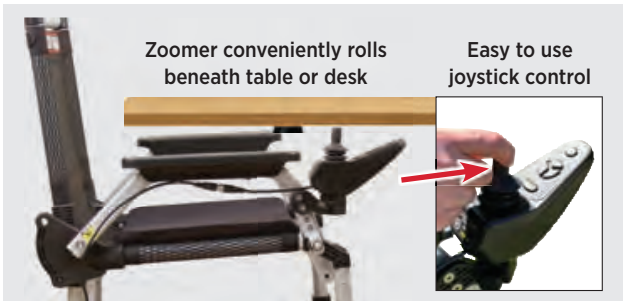
Sincerely, A. Macon, Williamsburg, VA

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A Whole New Ballgame

**The booming business
of esports finds eager
participants in rural schools**

BY CHRIS BURROWS

Ryan Conger thought his athletics career was over.

Rounding third base in a baseball game in 2017, the LeTourneau University sophomore hit an uneven spot in the field. He heard a pop in his knee and knew right away it was his ACL. He was gutted.

"I was like, man, if I don't have baseball, I really don't know what I'm going to do," he said. "I make good grades, but it was only because I wanted to play baseball."

Sidelined with what can be a career-ending injury, Conger channeled his competitive energy into a video game called NBA 2K. The native of Palmer, south of Dallas, worked his way up the basketball game's rankings, playing against others from around the world, and was drafted in 2018 by a professional competitive gaming affiliate of the Dallas Mavericks NBA team.

In September, Conger and his team won their second straight championship on a virtual basketball court, marking Conger as one of the best NBA 2K players in the world and earning him a cut of a half-million-dollar prize. His competitive career wasn't over; it just looks a whole lot different now.

Conger and his teammates occupy one of the many big and bright stages of competitive video gaming—known as esports—and their work and winnings are made possible by the booming new industry that attracts 26.6 million monthly viewers who watch gamers compete in a vast array of virtual venues. Beyond sports games, the online universe extends to strategy and battle arena games and even traditional board games, like chess.

Esports brought in more than \$1 billion in revenue for the first time in 2021 and has given rise to a whole host of career paths for professionals in marketing, information



technology, game design, broadcasting and many other fields—in addition to the game-playing pros on arena stages and online. Now educators at schools are preparing students to take advantage.

"Esports is not the five professionals sitting on the stage," said Matt Tarpley, a member of the Texas Scholastic Esports Federation board. "There's 10 times more people behind the scenes doing all sorts of other work."

In 2018, Tarpley approached the principal at the high school in Merkel, west of Abilene, where he worked in IT. He pitched a gaming team that would be managed by an esports-centered marketing class.

"I said, 'Man, I don't necessarily understand this, but I do understand that our kids are going to be into it, so let's try it,'" Principal James Stevens said. Tarpley taught the class and coached the team, and more than two-thirds of the school's students expressed interest in the class.

"We used to get in trouble for playing video games, but now it's really cool because we see that video games help us develop our problem-solving skills, our critical-thinking skills," said Jansen Wilhite, who took over for Tarpley in 2021. "These are all great skills to have for when we enter the job force."

Wilhite grew up with video games, playing Donkey Kong as a child and World of Warcraft with her husband as an adult. Her degree is in microbiology, but she teaches physics and now Merkel's gaming course, where her students learn all about the types of video games, how they're developed and how to foster positive gameplay environments.

"I never anticipated a career in video games, but here we are," Wilhite said. "It's really cool for me to get to use both halves of myself at work."

ABOVE Ryan Conger competes in the 2021 NBA 2K league playoffs four years after an ACL tear ended his college baseball career. Conger said he planned to use his winnings to help his father open a food truck.



Wilhite also runs Merkel’s after-school esports team, which competes in online chess and other video games against teams across Texas. Like the team at Sabine High School, in Upshur Rural Electric Cooperative’s territory in Northeast Texas, where technology director Randy Cox was surprised by the buy-in he received from the superintendent.

“When you tell someone you want to start a program where we do competitive video games, I expected to get a little bit of a laugh, but he was very supportive,” Cox said. “It’s one more thing that students can get involved in with our school.”

Merkel, Sabine and more than 400 other high schools across Texas now field esports teams, and even some middle schools are beginning to form clubs—part of a pipeline forming to feed some 250 colleges across the country that offer nearly \$15 million in scholarships to esports competitors and to feed the array of fields that support all of it.

Dallas public schools boast 60 esports clubs, but rural districts like Merkel and Sabine are making sure their students don’t get left behind. They’re working cooperatively to learn what’s working and what isn’t, how to get buy-in from administrators, where to get resources for

computers and equipment, and how to form leagues while the University Interscholastic League ponders official esports inclusion. Not every school has gamers on staff, fast internet or money for high-powered computers.

“Our rural schools in our area have always said, ‘Hey, we understand that we can’t do this by ourselves, but if we come together, we can get things done,’” said Shawn Schlueter, a

Esports brought in more than \$1 billion in revenue for the first time in 2021.

Now educators at schools are preparing students to take advantage.

technology consultant who works with educators in 13 counties. “We’re starting to see that where administrators and even interested teachers are calling us and saying, ‘You know, I see that [esports] could be valuable. How do I get going with it?’ ”

That value extends beyond the classroom. Esports can have profound benefits for students who aren’t interested in traditional sports, extending to them the positive effects of team building, communication and community support that have long been available to athletes.

“I always say that esports programs are primed for the kids who slip through the cracks of schools,” Schlueter said. “Even in a rural school where everybody has to do something, there are groups of

OPPOSITE PAGE The Mavs Gaming Hub in Dallas, site of last year's NBA 2K playoffs. THIS PAGE, FROM TOP The Merkel High School esports marketing class hosts a tournament. University of North Texas students celebrate at a national tournament. Texas Wesleyan University students compete.



kids that do nothing, and this helps engage those kids.”

Principal Stevens has seen it firsthand at Merkel.

“It’s attracted a lot of the kids who showed up at 8 and left at 4,” he said. “I’ve seen better participation, better grades, better attendance out of all those students, and it gave them something to be proud of involved with the school.”

Some of those students followed Tarpley to McMurry University in Abilene, where he now coaches the esports program.

