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Roots Revival

Rural entrepreneurs
are following in their
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September 2022



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A new generation of Menard County entrepreneurs discovers their rural roots run deep.

*By Addie Broyles
Photos by Scott Van Osdol*

Going Nowhere Fast

The Big Bend Open Road Race brings drivers together for legal high-speed thrills.

*By Pam LeBlanc
Photos by Erich Schlegel*

ON THE COVER
Logan Bell and Geer Gillespie feed goats grass freshly picked from their fields at Low Gear Farmstead.
Photo by Scott Van Osdol

ABOVE
Mike Black of Garland tears through the desert in his 2022 Corvette en route to victory.
Photo by Erich Schlegel

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Guadalupe Mountains Landmark

ONE HUNDRED YEARS after Yellowstone became America's first national park, the National Park Service established Guadalupe Mountains National Park on September 30, 1972.

The park, on the New Mexico border and about 100 miles east of El Paso, includes Texas' four highest peaks and El Capitan, a 1,000-foot-high limestone cliff.

Most of the park's 76,293 acres were used to ranch Angora goats in the production of mohair a century ago.



“That’s the thing about books. They let you travel without moving your feet.”

— JHUMPA LAHIRI

Being Prepared

Your electric cooperative is part of your community and wants you to stay safe during severe weather, which can strike with little notice. This month—National Preparedness Month—build an emergency kit to stay ready. Make sure your kit includes:

Enough food and water to last several days.

Medication, face masks and disinfectant for everyone in your household.

Pet supplies.

To learn more and bolster your family's preparedness, visit ready.gov/kit.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE RURAL LIFE IS ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our July prompt: **I feel patriotic when ...**

A new American tells me how happy she is to be here.

RYAN REED
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC
VAN ALSTYNE

I walk into any VA clinic or hospital. Patriotic and humbled.

TERRI ALLEN
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
PALO PINTO COUNTY

My 91-year-old mom tells how her father kissed the ground as soon as he got off the boat at Ellis Island in 1907.

STELLA JOSEPHINE
BANDERA EC
BANDERA

To see more responses, read Currents online.

September 1

National No Rhyme (Nor Reason) Day

You might ponder these words generally considered unrhymable: month, ninth, orange, silver and woman.



Boomtowns

Texas' rural population grew 2.4% between 2010 and 2020, and the state's urban population grew 18.4% over that period, according to census data compiled by the Pew Research Center. The second-fastest-growing metro area in the country was Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown, which grew by 33% to nearly 2.3 million people. The Villages in Florida was No. 1.



Hold on to Your Hat

WIND GENERATION in the U.S. hit a milestone March 29, when wind turbines produced more electricity than coal and nuclear plants. Natural gas is still the largest source of electricity generation in the country.

TCP Contests and More

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RECOMMENDED READING
September is National Library Card Sign-Up Month, a good time to revisit *Literary Fortunes*, from January 2021, which recounts the early 20th-century proliferation of Carnegie libraries in Texas.



JULIA ROBINSON

Prized Fibers

“Picking cotton was the hardest job I’ve ever done. I did get to ride with my dad to the cotton gin, though—a real treat.”

JUDITH FONTENOT
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC
NEW BRAUNFELS

Bridge Gaps

Please note that some of the information is erroneous [*Colorado’s Texas Bridge*, July 2022]. Mike Bandera has not been the general manager since 2016. Also, the Royal Gorge Bridge & Park has been owned by Cañon City since 1906, when the federal government deeded the land to the city. The city has leased out the management of the bridge and park to a concessionaire, which just so happens to be based in Dallas.

Dona Webb
Cañon City, Colorado

You have such a talent for bringing history alive [*Doctor’s Orders*, June 2022]. Love your amazing ability to find such interesting subjects and your writing.

JO DAY COYLE
VIA FACEBOOK

On Top of the World

Our son and his girlfriend climbed to the top of Guadalupe Peak a couple of years ago [*Can’t Top This*, July 2022]. While at the top, our son dropped to one knee and asked his girlfriend to be his wife. She stated later, “I went up a girlfriend and came down a fiancé.”

Karen Morley
MidSouth EC
Huntsville



COURTESY KAREN MORLEY

Juneteenth Coverage

I look forward to receiving my *Texas Co-op Power* each month. I was particularly anticipating the June issue because I knew there would be wonderfully educational articles about Juneteenth. I was extremely disappointed to see not even one article focused on this important occurrence in our Texas history.

Merelyn Johnson
Navasota Valley EC
Centerville

TCP 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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Connecting With the Land

A new generation of entrepreneurs in Menard County learns their rural roots run deep



Sarah Johanson's youngest daughter, June, feeds goats at Johanson Farm, which produces seasonal produce, baked goods and roasted coffee.

farmhouse, the couple stopped for a meal at the Lazy Ladle Cafe in downtown Menard, where Sarah Johanson's mom worked. "She told us we had to meet Sarah and Luke," Bell says.

Bell looked up Sarah Johanson on Facebook, and they started chatting, but it wasn't until Johanson started digging through old photo albums that she discovered that she and Bell shared more than a budding friendship.

When Sarah and Luke Johanson inherited her family's homestead outside Menard about five years ago, they had no idea how they were going to fit in.

The couple met in Los Angeles while pursuing acting careers, and they were living in Massachusetts when they started the process of moving to rural Texas.

"We thought, 'We're moving back there, but how are we going to survive there?'" Sarah Johanson says. Menard—a town of about 1,500—is an hour southeast of San Angelo.

Johanson's grandfather had been the football announcer for Menard High School for 30 years, but, she says, "we're not the normal type of folks who live here."

Logan Bell had a similar thought. Bell's family roots go way back in Menard, but the Odessa native lived on farms in Italy and England after college before settling in Fort Worth.

During Bell's childhood, the Bell family would visit Menard a few times a year to shear sheep that roamed the family land. When Bell's mom inherited the property in the mid-2010s, Bell and partner Geer Gillespie decided to turn their dream of becoming homesteaders into a reality.

"Before we moved here, we thought we would be the only people like this out here," Bell says. "We were prepared to be the isolated weirdos."

But Menard is a small town with a long memory. And these transplants and others came to discover their roots are more intertwined than they expected.

Not long after Bell and Gillespie moved into a dilapidated

The subjects in one photo were a group of close-knit friends in Menard who called themselves the Angels. Among them were Zella Williamson and Winnie Lois Wilkerson, Johanson's grandmother and Bell's great-aunt.