“They’re on track to get a degree all because of esports,” Stevens said.



In Texas, dozens of smaller and lower-profile colleges like McMurry are cashing in by enticing competitors with scholarship money. The University of North Texas and the University of Texas at Dallas field some of the most competitive esports programs in the nation, part of a burgeoning esports hotbed in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, where the \$10 million Esports Stadium Arlington—the largest such venue in North America—has space for 2,500 spectators.

But there are opportunities everywhere for esports professionals like Kyle Murto.

He was preparing for a college soccer career when a string of injuries put him in the hospital, where he cracked open his laptop and climbed the ranks. Pro teams didn’t come calling, but Blinn College did. Now Murto helps coach the Brenham-based school’s esports team, which competes against Division I giants—and wins.

“Smaller schools don’t have that name recognition, so we have to go out and make a name for ourselves before the universities really get into the game,” Murto said.

At McMurry, Tarpley is focused on education and personal growth, not wins and losses. He holds workshops for content creation, personal branding and livestreaming and finds graphic design, statistics, broadcasting and other work for students to master.

“Everybody wants to be in this space,” he said. “It’s going to be everywhere eventually. It’s just a matter of time.”

Tarpley’s team meets regularly with a mental health coach—esports’ version of an athletic trainer—and he strives to make sure women are included in an activity that’s been dominated by men. He’s not forming the next Ryan Conger but the next Jansen Wilhite—multiskilled gamers and leaders who can cultivate programs like Merkel’s.

“I had several local schools call me, several local principals that know me. They’re like, ‘Hey, we hear y’all are doing esports. Can you tell me about it?’” Stevens said. “Of course, my first thing is, to be really successful you have to have a Matt Tarpley.” ■

TCP Go online to watch the University of North Texas take down LSU in a national playoff game.



★ "HACKBERRY SLIM" ★
★ "FOGHORN" ★



★ "BUCK" ★ "MR RODEO" ★



STRETCHING THE BLANKET

Outlandish characters
and hard-to-believe
yarns defined the early
days of Texas rodeo

RODEO COWBOY Hackberry Slim Johnson came clean in 1956 when he described the 1906 train-jumping accident near Dalhart that cost him half a leg. “I’ve told so many damned lies about losing that leg,” he told an interviewer. But soon after this brief walk on the straight and narrow path of truth, Johnson reverted to his usual yarn about losing the appendage in a “wreck with a wild horse.”

Even though lies might be too harsh a term for the tall tales whipped up by early rodeo cowboys, Johnson was simply following the Texas tradition of stretching the blanket. Even when characters like him, Buck Steiner, Milt Hinkle and Foghorn Clancy told the truth, the stories still sounded like whoppers.

In its beginnings in the late 19th century, mirroring the recently shuttered American frontier, rodeo presented a vast stage for self-invention. “For decades, rodeo was busy defining itself,” says W.K. Stratton, author of *Chasing the Rodeo* and other books. “The sport was based on the Mexican charreada tradition, which subsequently inspired ‘cowboy contests’ on ranches and in small cattle towns in the West. The advent of Wild West shows and their showbiz elements influenced rodeo as well.

“There was no national sanctioning organization, no set rule-book, so rodeos varied from town to town. People expected to be entertained, and cantankerous old-timers were always a big draw. While elements of showbiz remain, today rodeo is made up of sanctioned athletic contests with standardized events and judging.”

But in its wild and woolly days of old, characters ran the show.

MR. RODEO

MILT HINKLE, aka Mr. Rodeo, first glimpsed daylight in 1881 on the patch of Texas Panhandle that became the town of Bovina, which grew from a camp that was part of the XIT Ranch. In 1904, he claimed, Hinkle became the second man to accomplish the act of bulldogging, first performed by the Black cowboy Bill Pickett and known today as steer wrestling. In another boast, Hinkle bragged that he was the first to apply the term “rodeo” to a roundup event.

In 1919 a *Saturday Evening Post* correspondent wrote about having seen Hinkle suffer a hip injury at a rodeo in Bovina. Three months later, having escaped from the hospital, Hinkle was spotted in Cheyenne, Wyoming, by the same reporter, who described him as “a howling, squawking maniac,” hobbling on crutches as he got ready to bulldog.

The Laredo Times credited Hinkle with the world record for bulldogging from an automobile traveling at 68 mph in 1931. That same year, he agreed to stand in for an “aerial bulldogger” in Nuevo Laredo during the annual Washington’s Birthday Celebration. As Mr. Rodeo prepared to leap onto the running bull, however, *el toro* turned and charged the aircraft, wrecking it. The border paper reported that Hinkle was not seriously injured.

Decades later, however, Hinkle repeatedly told scribes that he landed successfully on the bull, breaking its neck, and that he himself suffered a crippling hip displacement. Mr. Rodeo had become a promoter, and before his death at 91, he relived the wild old days, lugging his scrapbooks around to reporters and writing for *True West* and *Frontier Times Magazine*.

FOGHORN

ONE YEAR YOUNGER than Hinkle, famed rodeo announcer Frederick Melton “Foghorn” Clancy tried his hand at bronc riding in an 1898 cowboy tournament in San Angelo. The contest was won by the great Samuel Thomas “Booger Red” Privett, the Erath County native whose legend says he was never thrown, no matter how “outlaw” a horse he drew. And while Foghorn didn’t fare so well in the saddle, the experience opened another career door.

Clancy was working as a hand on the Hittson Ranch in Palo Pinto County when the Spanish-American War broke out. He quit to join the Army but was turned down for being underweight, so he began selling newspapers in the health resort town of Mineral Wells, bellowing headlines to drive sales. Local press observed that he “sounded like a foghorn at sea,” which provided a nickname and a second job as town crier. “I would ride horseback through the little resort,” he wrote in his 1952 autobiography, *My 50 Years in Rodeo*, “singing out about the attractions at the summer opera house or pavilion.”

Clancy’s stentorian reputation had preceded him in San Angelo, and after his unceremonious buck-off, the folks hosting the ropin’ and ridin’ contest offered him a job as announcer. This was a time before public address systems, but Foghorn lived up to his name, announcing rodeos from one-horse Western towns to Madison Square Garden.

Shortly after he died in 1957, the *Hereford Brand* reported on a quest by Fort Worth’s Pioneer Days celebration, held at the historic stockyards, to find the loudest Texan. Clancy would have been a shoo-in, and organizers recalled how, in “the old days of the rodeo, the mighty voice of the late Foghorn Clancy rattled the windows.”

“I would ride horseback through the little resort singing out about the attractions at the summer opera house or pavilion.”

“When I die, I want to go in style. With my boots on. Dancing, maybe, or maybe while riding a buffalo.”

Dancing, maybe, or maybe while riding a buffalo.”

In 1979, shortly after appearing in the Willie Nelson film *Honeysuckle Rose*, the 91-year-old white-whiskered cowboy danced to Nelson’s band playing *Milk Cow Blues*, then sat back down and slipped into the sunset. ■

BUCK

BORN IN BASTROP in 1899, T.C. “Buck” Steiner lived to see two centuries turn. But long before he died in 2001, the crusty cowpoke had packed several lifetimes into one.

He started early, leaving grade school to pursue the cowboy life. After driving cattle through the streets of Austin, he left home at age 12 to perform in rodeos and Wild West shows, sharing bills with the likes of Annie Oakley and Tom Mix. Steiner demonstrated proficiency at roping, wrestling and riding spirited stock, but he developed a specialty of riding bulls facing backward. As he recalled in endless press features, riding backward was far more lucrative than riding frontward.

Around age 16 he worked for a time at the San Antonio Stockyards. Then at some point, according to the biography of Buck in the Handbook of Texas, a law enforcement career was cut short when he shot at a carload of politicians while working traffic management during a parade. While trailing cattle from Mexico to San Antonio, Steiner reportedly downed a few drinks with Pancho Villa. Later, it’s said, he bent elbows with Al Capone.

Back home in Austin, where a German immigrant ancestor had owned the town’s first harness and saddlery shop, Steiner bought and sold land, operated his own touring rodeos, rented his stock to other rodeos, and opened Capitol Saddlery in 1930. News reports say that he had as many as 96 saddle makers working for him and supplied Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck and Company. In a 1950s rodeo tour of Cuba with Gene Autry, Autry and Steiner got caught up amid Fidel Castro’s revolution. An emergency call to Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson saved their bacon.

The Steiners have been called the royal family of rodeo. Son Tommy Steiner ran the rodeo business until closing it in 1984, and grandson Bobby Steiner won the bull riding world championship in 1973. Buck’s great-grandson, Sid Steiner, won the steer wrestling world championship in 2002.

HACKBERRY SLIM

TOWARD THE END of his long life, Hugh “Hackberry Slim” Johnson II carried his scrapbooks around to newspaper offices in towns where he’d rodeoed in days gone by. Time and again the “only one-legged bronc buster, bulldogger, steer rider and calf roper” in rodeo told the story

of his first prosthetic leg, made from a hackberry tree. He talked about working on the XIT and rodeoing with Hoot Gibson and Will Rogers, about the time he drove a bull through a Georgetown furniture store and about winning all-around cowboy in Harlingen in 1933.

He often talked about bison. Hackberry bought his first bison, named Chihuahua, in 1923 and was still producing his “buffalo rodeos” in his 80s. “When I die, I want to go in style,” he often said. “With my boots on.

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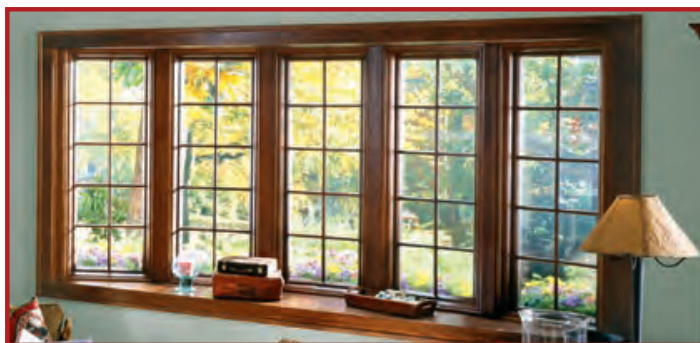
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MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER

ALAN
LESLEY

We Love Our Community

“TO MOVE FORWARD, you have to give back.”

Those words from Oprah Winfrey could be used to describe the special bond and obligation that ties CECA to the community we serve. With Valentine’s Day approaching, we can’t think of a better time to express how much we love this community and serving you, the members of the co-op.

We know that when our founders—members of the community, like you—helped bring electricity to rural Texas decades ago, the quality of life improved for all. Through the years, we have been at the forefront of helping our area thrive. We want to help meet the long-term needs of our community to ensure its continued success—because we live here too.

While our top priority is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of our members. This focus on the larger community is central to the way we operate as a cooperative. CECA knows that electricity is a critical need for modern-day life, but it takes more than poles and power lines to make a community.

Throughout the co-op’s existence, our charitable programs and other outreach projects have fed hungry families, enabled those in need to keep their lights on, educated students and so much more—and we couldn’t do any of this without you, our members.

We all benefit from these programs because of you and your neighbors. You empower CECA through your membership and through your participation in and support of these programs.

As a local business, we are proud to power your life and bring good things to our community. We hope you will continue to guide our efforts by sharing your perspective as we plan for the future. The energy landscape is constantly changing, fueled by evolving technology and consumer desires for more options. But one thing remains the same: By working together, I’m certain that we can continue to do good things for our community. ■

Plan a Green Valentine’s Day

IF YOUR VALENTINE’S DAY theme calls for more green than red, here are five tips for an energy-efficient holiday.

Prepare an energy-efficient dinner. You can cut back on energy wasted at dinner-time by making your Valentine’s Day meal using a slow cooker or toaster oven or by selecting the right-sized cookware for the burner. When it’s time for cleanup, use the dishwasher rather than hand-washing.

Turn off electronics. If you’re going out on a Valentine’s Day date, turn off or unplug all electronics so they’re not using electricity when you’re not home.

Let leftovers cool down. Be sure to let hot food cool down before you put it in the refrigerator so your appliance doesn’t have to work overtime.

Turn off lights. Use romance as an excuse to turn off electric lights. Break out a few candles or LED lights to keep costs for the night low.