"Sarah sent me that photo and said, 'Is that person related to you?' I was like, 'oh, oh, *oh*,'" Bell says. "We knew we had a connection, but then we realized we were sort of related."

As it turns out, Johanson and Bell aren't the only descendants of the Angels who have returned home to Menard.

Hannah Beall's grandmother, Betto, was also part of the group that lived in Menard when it was a bustling livestock town in the 1940s and '50s.

Beall was born in Austin and moved back to her mother's hometown while she was in elementary school. She made friends but never quite lost that outsider-looking-in perspective. Now she works for an Austin nonprofit and runs her own preserved foods business called Han Can.

Beall makes big batches of the preserves and delivers them to customers in Menard, a place she remembers didn't have much fresh produce when she was a kid.

"I always feel closely connected to my ancestors when I'm in Menard," she says. "But it's more of a longing to have known them more or better."

One of the first products Beall sold was her great-great-grandmother's chowchow, a savory mix of green tomatoes, peppers and cabbage. "Canning is a lost art these days," Beall says. "We don't have a lot of family traditions and passed-down recipes, so Oma's chowchow felt like such gold."

For Beall and others in Menard, it's not about recreating what once was. It's about imagining something new that is connected to what came before.

"Instead of moping that I don't have any culture, I get to start new traditions and fill in these gaps in the history where I can, even if I have to make it up," Beall says.

OPPOSITE From left, Menard farmers Sarah Johanson, Logan Bell and Amie Prest gather in the pecan grove at Bell's Low Gear Farmstead. INSET Close-knit friends who called themselves the Angels have descendants who have returned to Menard and formed friendships of their own.



“You go out into the world and gather seeds of knowledge from all over and then you get to decide where to plant them.”

Menard County’s current generation of food producers used to gather on Saturdays for a small farmers market in Menard, but since the pandemic started, most of the local vendors have been selling at the year-round farmers market in Junction, about 30 minutes south.

One of the biggest hits at the market is Texas Scratch Kitchen, the Prest family’s cottage baking business. Amie and Joe Prest and their five children have lived in Menard for nearly a decade after starting their family in Germany and England, where Joe is from. Amie grew up in Menard—her ancestors were among the founding families—and, like Bell and Johanson, didn’t have plans on returning, but that changed after visiting her grandmother in 2011.

“When a piece of heritage has been in your family for that long, it’s both a blessing and a curse,” says Amie, a member of Southwest Texas Electric Cooperative. “There comes a time when you have to commit: Are you going to come back, or are you going to stay away?”

They settled on a piece of land along the San Saba River, and their passion for European-style baking continued after they moved to Texas. A few years ago, they decided to turn it into a family business, making macarons, tarts and tiramisu to sell at the market.

“You go out into the world and gather seeds of knowledge from all over and then you get to decide where to plant them,” Amie says.

Menard County, with its persistent drought and extreme temperature swings, isn’t ideal for vegetable farming, but each of the not-so-newcomers has found their own way to make it.

At Low Gear Farmstead, Bell and Gillespie have focused on raising goats, chickens, ducks and turkeys, mostly for their own use, but their biggest source of revenue has come from a high-tech solution to a rural issue: Hipcamp, a website that connects landowners with people who want to camp.

Since 2017 the couple has hosted hundreds of campers in the pecan grove along the San Saba River that cuts along the back of their property, taking care to be inclusive of people of color and members of the LGBTQ community.

After five years of hosting visitors on their land, Bell says they realized they offer something that can’t be measured by the pound.

“What we can offer more easily than anything else is a social ecosystem,” Bell says. “Yeah, we’re trying to grow food, but that social ecosystem that we can create is perhaps more important and more readily available.”

What’s happening in Menard reflects similar changes happening across Texas, as farm and ranch land changes hands and a new generation of homesteaders plants roots.

Sarah Johanson, who had a small recurring role on the TV show *Mad Men* years ago, says that as a girl growing up in Menard, she didn’t see anyone who was living a life that she wanted to live—namely, anyone making a living as an artist. “People said, ‘You’re not going to be able to survive at this,’” she says. “A big part of moving back was to show young people here that football isn’t the only thing. Art is absolutely something you can make money in.”

Now that they’ve been back for a few years, Johanson has spent time in the local archives researching the history of the area. One particular detail stood out.

“The Native Americans who lived here called it ‘Summerland,’” she says. “They said that once you taste the waters of the San Saba, you will always come back.” ■

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The Prest kids plant seedlings for Texas Scratch Kitchen, the family’s baking business. Sarah Johanson and daughter Juliet make bread in the family home where Sarah’s grandmother taught her to bake bread. Bell and Geer Gillespie visit their Galiceño horses, a breed that originated in Spain and arrived in the Americas in the 1500s.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Some 160 race cars line up on U.S. Highway 285 before the start in Fort Stockton. Inspector Joe Henderson helps Bob Bowser with his seat belt. Fans check out the cars at James Rooney Memorial Park. Navigator Colt Whetstone, left, and driver Gene Lehman plot their strategy; they won the 150 mph target speed class.

GOING NOWHERE FAST



The BIG BEND OPEN ROAD RACE brings drivers together for legal high-speed thrills

BY PAM LEBLANC • PHOTOS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL



The April edition of the 2022 Big Bend Open Road Race starts with a warning to drivers: Buzzards are perched on a bridge along the twisty course.

The big carrion-eating birds—along with blown tires, overheated engines, assorted roadkill and the occasional wandering wildlife—pose a real threat during the race, which unfolds down a 59-mile stretch of mostly two-lane asphalt that slices through the desert between Fort Stockton and Sanderson in far West Texas.

Old-timers will tell you about the time a buzzard exploded through the windshield of a car (no one was hurt, but the bird didn't fare well) or when wayward javelinas strolled onto the road. There have been blowouts and skid-offs but, so far, no serious wrecks.

The buzzard warning ripples through the line of about 160 vehicles along U.S. Highway 285 awaiting the race start. In a few minutes, the first car screeches away.

The Big Bend Open Road Race is the common man's Indy 500. Anybody with a driver's license and a properly equipped vehicle can pay the entry fee (which ranges from \$650 to \$1,050, depending on class) and compete. Most teams will tell you they come because they like to go fast. Officials shut down the highway for 12 hours, and the rubber burns.