Give an energy-efficient appliance. A new refrigerator, dishwasher or microwave might not seem like a romantic gift, but if an old appliance has been causing stress, a new, Energy Star-rated model can make life easier. ■



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TOP: Truck 10

2015 Chevrolet Silverado 2500 HD,
4x4, extended cab, no bed

VIN: 1GC2KUEGXF2139217

Mileage: 152,433

Minimum bid: \$3,000

BOTTOM: Truck 63

2003 Chevrolet Silverado, 1 ton, flatbed,
4x4, single cab, standard transmission,
6.6-liter Duramax engine

VIN: 1GBJK341X3E113808

Mileage: 115,367

Minimum bid: \$3,000

*Please note Truck 63's transmission
needs a secondary clutch cylinder.*

CECA Vehicles To Be Auctioned

CECA HAS TWO retired vehicles that will be auctioned through a closed-bid process. These vehicles have a few battle scars and are well broken in, as you would expect from a work vehicle.

You may come by the shop yard at 201 W. Wrights Ave. in Comanche to inspect the trucks in person.

Please include the truck number in your bid and bid in uneven numbers, including cents. Sealed bids can be mailed to CECA, Attn: Sealed Vehicle Bid, P.O. Box 729, Comanche, TX 76442. Bids can also be dropped off in person at the office at 349 Industrial Blvd.

In all correspondence, please include a phone number where you can be reached. Questions can be directed to Dale Ogle at 1-800-915-2533. The deadline for bids is 4:30 p.m. February 14. Auction winners will be notified by February 16. CECA reserves the right to reject any or all bids at the discretion of the board.

Mileage for all vehicles is current as of December 15, 2021, but is subject to change as vehicles could still be used. ■

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Comanche, TX 76442

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Early

1801 CR 338

Early, TX 76801

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Closed from 1 to 2 p.m.

Eastland

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Eastland, TX 76448

Tuesday and Thursday

8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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ceca.coop



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Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Opens to CECA Members

CECA IS PROUD to announce that we are bringing Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to our members this year as part of our latest Operation Round Up initiative.

The Imagination Library puts books into the hands and hearts of children across the world by partnering with local communities to provide specially selected, high-quality books each month to participating children from birth to age 5. The books are personalized with the recipients names and mailed directly to their home to create an experience that makes reading exciting and encourages families to spend time enjoying books together.

Best of all, the program is available at no cost to all children under 5 who reside in CECA's service territory.

Each book mailed by the Imagination Library is selected by a panel of childhood literacy experts. On each book's inside cover are tips for extending the engagement and interaction between the child and their caregiver. The Imagination Library sends two Spanish-English bilingual titles per age group each year.

For more information about the Imagination Library and to register your child for the program, contact Maegan Caffey at mcaffey@ceca.coop or 1-800-915-2533.

Year One: Birth to 12 Months

Vision—bright, big, colorful
Touch—board pages
Rhyme and rhythm
Simple—easy to use
Minimal text—point and say
Playful sound
Nurture—attachment, lullaby themes

Year Two: 13–24 Months

Continue concepts from year one and build upon them
Repetition and predictability—generate language
Books about daily routines, topics familiar to child
Use of real photo illustrations
Body awareness
Nursery rhymes
Colors, letters and numbers

Year Three: 25–36 Months

Wordless books—build your own story (reader and child)
Values and character
Issues—fear, conflict, love and safety
Colors, letters and numbers
Nursery rhymes

Year Four: 37–48 Months

More complex stories—hero, complication and resolution
Diversity of others—faces, environments—OK to be different
Play, humor and fun
Nursery rhymes and poetry

Year Five: 49–60 Months

School preparation and readiness
Use rebus (pictures used for words)
Science—nonfiction
Folk tales
Thank you and appreciation
Rhymes and poetry

Empowering Students for a Better Tomorrow

CECA WILL award eight scholarships to local students to assist with educational expenses. Applicants must be a member or a dependent of a member of the cooperative and can be a graduating senior or currently enrolled at a qualifying school.

The cooperative will award five \$2,000 Scholarships for Excellence and two \$2,000 Operation Round Up scholarships, all to be paid over four semesters. In addition, Operation Round Up has added \$1,000 technical scholarships, the number of which will be determined by the number of applicants and which will also be paid over two semesters.

To apply for a scholarship, visit ceca.coop/scholarships. Be sure to fill out applications for all scholarships you qualify for to increase your chances of receiving an award. The deadline for applications is April 1. For more information, contact Maegan Caffey at mcaffey@ceca.coop or 1-800-915-2533. ■



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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Valentine's Day
Monday,
February 14

Presidents Day
Monday,
February 21

National Chili Day
Thursday,
February 24



The Wild West Rides Again

BY MAEGAN CAFFEY

THE MYSTIQUE OF THE WILD WEST has a way of captivating the young and old. While most adults might not show their love for the era in the same way they did as children, many still find ways to pay tribute to the past. Darrin St. Ama, owner of Savage Saint Custom Iron Works and Los Trece, is one such aficionado.

In 2018, St. Ama and his wife, Jayme, purchased 13 acres outside of Early in west Central Texas. At the time, they were just looking for a place to store trailers. First came a barn to store equipment, then a pool for the family to enjoy, and soon they found themselves living in a recreational vehicle there.

Darrin St. Ama recalls waking up one day and not even remembering when he had last been to town. He and Jayme knew then it was time to sell their downtown property and move permanently to the Thirteen, as they referred to their piece of land.

Twenty-seven days after selling their downtown building, they had transformed the barn into a 1,200-square-foot living quarters. With only two days to spare before 40 family members joined them for Thanksgiving, Jayme St. Ama rushed to turn the space into a home. Thanksgiving 2019 was the first of many such events the Thirteen would host.

When Jayme said she wanted a barn in their backyard a few weeks later, Darrin's creativity sparked. If he was going to build a barn, he wanted it to look like an Old West saloon. As the couple shared photos of the barn's progress on social media, curiosity took hold among their friends and family. Many wanted to see this blast from the past themselves.

The St. Amas built the saloon, now known as the Forge, in their spare time. When they started, the couple had no idea what would become of their after-hours project. But as news spread about an Old West town being built, the St. Amas decided it was time to give the town a name.

Several options were tossed around, but the one that stuck was the Thirteen. When Darrin thought of the town, he pictured it as a South Texas border town circa 1875. With that

inspiration, Los Trece was born.