This year's field features a stable of sleek Corvettes, a few Teslas, a herd of Mustangs, some Camaros, Porsches, Miatas and a Mini Cooper—plus a 1962 Chevrolet pickup truck and a 1970 Chevelle. In years past, junkers and rentals have also lined up at the start.

Competitors pick a class based on the speed they think they can average over two runs, a tricky feat to pull off. The fastest car doesn't necessarily win, except in the "unlimited" division, in which the flat-out fastest driver gets the trophy. In other classes, drivers who come closest to their target average speed take top honors. And drivers can't slow more than 30 mph below their target speed on straightaways, which prevents them from racing along and then coasting into the finish. The rule is enforced by radar.

The best teams come within a few hundredths of a second of their goal.

"If I don't giggle and laugh when I drive that fast, something's wrong," says Tracy Alexander, who is zipped into a pink and black fire suit as she leans against her 2015 Corvette Stingray, waiting her turn. Participants are required to wear a fire suit, helmet and gloves.



"I just drive as fast as I can, and I turn off the air conditioning so I can go faster."

Australians John Binns and Kelli-Ann Robinson fly by in their 2010 Dodge Challenger.



The vehicles take off one at a time, and it takes about three hours to launch the whole field. Then they do it again for the return trip. "I've just always been a speedster," Alexander says. "My dad had Corvettes when we were growing up, and when you're behind the wheel of a Corvette, it seems like you should push it a little bit. It's the thrill of it, really, and the adrenaline rush. Some people jump out of airplanes; I drive fast."

She and her husband, Fort Stockton Mayor Joe Chris Alexander, used to help behind the scenes at the race, which began in 1998. But when a friend's partner bowed out a few years ago, she jumped in.

"I always thought it would be fun to race because I like to drive fast, and that would be a legal way to do it," Alexander says.

That first year, she drove the first leg of the race and navigated the second alongside teammate Arno Pitzen of Kingsland. They finished second in their class.

"I'll never forget that first time," Alexander says. "You hold your breath, and I said a prayer—'Lord, let me cross at the right time.' It's the biggest adrenaline rush. You're not racing anyone but yourself. You're racing your own ability."

This year she navigates and Pitzen drives. They finish third in their class, just six-tenths of a second off their target time.

Once an annual spring event, an October race was added last fall (October 15 this year). The race is the only one of its kind in Texas, although similar events are staged in Nebraska and Nevada. Registration typically fills up within 15 minutes, and a waitlist 40 deep forms, said race coordinator Crystal Lopez.

"It's an opportunity for these guys to come out and push close to their limits," says race director Randy Dustin.

In the week leading up to the race, school kids in Fort Stockton fashion race cars out of cardboard boxes, and drivers parade through downtown in their vehicles. This year organizers added a screening of *Cannonball Run*, the 1981 comedy starring Burt Reynolds, Farrah Fawcett and Roger Moore.

That very movie once inspired John Binns to get into the sport. The former Texan who lives in Sydney, Australia, stores several cars in nearby Alpine specifically for the event. He brought Kelli-Ann Robinson with him from Australia

to serve as navigator this year while he drives his purple 2010 Dodge Challenger. He's only here to have fun.

"I just drive as fast as I can, and I turn off the air conditioning so I can go faster," Binns says.

Some drivers scout the course ahead of time, using old-fashioned tools. Others rely on high-tech gadgets and GPS to hit their targets.

"Everybody has their secrets," says Travis McRae of Kerrville, a Central Texas Electric Cooperative member. "I like the technical part of it. I can drive anywhere fast, but out here you have to be spot on."

Charlie Friend, 82, of Pahrump, Nevada, a former U.S. Air Force fighter pilot who has raced in every class and won the unlimited category one year, also does everything manually—punching a stopwatch and scrolling through a paper route chart as he drives the course. "More and more people now use magic stuff, like computer systems," Friend said.

After this year's race, teams gather in Fort Stockton to swap stories. A father-daughter duo from San Antonio dances a jig by their car. Sweaty racers eat barbecue from a food truck. Brothers Mike Smith from Blanco and Mark Smith of Longview crack cans of cold beer and hash over their performance.

"We know we were too fast," Mike Smith says, and race results later confirm they crossed the finish line nearly 22 seconds too soon in the 150-mph class, completing the 118-mile sprint in just over 47 minutes. That doesn't matter much to him. "All the guys out here have a common interest. We all enjoy tinkering with cars, and this is kind of like a reunion."

And those buzzards? Friend, the former pilot driving a Cadillac CTS-V, spots some along the course. They don't cause any problems.

"I just flashed my light and tooted the horn, and they moved," he says. ■



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FRESH OUTTA TEXAS



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER

ALAN LESLEY

What Is the PCRFB?

OUR MEMBER SERVICE representatives have been busy lately responding to a common question: “I see this PCRFB charge on my electric bill, and I don’t know what that is; can you explain?”

It’s a great question, with a surprisingly simple answer. The acronym PCRFB stands for power cost recovery factor. CECA has three charges that appear on the average monthly residential bill: the availability charge, the energy charge and the PCRFB charge. To understand this last charge, it’s important to understand the others.

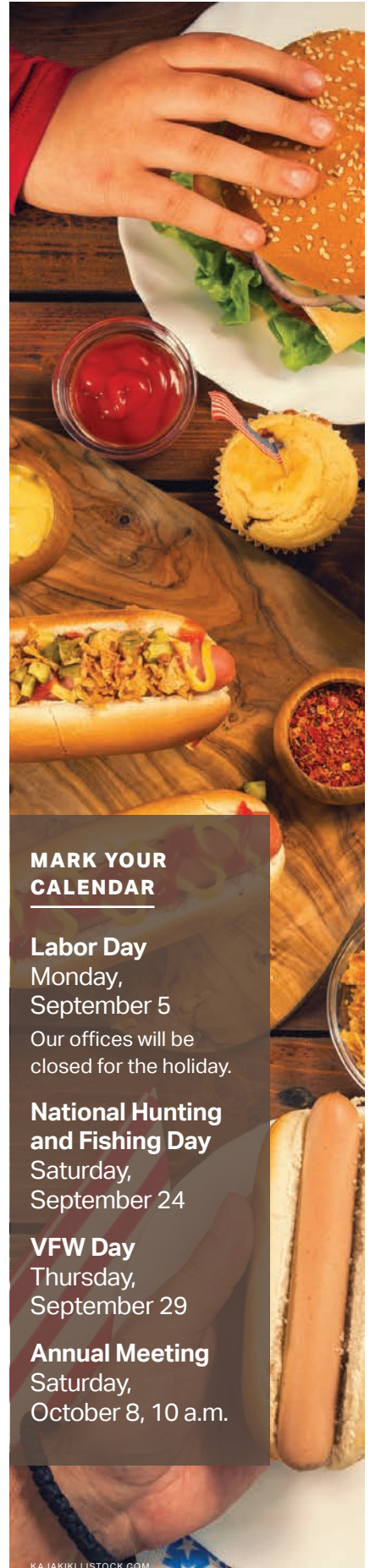
The availability charge is a fixed monthly amount assessed to each meter that calculates a portion of the costs associated with delivering power. This charge helps purchase necessary infrastructure like poles, wires and transformers, and employee labor to keep electricity “available” and flowing from the substation to your homes and businesses.

The energy charge on your bill is currently \$0.1016 per kilowatt-hour. Like the availability charge, \$0.0416 per kWh of the energy charge is calculated to cover the remaining costs to energize the power lines. Because we have used \$0.0416 per kWh out of our \$0.1016 energy charge, we have \$0.06 left, which is an estimated amount. The price of electricity in the Electric Reliability Council of Texas market changes every 15 minutes, so when CECA developed our rates in 2017, there was no way to know exactly what electricity would cost in the future. The \$0.06 per kWh was our best estimate for this future power cost.

Now that we have tackled the availability charge and the energy charge, let’s look into the PCRFB. The PCRFB is a mechanism that trues up the actual monthly cost for the electricity that we purchase and deliver to our members against the \$0.06 per kWh that we estimated that electricity would cost when the rates were developed.

You may have noticed that the PCRFB portion of your bill has been much higher lately, just like the price of gas at the pump has increased. Electricity is closely tied to the oil and gas industry. We will discuss this relationship in the coming months.

As always, if you have questions regarding the PCRFB, please contact our office at 1-800-915-2533. ■



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Labor Day

Monday,
September 5

Our offices will be closed for the holiday.

National Hunting and Fishing Day

Saturday,
September 24

VFW Day

Thursday,
September 29

Annual Meeting

Saturday,
October 8, 10 a.m.



JIRI HERA | ADOBE STOCK

Capital Credits Allocated

AS EACH YEAR COMES to a close, capital credits must be allocated to the accounts of CECA members.

Cooperatives determine the margins accumulated from operations and allocate the margins to our members' accounts. After all of the expenditures are paid by CECA, the remaining margins are allocated to our members based on usage.

These capital credits will be returned to members in the future in the form of estate returns or general returns when doing so will not weaken

the financial condition of the cooperative as determined by CECA's board of directors.

In the meantime, the funds are invested in the cooperative plant and credited to each member's account, even if the member

moves out of our service territory. It is important for member families departing our service territory to inform CECA of a new address so capital credits can be returned and not go uncollected when the board approves a distribution.

Capital credits for 2021 were calculated by multiplying each member's bill by the allocation factors listed above. For example, if your total annual residential bill from the co-op—consisting of energy billing and power cost adjustment—was \$500, multiply that amount by 0.03601236, so the product is \$18.01.

In calculating your total bill, include any security light charge but do not include any tax, service or miscellaneous charges. If you have any questions concerning these calculations, please feel free to contact the co-op office.

This article is intended to serve as an official notice of allocation of capital credits for 2021. ■

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ABOUT CECA

CECA operates in Brown, Callahan, Comanche, Eastland, Mills, Shackelford and Stephens counties.

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Headquarters

349 Industrial Blvd.
Comanche, TX 76442
Monday–Friday, 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Early

1801 CR 338
Early, TX 76801
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Eastland

1311 W. Main St.
Eastland, TX 76448
Tuesday and Thursday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.

VISIT US ONLINE

ceca.coop



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District Meeting Prizewinners

DURING THE BLAZING SUMMER, when temperatures were soaring around and above 108 degrees, CECA held three district meetings July 18–20, calling upon our member-owners to turn out to hear about the state of their cooperative and exercise their democratic voice to nominate a director.

CECA would like to thank our member-owners of districts 3, 5 and 6 for attending and taking time to ask questions important to their families. Member families that attended their district meetings were awarded a \$15 credit to their electricity service with CECA and entered in a drawing to win a Keurig coffeemaker, Ryobi drill, and a Better Homes and Gardens fan. ■



- 1. Bill and Shirley Hill with their new Keurig coffeemaker.
- 2–4. From left, George R. Wall, Karen Coplen and Laura Geisendorff were delighted after they each won a prize from the raffle at CECA's District 3 meeting July 18.
- 5. Howard Hamilton with his new Better Homes and Gardens fan at the District 5 meeting.
- 6–7. James Winge, left, and Philip Perley were in attendance for the District 6 meeting July 20, and both won prizes.
- 8–9. Thomas D. McClanahan of District 5 and Ruth York of District 6 were excited to win items from the raffle at their respective district meetings.





WEATHERSTRIPPING DOORS

Capture Energy Savings by Sealing Air Leaks

Save energy and seal air leaks by weatherstripping exterior doors.

How do you know if you need to weatherstrip? If you can see any amount of light between a door frame and the floor, weatherstripping should be applied to eliminate energy waste. This DIY energy-saving project is relatively easy and inexpensive, depending on the type of materials selected. The most common weatherstripping material is self-adhesive foam strips, although rubber, vinyl, metal or a combination of materials may be used.

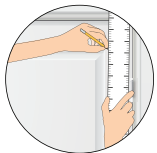
1. CLEAN SURFACES

Clean the door and doorjamb to be weatherstripped. For best results, apply weatherstripping to clean, dry surfaces warmer than 20 degrees.



2. MEASURE DOOR AND DOORJAMBS

To ensure greater accuracy, measure your space twice before cutting the material. It is best to plan for one continuous strip for each side of the door and doorjamb.



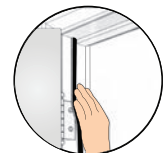
3. CUT FOAM

Cut long pieces of self-adhesive weatherstripping material (foam, vinyl, etc.) for each side of the doorjamb and door.