Nowadays, walking into Los Trece is like walking back in time. Darrin just can't stop building, Jayme says. As he builds one piece of the town, he mentally creates another.

"Once we had the barn and [saw] things come together, then it's like 'Oh well, if this was really an old town, this would be over here,'" Darrin said. "Then we built that part over there, then when that was built, I wanted to see what the other side of the street would look like."

Fittingly, Darrin has built 13 into the heart and soul of Los Trece—details that might go unnoticed to an unaware eye.



The Forge was the first building in Los Trece. What started out as a barn behind Darrin and Jayme St. Ama's house turned into one of the most recognizable pieces of the site.



Thirteen buffaloes painted on a hide that decorates the upstairs VIP area. Various representations of 13 have been built into many components of Los Trece.

“The gate is 13 feet tall and 13 feet wide; the cedar posts are 13 inches in diameter. There are 13 eagle feathers [above the VIP table], there’s 13 buffalo [on the VIP bar], and the list just goes on and on,” he said on my tour of the town.

Anything Darrin builds in Los Trece fits the time period, but he also applies his skills in iron- and metalwork to add artistic flair throughout the property. Old West period details are reflected in many elements of Los Trece, including signs and building designs.

Darrin explained the seeming disconnect between some of Los Trece’s decor and its period setting. “Typically, you wouldn’t have metal signs, but early to mid-1800s, you had trains and elaborate gears and brass doorknobs, and we were building really nice guns,” he said. “So a lot of people think when they see metal signs and such in old Westerns, they think that’s not period, but it’s very period. To me, a saloon owner would be like, ‘What are we going to do [the railing on the

saloon] out of? We don’t have a lot of wood, but I do have some old, busted barrels,’ so he might use that.”

That attention to detail courses through Los Trece. Most of the names visible throughout the town derive from the couple’s loved ones. While many of those whose names are included as tributes have passed away, a few are still with them and continue to play a huge role in their lives.

When Steve Mitchell, known as the Singing Cowboy, passed away, his wife knew that Mitchell would not want all his beloved treasures hiding out in a barn with no one to appreciate them. She brought his chuck wagon and boxes of heirlooms that had been stored in it to Los Trece. Darrin built a display the day Mitchell’s belongings arrived to showcase the singer’s prized possessions. The chuck wagon that has been in the Mitchell family since 1882 now stands for all to see in Los Trece.

The tribute to Mitchell extends to the campfire setup Darrin put together in the chuck wagon museum.

“That was his fire deal, that was his chair, and I presume that was his cup. It was the only one different from the rest of the cups. So I put the cup there and that was his coffeepot,” he said. “I set it up like I think he would have done it.” As they were setting up the chuck wagon museum, Darrin and Jayme took care to craft a space that Mitchell and his family and friends would have liked.

“I set it up like
I think he would
have done it.”



One of the many shops in Los Trece named after a loved one. Each name represents a person who has played a big role in Darrin’s and Jayme’s lives.



Steve Mitchell’s campfire setup featuring his guitar, chair, coffee mug and coffeepot. The family heirlooms in the setup came from Mitchell’s 1882 chuckwagon, with most items dating to the 1800s.

Family is always at the forefront of Darrin's and Jayme's minds. As they began discussing turning the blacksmith shop into a cantina, Jayme wanted to reassure parents that it was still a safe space to bring the whole family. To that end, right off the cantina, they've installed batting cages and a basketball court and are in the process of adding a fenced-in toddler area for younger kids to play safely, a rock wall and more.

"[Parents] can sit here to eat and drink while kids have a place to play," Jayme said. She and Darrin want Los Trece to be a place kids can play and make memories while taking in a portion of history.

One favorite activity for families during events at Los Trece is chicken poop poker. Individual cards from a deck of playing cards are sold for chances to win, and a deck of cards is spread across the ground inside a chicken coop. When all 52 cards are sold, a chicken enters the coop. The person whose card matches the card the chicken poops on is the winner of the pot. Kids beg their parents for more cards and chances to win and family members of all ages huddle around, rooting for their card to be the lucky one.

Creating memories that families will cherish inspired the St. Amas to pour a lot of blood, sweat and tears into this once-empty lot, transforming it into what it is today. They are bringing life to a dream many kids might have, to step back into the Wild West—a childhood wish that resonates with Darrin.

"This all stemmed from being a 10-year-old boy that loved watching Westerns and playing cowboys and Indians," he said. ■



Darrin and Jayme St. Ama in front of their favorite spot in Los Trece. Typically their favorite spot is the area they just finished, but they seem to always come back to the porch in front of the jail.



Sheriff Bobbeaux can be found keeping the streets of Los Trece safe. He found this cowboy acting out of line and locked him up to let him gather himself again.



A bathhouse that would have been available for public use. Rainwater would be held in the red water tank and used for the showers.

Ice Isn't Always Nice

Although much of the state is unaccustomed to snow and ice, temperatures can fall below freezing even in South Texas, potentially causing power outages. To keep safe and comfortable during a winter power outage:

Report any outages.

Turn off electrical appliances that were operating at the time the power went off. Leave one light on so you'll know when service has been restored.

Keep warm by closing off rooms you don't need to access, and use only safe heat sources, like a wood stove. Do not burn charcoal indoors. If you operate lanterns or fuel-fired cook stoves or heaters, make sure you have adequate ventilation.

Don't drive unless absolutely necessary until conditions improve. If you must drive, go slowly.

CECA encourages you to always practice safety.

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ANJELAGR | ISTOCK.COM

Chocolate Strawberries Romanoff

½ cup sour cream
3 tablespoons brown sugar
¼ cup chocolate syrup
1 tablespoon cognac
½ cup heavy cream
3 tablespoons sugar
4 cups (2 pints) strawberries

1. Mix sour cream, brown sugar, chocolate syrup and cognac in a medium bowl. In a separate bowl, whip the cream until it starts to thicken. Add sugar and whip until thick.
2. Fold whipped cream into the sour cream mixture until well blended.
3. Clean and core the strawberries. Put about ½ cup of berries each in eight wineglasses. Divide sauce equally among glasses.