4. APPLY WEATHERSTRIPPING

Peel back the self-adhesive foam. Apply one continuous strip of material snugly along each side. Make sure the weatherstripping meets tightly at the corners and is pressed firmly onto the door and doorjamb. The material should compress tightly between the door and doorjamb, without making it difficult to shut.





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Keep the Cool Where It Belongs

REFRIGERATORS ARE ONE of the biggest power users in the home, and they deserve special attention. Keep yours running right with these tips.

Although rushing out to buy a new refrigerator may not be in your budget, it's important to know that new models are more efficient and use as little as half the electricity of older units.

Full fridges run more efficiently than ones that are only partially full. So add more food, drinks or even bottles of tap water to save energy.

If you have two refrigerators, or an additional freezer, decide if the extra expense is really worth it. Cram as much as you can into your primary fridge (leaving room for air to circulate) or consider disposing of the two older refrigerators and replacing them with one larger, newer and more efficient model.

Make sure door seals are tight. Test them by closing the door over a piece of paper or a dollar bill so it is half in and half out of the fridge. If you can pull the paper or bill out easily, the latch may need adjustment or the seal may need replacing.

Store food and liquids in airtight containers. Uncovered foods release moisture and make the compressor work harder.

Move the refrigerator away from the wall and vacuum its condenser coils yearly—unless you have a no-clean condenser model. Fridges use less electricity when they have clean coils.

Maintain a consistent temperature in the fridge and freezer. Recommended temperatures are 37–40 degrees for the fresh food compartment of the refrigerator and 5 degrees for the freezer section. If you have a separate freezer for long-term storage, set it to zero degrees.

Protect the refrigerator from high-heat sources. The compressor kicks into high gear when it's near sources of heat, wasting energy and shortening the life span of the appliance. When designing your kitchen, try to keep your fridge away from the range, oven and dishwasher or any other appliance that may emit high levels of heat. It's also wise to keep it out of prolonged direct sunlight. ■

Mexican Pasta Bake

½ pound whole-grain corkscrew or penne pasta
20 ounces lean ground turkey
1 can (15 ounces) corn or Mexican corn blend, drained
3 cups chunky salsa, plus more for garnish
2 cups shredded Mexican blend cheese, divided use

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9-by-13-inch casserole dish.
2. Cook the pasta in salted water until it's al dente, as directed on the package.
3. Cook the turkey in a skillet until it is thoroughly browned. Combine cooked pasta, turkey, corn and salsa.
4. Spread half the pasta mixture in the dish, then sprinkle with half the cheese. Add remaining mixture and cover dish tightly with foil.
5. Bake 35–40 minutes. During the last 10 minutes, remove foil and sprinkle with remaining cheese. Garnish with extra salsa, jalapenos, tomatoes and cilantro, if desired.

SERVES 8

TC Find this and more delicious recipes online at [TexasCoopPower.com](https://www.texascoopower.com).

MELISSA SKORPIL



Antiquity's Inkwell

For centuries, documents—including historic treasures—were written in organic iron gall ink

BY MARTHA DEERING • ILLUSTRATION BY ELVIS SWIFT

LONG BEFORE Bic pens began to roll off assembly lines in the 1950s, frontier Texans drew up their official documents and signed their names using a quill pen and iron gall ink.

When Stephen F. Austin signed the land grant from the Spanish government in 1824 allowing 300 families to resettle in the Texas territory, iron gall ink was likely his only option. It was used for the constitution of the Republic of Texas, the Texas Declaration of Independence and many cherished family letters that have been passed down for generations.

Before iron gall, inks were made from soot collected from burning plant materials or bones mixed with water and glue, but these carbon-based inks were easy to smudge or remove.

Oak trees produce nutlike growths called galls as a reaction to wasps depositing eggs beneath the bark. The tree encapsulates the eggs, and after wasps emerge, the insects bore a hole in the gall and fly off.

Ink makers crushed dried galls with a mortar and pestle, although a hammer worked as well. They then soaked the powder in a small jar of rainwater along with a handful of rusty nails. Placed in a sunny spot for 10 days or so, the tannic acid from the oak galls would react with the rust, making a light brown- or sepia-colored ink that turns black in a matter of hours when applied to paper. Adding a bit of gum arabic—basically hardened tree sap—made the ink flow better.

Since iron gall ink is not easily removed, it was the obvious choice for record keeping in the Western Hemisphere for hundreds of years, from the fourth century into the 20th century. Monks in medieval monasteries used iron gall to copy manuscripts, and Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks and the musical scores of Johann Sebastian Bach were executed in iron gall. It was a popular drawing ink in the 15th century because of its rich, velvety tone and was used for drawings by Rembrandt and Vincent Van Gogh.

Some people still use the ink today, and you can buy it online if you don't want to make your own.

But there's a reason iron gall wasn't used to fill your Bic: The ingredients make it inherently unstable. It often fades and corrodes over time, weakening paper—especially where it is heavily applied—and

can eventually cause discoloration, brittleness, cracks and holes. Humidity and light are its worst enemies.

Storage conditions for historical documents and the amount of use they are subjected to can also affect their condition, which can range from a slight browning of the ink itself to corroded paper so full of holes that it resembles lace.

"Not all iron gall ink documents show severe damage," says Heather Hamilton, a conservator at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. "Iron gall ink formulations differed, and some were more stable than others. Also, some papers were more prone to becoming damaged by the inks—thin papers, for example."

Hamilton says past display practices have caused the iron gall ink to fade on some treasured documents, including the William B. Travis letter and the original Texas Declaration of Independence. She says the TSLAC now follows conservation best practices that better prevent fading, including carefully monitoring light exposure.

When irreplaceable Texas historical documents written in iron gall ink travel, as was the case when the Travis letter was displayed at the Alamo in 2013, they are packed carefully to reduce vibration during transport. To protect the fragile letter from variations in temperature, humidity and light, it was enclosed in a Mylar sleeve and mounted between sheets of high-quality, anti-reflective plexiglass in the conservation laboratory of the Texas State Library and Archives in Austin.

Just as natural dyes, like that extracted from the tiny cochineal bug for centuries to make bright red coloring for food and clothing, were eventually replaced by synthetics, iron gall ink has given way to synthetic inks made using dye suspended in a mixture of solvents and fatty acids.