SERVES 8

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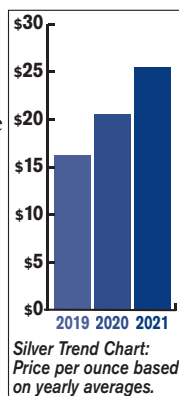
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What This Means for You

Silver values are up, and silver is in high demand in the marketplace. In addition, many experts believe that the price of silver could continue to increase in the next 12 to 24 months. And while no one can accurately predict the future, there are two questions you should be asking yourself right now:

- 1) Do I own enough physical silver?
- 2) Which silver coins are right for me?



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Queen Elizabeth II walks with Gov. Ann Richards.

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Houston. She even took a ride on the San Antonio River on a beautifully decorated barge.

When Elizabeth arrived at Dallas' Love Field, she was greeted with strains of *The Yellow Rose of Texas*. The words to *God Save the Queen*, the British national anthem, were recited before the playing of the song so that the mostly Texan audience wouldn't sing *My Country 'Tis of Thee* to the familiar tune.

While in Dallas, she knighted Cecil Howard Green, an honorary title for the British-born founder of Texas Instruments and co-founder of the University of Texas campus there.

Prince Philip, the duke of Edinburgh, accompanied Elizabeth on the visit, part of their 13-day trip to the United States. Sitting next to him at the dinner commemorating the 150th anniversary of Dallas' founding was Louise Caldwell, president of the Dallas Historical Society. She remarked, "It was very hard to find anything that he didn't know more about than me, including Texas history."

The queen recounted the story in which a man tells his son: "Never ask a man where he's from. If he's from Texas, he'll tell you. Otherwise no use embarrassing him by asking."

At the Capitol, Gov. Ann Richards hosted the queen, and 8,000 people gathered to catch a glimpse. The queen declared, "No state commands such fierce pride and loyalty. Lesser mortals are pitied for their misfortune in not being born Texans." And she, the most traveled monarch in the world, knows what she's talking about. ■

Her Majesty's Visit

Queen Elizabeth II's 1991 trip to Texas was a momentous occasion

BY W.F. STRONG AND LUPITA STRONG

DURING HER 70-YEAR reign, Queen Elizabeth II has witnessed many of the world's pivotal events, and one honorable mention where she became the event is her 1991 two-day visit to the Lone Star State.

Elizabeth was the first British monarch to visit Texas, and Texans gave her an impressive tip of the Stetson. She loved it. She asked her U.S. chief of protocol, "Why didn't I come here sooner?"

Texas has long had a special relationship with Great Britain, one of the first nations to recognize the Republic of Texas. Texans even flirted with the notion of becoming part of the British Empire in the 1840s, but the U.S. had other plans.

Five years before the queen was here, her majesty's son, Charles, the Prince of Wales, came to Texas to help celebrate

the Texas sesquicentennial. He cut into the 45-ton world's largest birthday cake with a 3-foot sword. I mean, it was Texas; what else was he supposed to use?

At the Capitol, the prince was given a giant gavel. He laughed and said that it was the biggest he had ever had and "extremely appropriate coming from Texas." While touring San Jacinto later that week—it was February but warm—he remarked, "If it's this hot in the winter, I'd like to see what it's like in the summer."

Texas has had 14 kings, but it was a queen who was most celebrated by Texans. In May 1991, Elizabeth visited Austin, San Antonio, Dallas and Houston with an itinerary that included visits to the River Walk, the Alamo, NASA and Antioch Missionary Baptist Church in

Pasta

This most flexible staple anchors a variety of dishes and flavors

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Pasta has been a staple in our home for as long as I can remember. And why not? It's economical, filling and can be made into so many different dishes. Whether you have hungry kids in the house or just need something hearty on a cold night, there are plenty of options. This Pesto-Baked Penne is perfect for transforming leftover chicken and pesto into something new. You can easily make this recipe vegetarian by swapping in mushrooms or roasted winter squash for the chicken.

Pesto-Baked Penne

16 ounces penne pasta

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 cup ricotta cheese

⅓ cup pesto

2 tablespoons heavy cream or half-and-half

¼ cup chopped oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes

2 cups diced chicken

½ cup shredded mozzarella

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and coat a 9-by-13-inch casserole dish with cooking spray. Cook penne just to al dente, according to package directions. Reserve ¼ cup pasta water, drain and transfer to a large bowl. Toss pasta with olive oil and set aside.

2. In another bowl, stir together ricotta, pesto and cream until blended. Add reserved pasta water to thin, if desired. Pour sauce over pasta and stir well to coat. Stir in the tomatoes and chicken, then transfer to prepared dish. Sprinkle mozzarella on evenly.

3. Cover with foil and bake 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake another 5–10 minutes, until cheese on top is melted, if preferred.

SERVES 8

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Roasted Butternut Squash Lasagna.





Gleason Family Goulash

SAMANTHA GLEASON
BANDERA EC

This recipe is a great option for a make-ahead meal, as the flavors are even better the next day. In a clever trick, Gleason adds baking soda to help reduce the acidity from the tomatoes.

- 2 cups uncooked pasta (rotini, elbow or bow tie)**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic**
- 1 pound ground beef or turkey**
- 1 pound yellow squash or zucchini, diced**
- ½ sweet onion, chopped**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- 1 teaspoon dried sweet basil**
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning**
- ¾ teaspoon garlic powder**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**
- 2 cans (14.5 ounces each) fire-roasted diced tomatoes, undrained**
- ¾ cup ketchup**
- 1 tablespoon sun-dried tomato paste**
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce**
- ½ cup water or beef broth**
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce**
- ½ teaspoon baking soda**
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**

1. Cook pasta in lightly salted water according to package directions. Drain and set aside.
2. Meanwhile, in a large saucepan or deep-sided skillet over medium heat, add olive oil and garlic and cook 2 minutes, stirring to prevent burning. Add ground beef and cook 5 minutes, then add squash and onion. Continue to cook until beef is browned, stirring as needed.

\$500 WINNER

Seafood Manicotti Alfredo

ANECIA HERO
COSERV



This seafood manicotti feels fancy but is easy enough to put together on a weeknight. It's important to not overcook the pasta and handle it gently so it doesn't tear, so consider cooking a few extra shells just in case.