Are they better than iron gall? Only time will tell. ■



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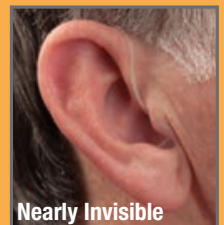
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Sincerely, A. Macon, Williamsburg, VA

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Good on Paper

Fueled by booze and a legendary cocktail napkin, Southwest Airlines took off and never looked back

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH FERONE

THIS LEGENDARY STORY starts off like many good stories do: Two men walked into a bar.

They were in San Antonio, and this was more than 55 years ago. And, OK, it was actually a restaurant with a bar. They ordered drinks and perhaps hors d'oeuvres. As the story goes, one of the men grabbed a cocktail napkin, took out his pen and said to the other, "Here's the plan."

He then drew a simple triangle on the napkin. At the apex of the triangle he wrote "Dallas." The bottom left he labeled "San Antonio." And on the remaining corner: "Houston."

"There—that's the business plan," he said. "Fly between these cities several times a day, every day." And that is the

tale of how Southwest Airlines began, on a simple napkin in a bar in San Antonio in 1966. The two men were Rollin King and Herb Kelleher.

King was a pilot and businessman and Kelleher a lawyer. King would become a managing director of the company that he and Kelleher co-founded in March 1967 and that first took to the sky in June 1971. Kelleher would go on to serve as CEO from 1981 to 2001. At the Southwest headquarters at Dallas Love Field, there's a bronze replica of the original napkin and a plaque with this exchange: "Herb, let's start an airline." "Rollin, you're crazy. Let's do it!"

Beyond the sizzle, there was genuine business genius in Southwest's efficiencies: peanut fares and the 10-minute

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



turnaround, which had never been achieved before. To date, Southwest has flown more than 2 billion passengers without a crash and now serves more than 100 destinations in the U.S. and 10 countries.

Perhaps the coolest story in Southwest Airlines' history, and relatively unknown, was its fare war with now-defunct Braniff Airlines in early 1973—only a year after a struggling Southwest had just \$143 in its bank account. Braniff offered \$13 fares for its Houston-Dallas route as a means of "breaking" the upstart airline.

Southwest responded by offering passengers a \$13 fare or a \$26 fare that included a free bottle of Chivas scotch, Crown Royal whiskey or Smirnoff vodka. According to airline lore, for the two months before Braniff surrendered, Southwest was Texas' biggest distributor of premium liquor as business travelers expensed the \$26 tickets and kept the booze for themselves.

Not long before he died in June 2014, King confessed that the napkin story wasn't entirely true but that it was a "hell of a good story."

It was too late: The myth had become more powerful than the reality.

As the saying goes, when the legend becomes fact, print the legend. ■

Pizza Night

We hold the anchovies but offer these slices of inspired pies

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

We instituted Friday night pizzas when my kids were small, and it's been a great way to get creative in the kitchen. Whether you are sticking with reliable classics like pepperoni and mushroom or branching out to new toppings, it's hard to resist pizza. This take was inspired by my love of Mexican street corn.

Chorizo Corn Pizza

½ cup sour cream
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
2 tablespoons lime juice, plus more to taste
1 teaspoon chili powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 ball pizza dough or premade crust
Olive oil
1 cup shredded mozzarella
½ pound Mexican chorizo, cooked and drained
¾ cup corn kernels
¼ cup pickled jalapeño peppers
½ cup crumbled cotija cheese
Chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees.
2. In a bowl, mix sour cream, mayonnaise, lime juice, chili powder and salt until well combined. Taste and adjust seasonings, adding more lime juice or water to thin if desired.
3. Lightly grease a pizza pan and roll out pizza dough on top. Brush olive oil on top of dough, then spread sour cream mixture on top. Layer on the mozzarella, chorizo, corn and jalapeños. Sprinkle cotija over the top.
4. Bake pizza 10–15 minutes, until crust is browned and mozzarella is melted. Garnish with fresh cilantro.

SERVES 4

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Brussels Sprouts Pizza With Bacon and Pear.





Low-Carb Sausage, Mushroom and Jalapeño Pizza

DIANE MUDD
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

This pizza is a great option for those who are looking for a low-carb alternative. Mudd recommends making your own low-carb pizza sauce. These mini pizzas are also delicious cold the next day.

CRUST

- 1½ cups almond flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 eggs
- 3 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- ⅓ cup (¼ stick) butter

TOPPING

- 1 pound ground pork
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon fennel seed, crushed
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1 cup chopped white button mushrooms
- ¼ cup pickled jalapeño peppers, chopped
- ¼ cup chopped olives
- 1 cup low-carb pizza sauce
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

1. **CRUST** Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line an extra-large baking sheet or two standard baking sheets with parchment. In a medium bowl, combine almond flour, baking powder, garlic powder and eggs. Set aside.
2. In a large microwave-safe bowl, combine mozzarella, sour cream and butter. Microwave 1–2 minutes, stirring every

CONTINUED >

\$500 WINNER

Williams Family Best Marmalade Bacon Pizza

SHAWN WILLIAMS
LYNTEGAR EC



The Williams family began a weekly cooking challenge during the pandemic while their children lived in different cities. A prompt of marmalade led to the creation of this unique pizza featuring fig, bacon and asparagus.

SERVES 4



- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large red or yellow onion, sliced
- ½ teaspoon salt, plus more to taste
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, divided use
- ⅓ cup (¼ stick) butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¾ cup milk
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 3 tablespoons fig jam or marmalade
- 1 package unbaked pizza dough
- 7 slices bacon, cooked crisp and chopped
- 8 ounces asparagus, cooked and cut into small pieces
- 6 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 2 ounces Parmesan cheese, shredded

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. In a sauté pan over medium heat, heat olive oil. Add onions and sprinkle with salt. Sauté 10 minutes, then add sugar and continue to sauté until onions begin to caramelize, about 5–10 minutes. Add a tablespoon or two of water as needed during cooking to keep the onions from drying. Stir in 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar and set the onion topping aside.
3. In a small saucepan, to make sauce, melt butter over medium heat. Add flour and garlic and cook, whisking constantly, for 1 minute. While whisking, slowly pour in milk. Bring to a boil, whisking constantly, for about a minute until thickened, then remove from heat. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. In a small bowl, combine fig jam and remaining tablespoon of balsamic vinegar. Heat in microwave 15 seconds and set aside.
5. Roll out pizza dough onto pan and bake 4 minutes. Remove from oven and spread sauce evenly over the top. Layer on toppings and drizzle on warmed balsamic jam. Return pizza to the oven for 7–10 minutes, until crust is golden and cheese is melted.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

CUPCAKES DUE SEPTEMBER 10

Whether you stick with classic flavors or go wild, do you make the best cupcakes around? Show us. Submit your recipes on our website by September 10 for a chance to win \$500.