SERVES 4



PASTA

- 8 manicotti shells**
- 8 ounces cooked shrimp, tails removed, diced**
- 4 ounces cooked crabmeat, flaked**
- 1 egg, lightly beaten**
- 1 cup ricotta cheese**
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese**
- ¼ cup shredded mozzarella cheese**
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice**
- 1 teaspoon Creole seasoning**
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder**

SAUCE

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter**
- 1 cup heavy cream**
- 1¼ cups shredded Parmesan cheese**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**

1. **PASTA** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat a 2-quart baking dish with cooking spray and set aside. Cook pasta in lightly salted boiling water for 7 minutes. Drain and transfer to a lightly greased baking sheet to cool.
2. In a large bowl, combine shrimp, crab, egg, ricotta, Parmesan, mozzarella, lemon juice, Creole seasoning and garlic powder. Stir until uniformly combined, then transfer to a piping bag or large zip-close bag. Cut off the bag tip and carefully pipe filling into cooked shells; fill one end of the shell, then the other. Transfer shells to prepared baking dish.
3. **SAUCE** In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, melt butter. Add heavy cream and Parmesan and cook, whisking often, until cheese is melted and sauce is thickened and smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. Pour half of the sauce over the pasta, reserving the remaining sauce for serving. Cover dish with foil and bake 20 minutes. Serve with additional warmed sauce on top.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

STONE FRUITS DUE FEBRUARY 10

How do you turn peaches, plums, cherries and apricots into the stars of your kitchen? Submit your recipes online by February 10 for a chance to win \$500.



CONTINUED >

RECIPES CONTINUED

3. Stir in oregano, basil, Italian seasoning, garlic powder, salt and pepper, then stir in diced tomatoes with their juices, ketchup and tomato paste.

4. In a small bowl, whisk together tomato sauce, water, Worcestershire sauce and baking soda. Slowly add the mixture to the pan, stirring until foaming stops. Cover and simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

5. Add cooked pasta and balsamic vinegar and stir well. Cover again and simmer another 10–15 minutes.

SERVES 8

Meaty Mexican Mac and Cheese

CHUCK BURGESS
HEART OF TEXAS EC

Perfect for those who love their mac and cheese fully loaded, Burgess' "3MC" gets its kick from a medley of favorite taco flavors. Make it as mild or as spicy as you like, with hot sauce and tortilla chips served on the side.



2 tablespoons vegetable or olive oil
1½ pounds lean ground beef
1 pound ground pork sausage
1 large onion, chopped
2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 can (10 ounces) Ro-Tel tomatoes, mild (or to taste)
½ cup salsa, mild (or to taste)
1 can (4 ounces) diced green chiles, mild (or to taste)
1 pound uncooked macaroni pasta
1 pound Queso Blanco Velveeta
10 ounces queso fresco, crumbled

1 cup Mexican crema or heavy cream
Pepper jack cheese, shredded

1. In a large pot with a lid over medium-high heat, heat oil, then add meats and onion. Cover and cook until meat is browned, stirring occasionally. Add salt, chili powder, tomatoes, salsa and chiles. Stir well and cook 10–15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

2. Meanwhile, cook pasta to al dente according to package directions. Drain and return to original cooking pot; set aside.

3. In a microwave-safe bowl, add Velveeta, queso fresco and cream and microwave 3 minutes. Stir well and continue to cook in the microwave in 30-second increments, stirring after each time, until melted and smooth. (Or combine ingredients in a saucepan and melt over medium heat.)

4. Stir cheese sauce into macaroni to coat, then pour pasta into the meat mixture. Heat on low 5 minutes or until heated through, stirring to blend well. Serve with pepper jack cheese on top.

SERVES 8–10



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

A Glimpse of Buddy Holly

Lubbock museum honors native son's enduring musical legacy

BY CHET GARNER

I REMEMBER THE first time I heard Buddy Holly. My older brother bought the soundtrack from the film *Stand by Me*, and for weeks the song *Everyday* was stuck in my head. Soon I discovered *Peggy Sue*, *Rave On* and other classic hits. My feet have been tapping ever since.

It wasn't until decades later that I learned Holly was born and raised in Lubbock and that the world's best Buddy Holly museum sits in the heart of the Hub City.

The first thing I noticed as I turned off Crickets Avenue was a larger-than-life set of Holly's signature black-rimmed glasses. Holly once considered wearing contact lenses to help his rock star image, but contacts hurt his eyes and he needed glasses to see the crowd. That's a good thing, as the glasses became as much a part of his timeless look as the electric guitar in his hands. This is just one of many facts I learned inside Lubbock's Buddy Holly Center.

The museum is full of artifacts and a complete timeline of how a kid from Lubbock forged a new rock 'n' roll sound that changed the world. One display shows mementos from Holly's high school days, including his baseball mitt and Converse high-tops. Another display holds items from Buddy's rise to fame, including a tweed sports coat he wore on tour and a pair of super-hip suede shoes.

It's hard to believe that Holly's career lasted only a few years, cut short by a plane crash in Iowa. His black-rimmed glasses recovered from the wreckage now sit silently in a case at the end of the museum's timeline.

The center gives every generation a connection to the man and his music. As the title of one of his hit songs says, his legacy will *Not Fade Away*. ■

ABOVE Chet visits the Buddy Holly Center in Lubbock.

TCP Check out the Buddy Holly Center through Chet's eyes on our website. You'll want to see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

FEBRUARY

10

Lufkin My Funny Valentine, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

Port Aransas Chocolate Crawl, (361) 749-5919, portaransas.org

Round Rock [10-13] Texas Basket Weavers Association Annual Conference, (512) 925-3596, texasbasketweavers.com

11

Fredericksburg [11-12] Luckenbach Hug-In & Valentine Ball, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

Port Lavaca [11-12] South Texas Square and Round Dance Association February Frenzy, (361) 575-2665, stsrda.org

Fredericksburg [11-13, 18-20, 25-27] Clue: The Musical, (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

12

Jefferson Queen Mab Ball, (903) 742-1405, mardigrasupriver.com

New Braunfels Love the Run You're With 5K, (830) 626-8786, athleteguild.com

Dallas [12, 19, 26] The Dinner Detective Murder Mystery Dinner Show, 1-866-496-0535, thedinnerdetective.com

15

Gladewater [15-March 15] Helen Lee Estate Daffodil Gardens, (903) 845-5180

17

West Tawakoni [17-19]
Catmasters Classic on Lake
Tawakoni, (325) 998-2191,
 thecatmasters.com

18

Brenham The Funniest
Night of Your Life With
Todd Oliver, (979) 337-7240,
 thebarnhillcenter.com

Brenham [18-19] Hearth
and Home Quilt Show,
 (979) 661-4761,
 friendshipquiltguild.weebly.com

Kerrville [18-19] Hill Country
Quilt Guild Winter Quilt
Show, (281) 974-6220,
 hillcountryquiltguild.com

Ozona [18-19] Ozona
Land Stewardship Blowout,
 (325) 392-3737

Fredericksburg [18-20]
Trade Days, (210) 846-4094,
 fbgradedays.com

Galveston [18-20, 25-27,
March 1] Mardi Gras!
Galveston, (409) 763-8676,
 galveston.com

Victoria [18-20, 24-27]
Ring of Fire, (361) 570-8587,
 theatrevictoria.org

19

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

Mesquite Daddy-Daughter
Dance, (972) 204-4925,
 visitmesquitetx.com

Palacios African American
Heritage Day, (310) 650-9352,
 citybytheseamuseum.org

West Columbia Market
Day, (979) 345-4656,
 visitvarnerhoggplantation.com

Nocona [19-26] Mardi
Gras Nocona Style,
 (940) 825-3526, nocona.org

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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Pick of the Month

Texas Independence Day Celebration

Huntsville, March 2
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huntsvilletexas.com

March 2 is Texas Independence Day and Sam Houston's birthday. Huntsville, where the Texas statesman is buried, and Sam Houston State University hold annual celebrations for the occasions, including a graveside ceremony.

25

La Grange [25-26] Best Little Quilt Show in Texas, (979) 242-3514, coloradovalleyqg.com

Lubbock [25-26] Friends of the Lubbock Library Last Friday BookStore, (806) 775-2852, lubbockfol.org

26

Granbury JazzFest, (650) 265-1193, granburyjazzfest.com

Henderson Mardi Gras Gumbo Cook-Off, (903) 392-0691, visithendersontx.com

Irving Irving Symphony Orchestra: Musical Treasures From the World, (972) 831-8818, irvingsymphony.org

27

Lufkin Croce Plays Croce, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

MARCH

FEBRUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

20

Fredericksburg Lone Star Brass, (830) 997-6523, fredericksburgmusicclub.com

23

Lufkin [23-24] Rob Schneider, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

24

Corsicana The Magic of Bill Blagg, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: Heart of the Strings, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

Port Aransas [24-27] Whooping Crane Festival, (361) 749-5919, portaransas.org/whooping-crane-festival

04

Fredericksburg Texas A&M Singing Cadets, (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

Lubbock [4-5] Lubbock Area Square and Round Dance Federation Conclave Dance, (806) 786-8589, squaredancelubbocktx.com

05

Kerrville Looking Back with John Moore, (830) 896-8976, lookingbackjm22@gmail.com

06

Lufkin Bella Gaia, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

Orange Fiddler on the Roof, (409) 886-5535, lutch.org

Public Art

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—Charles Schulz, creator of the *Peanuts* comic strip

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1 STEPHANIE EHLERT
GREENBELT EC
"I found this beauty driving
through Brady."

2 GLENN TIMMONS
SOUTH PLAINS EC
Parking meter art east of
Lubbock.

3 DEBRA CZERNY
BLUEBONNET EC
Tom Besson painted this
mural in downtown Elgin.

4 CARMEN GALLO
PEDERNALES EC
A recycled bicycle at Yellow
Bike Project in Austin.



Upcoming Contests

DUE FEB 10 Industrial
DUE MAR 10 Morning Glory
DUE APR 10 Motorsports



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website
for more Public Art photos from readers.



The Muse in Museum

Artistic inspiration abounds in the comfort of the Kimbell Café

BY BABS RODRIGUEZ
ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA LIEDO

WHEN I TRAVEL, I seek out museums. As a writer always in search of a quiet place where my laptop is welcome, museum cafés help me meet deadlines and recharge in ways coffeehouse clatter never could.

The atmosphere of a good museum café pulls me out of time and settles me in a world—my chair, stool or booth—literally surrounded by artistic inspiration. Masterpieces a glance away, these settling-in spots are elevated musing favorites for any number of reasons: They are sure to be more subdued than the average coffee shop; the people-watching is stellar; and there's a hum in the atmosphere that inspires some of my best thinking.

Why it took me decades of courting the creativity muse in distant cafés only to discover I could have coffee with her

in my hometown of Fort Worth, I do not know. I do remember the moment it occurred to me that I had too long overlooked such a prime location for contemplation. Just before Christmas one year, I stopped at the Kimbell Art Museum for a gift shop run. I plodded up the broad limestone steps to the gallery level, overwhelmed by obligations, my head full of deadlines.

Drawn into the light that fills Louis I. Kahn's vaulted masterpiece, I headed straight for the Kimbell Café. From my seat I could see Aristide Maillol's *L'Air*, a bronze female figure, floating in a courtyard. European masterworks beckoned from across the corridor. Immediately I was transported. That's the other bonus that comes from stopping into a hometown museum: There is a sense of excitement that I associate with travel. Without planes or trains, I can step out of the workaday world and feel I am on a journey—even when I'm less than a mile from home.

Seated beneath fragments of a sixth-century mosaic, cupping my warm coffee mug, I realized I was steps away from Michelangelo's first known painting. And just like that, I lay my burdens down.

Now I return regularly to the Kimbell's café for creative therapy. I can energize myself in 10 minutes or 20, view one painting or a dozen, before or after my coffee. Or I can simply sit quietly. No entrance fee and no passport required.

And while the soup-and-sandwich lunch options are dependably tasty, a post-pandemic offering of an afternoon tea service takes me to happy memories served up abroad. It also offers up my favorite sort of nibbling—scones with housemade jam, finger sandwiches, cookies—and because it's served as “tea for two,” I'm sometimes inspired to share with a friend.

That is, of course, when I'm not meeting my muse. ■



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