RECIPES CONTINUED

30 seconds, until melted. While the cheese is still hot, add the almond flour mixture and stir or knead with your hands until a uniform dough forms. Form dough into a ball and divide it into 8 equal pieces. Roll each piece into a ball, place on prepared baking sheet and flatten to about 1/4-inch thick. Bake for about 10 minutes, then remove and pop any bubbles with a fork. Return to oven for 2 minutes, until golden-brown.

3. TOPPING Heat a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Season ground pork generously with salt and pepper, fennel seed, and Italian seasoning. Brown the resulting sausage, breaking it into small pieces. Add mushrooms, jalapeños and olives, stirring and continuing to cook until mushrooms are soft.

4. To prepare, divide sauce equally among pizza crusts. Sprinkle on mozzarella, then arrange meat mixture on top (you might have extra remaining). Bake 5–8 minutes, until cheese has melted.

SERVES 8



Jump-Start Breakfast Pizza

DALA BURK
WISE EC

Pizza for breakfast? Why not! Burk takes all your favorite breakfast ingredients and combines them for one fantastic pizza. Watch the crust carefully to prevent it from overbrowning.

- 8 ounces (1 package) refrigerated crescent rolls, separated**
- 2 cups frozen hash browns with peppers and onions (about half a**

- 28-ounce package), slightly thawed**
- 1 pound ground sausage, cooked and drained**
- 4 slices Canadian bacon, diced (optional)**
- 4 ounces diced green chiles, drained**
- 4 ounces sliced mushrooms**
- 1½ cups shredded cheddar cheese**
- 5 eggs, beaten**

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Arrange crescent rolls to cover the bottom of an ungreased pizza pan, pressing seams together and pinching edges to form a slight rim.
2. Spread hash browns evenly over crust, then sprinkle on sausage, Canadian bacon, chiles and mushrooms. Evenly top with shredded cheese, then carefully pour eggs over the whole pizza.
3. Bake 30–40 minutes, until crust is browned and cheese is melted.

SERVES 4–6

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Gulf Boast

Port Arthur museum shows off the region's global influence

BY CHET GARNER

GROWING UP in Southeast Texas, it was hard to appreciate the unique culture and people of the Gulf Coast. It wasn't until I moved to Austin and tried to order barbecued crabs at a restaurant and play zydeco music on the jukebox that I realized my upbringing was a bit different.

A recent trip to the Museum of the Gulf Coast in Port Arthur not only reaffirmed that belief but helped me realize that without the people of the Coastal Bend, Texas and even the U.S. wouldn't be the same.

When I stepped into this massive downtown museum, I felt like I had stepped into a life-size textbook. From Karankawa artifacts to the Spindletop oil boom, the museum captures the unique history of the Gulf Coast. There's a 125-foot mural depicting moments like the shipwreck of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca right next to a record-setting race car. Everybody can find something interesting here.

Upstairs are four rooms dedicated to the staggering crowd of people born in this region who have gone on to influence the world—governors and artists, actresses and war heroes, all hailing from this crescent of swamp and coastal prairie. The sports room was especially awesome, with tributes to famous coaches like Bum and Wade Phillips, along with Cowboys legend Jimmy Johnson.

The music room flooded my mind with great tunes from artists like the Big Bopper, ZZ Top and George Jones. However, no artist draws more visitors than the "Pearl"—Janis Joplin—who was born in Port Arthur in 1943. Folks come to see a replica of her classic Porsche Cabriolet and many of her gold records.

It just goes to show: Folks from small towns can go on to have a big influence on the world. I left inspired—and hungry for Cajun food. ■

ABOVE Chet channels some of Janis Joplin's cosmic blues at the Museum of the Gulf Coast in Port Arthur.

TCP Chet finds a piece of his heart and his roots at the museum. See his latest video on our website, and watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

SEPTEMBER

08

San Angelo [8-11] Arthur Stillwell's Dream of Steam, (325) 486-2140, sanangelorailway.org

09

Caldwell [9-10] Creative Memories Quilt Guild's Quilt Show, (512) 924-8716, englemann@suddenlink.net

Ennis [9-10] Patriot Day BBQ Bash, (972) 878-2625, ennis-chamber.com

Fairfield [9-10] Big T Memorial State Championship BBQ Cookoff, bigtmemorial.com

Brownwood [9-11, 16-18] Noises Off, (325) 998-2801, brownwoodlyrictheatre.com

10

Bartlett Metaphysical Night Gallery and Paranormal Tour, (512) 203-5561, austinghosttours.com

Caldwell Kolache Festival, (979) 567-0000, burlesoncountytexas.com

Plano Twenty Hounds: Downtown Sessions, (972) 941-5600, visitplano.com

Brenham [10-17] Washington County Fair, (979) 836-4112, washingtoncofair.com

11

Yorktown Holy Cross Festival, (361) 564-2893, holycrossyorktown.net

15

Lufkin [15-18] Texas State Forest Festival, (936) 634-6644, texasforestfestival.com

16

Nacogdoches [16-17] Old Town Rig Down, (936) 615-0580, oldtownrigdown.com

Amarillo [16-24] Tri-State Fair & Rodeo, (806) 376-7767, tristatefair.com

Kerrville [16-17, 23-25, 30-Oct. 2] Leading Ladies, (830) 896-9393, caillouxperformingarts.com

17

Anson Party in the Park, (325) 823-3259, ansonchamberofcommerce.com

Conroe Montgomery County Master Gardeners Fall Plant Sale, (936) 539-7824, mcmga.com

Plano North Texas Pride Festival, (469) 694-4834, visitplano.com

San Angelo Concho Valley Archeology Fair, (325) 657-4444, fortconcho.com

Taylor Texas Mamma Jamma Ride, (512) 297-7740, mammajammaride.org

Gladewater [17-18] Arts and Crafts, (903) 845-5501, gladewaterartsandcrafts.com

18

Kyle Doggie Dip, (512) 262-3939, cityofkyle.com

Stonewall Seed Stomp, (830) 644-2252, tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lyndon-b-johnson

19

Kerrville [19-25] Paint Kerrville!, (830) 895-2911, kacckerrville.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP *Submit Your Event*

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



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Paint Kerrville!
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www.kacckerrville.com



Texas State Arts & Crafts Fair
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ELISA BISTOCCHI | DREAMTIME.COM

Pick of the Month

Balloon and Music Festival

Paris, September 9–12
(903) 517-2830
parisballoonandmusicfestival.com

The skies over North Texas are filled with hot air balloon flights and the evenings with food trucks, music, a kids zone, vendors and a live painting competition at this visually stunning festival.

25

Serbin Wendish Fest,
(979) 366-2441,
texaswendish.org

30

Graford [30–Oct. 1] Possum Fest BBQ and Chili Cook-Off, (940) 779-2424,
possumkingdomlake.com

SEPTEMBER EVENTS CONTINUED

22

Plano [22–25] Balloon Festival, (972) 867-7566,
planoballoonfest.org

Kerrville [22–Oct. 29] Roundup Exhibition and Sale, (830) 896-2553,
museumofwesternart.com

24

Brenham Suzy Bogguss,
(979) 337-7240,
thebarnhillcenter.com

DeKalb Saturday in the Park, (903) 277-3519,
dekalbtexasoktoberfest.org

Fredericksburg Back to the Basics,
(830) 997-3224,
backtothebasicsfestival.com

George West Mariachi Las Alteñas, (361) 436-1098,
dobie-westtheatre.com

Lakehills Medina Lake Cajun Festival,
(830) 460-0600,
cajunfestival-medinalake.com

Mason Old Yeller Day,
(325) 347-5446,
mason.ploud.net

OCTOBER

01

Bowie Chicken and Bread Days Heritage Festival,
(940) 872-6246,
cityofbowietx.com

La Grange Oktoberfest on the Square, (979) 968-3017,
visitlagrangetx.com

Lubbock [1–2] Miniaturists of Lubbock Show and Sale, (806) 885-4306,
miniaturistsoflubbock.org

Plano [1–2] Fall Plano Train Show, (972) 941-5840,
visitplano.com

07

Kerrville [7–16] Welcome Home Fest, (830) 257-3600,
kerrvillefolkfestival.org

Ingram [7–8, 14–16, 21–23] The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, (830) 367-5121,
hcaf.com

Light and Shadow

Out of the shadows and ready to shine, these photos are downright illuminating. Don't get left in the dark—join us as we cast a spotlight on Texas beauty.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 FAITH CAUGHN
TRINITY VALLEY EC

The East Texas Stampede equestrian drill team at the rodeo in Mesquite.

2 JOHN HOBBS
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

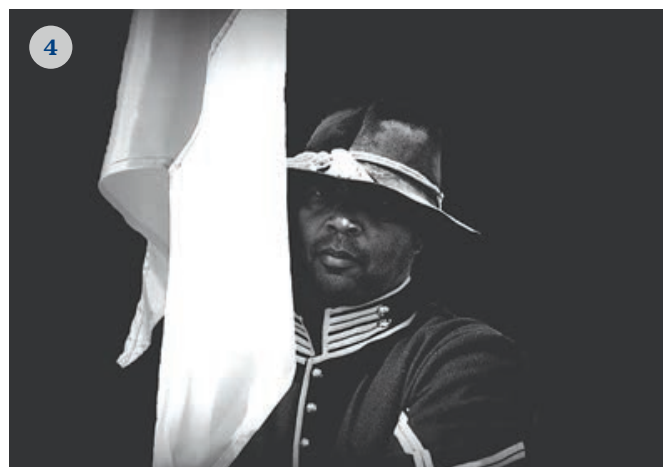
Yuccas at White Sands National Park.

3 CAMERON FOX
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

"You can't take the country out of a Texas girl raising her livestock."

4 PAUL GARCIA
MEDINA EC

The Texas Folklife Festival in San Antonio features historic reenactors in full period dress.



Upcoming Contests

- DUE SEP 10** Nature's Color
- DUE OCT 10** First Responders
- DUE NOV 10** Land, Sea or Sky



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more Light and Shadow photos from readers.



Roll Call

Hail to the bus drivers, who help students get ahead

BY CYNTHIA L. MATLOCK
ILLUSTRATION BY TAYLOR CALLERY

WHEN I WAS A KID in the 1970s, the frame of a small school bus sat rusting in our neighbor's pasture. I asked my mother about it, and she told me that in the late 1930s, the neighbor, John Christian, had bought the bus.

So it was his. My mouth dropped in awe that an African American man in our rural Cherokee County community had bought a school bus.

That triggered my interest in school bus history as I watched bright yellow buses, large and small, coming and going, picking up and dropping off children as the school year began. They were headed home, to school or to their extracurricular activities.

I found out that in the second half of the 19th century, students who lived beyond walking distance of their school

were typically driven in the family wagon or a horse-drawn repurposed farm wagon with a tarpaulin stretched above the passenger seating.

It wasn't until the 1950s that buses operated by private drivers were widely replaced by district-owned fleets.

During the 1940s, many rural schools only went through the eighth grade. Beyond that, students often had to travel longer distances to their nearest high school. Very few families in rural communities had cars at that time. People like Christian—who made sure the school-age children in their farming areas had transportation to school—were so important.

“Oh yeah, Mr. John Christian bought a school bus, and he hired my father, Matthew Allen, to drive the bus to pick up the kids in the Green Chapel area,” Evelyn Allen, a former resident of the community, told me. “They all knew Mr. Christian.”

While the buses themselves have improved over the years, the experience is much the same. Schoolchildren—then and now—wait and anticipate the rumbling bus coming to their stop during the early dawn hours.

The bus rides to and from team sports, competitions and performances are the source of many friendships, laughs and arguments among the riders. Most riders can recall favorite drivers who stand out in their memories of their school days—like those who made them feel special or let them have safe fun.

Even the strictest drivers can be fondly remembered. Like one of my favorite drivers, J.C. Jones. My cousins and I knew he did not play. He'd look up in that wide rearview mirror and yell back to us in a commanding tone: “Y'all better set down back there.” And we'd immediately flop down in our seats.

Much gratitude is due to those bus owners, faithful drivers, mechanics and all who keep the buses rolling. Your work is important. ■

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