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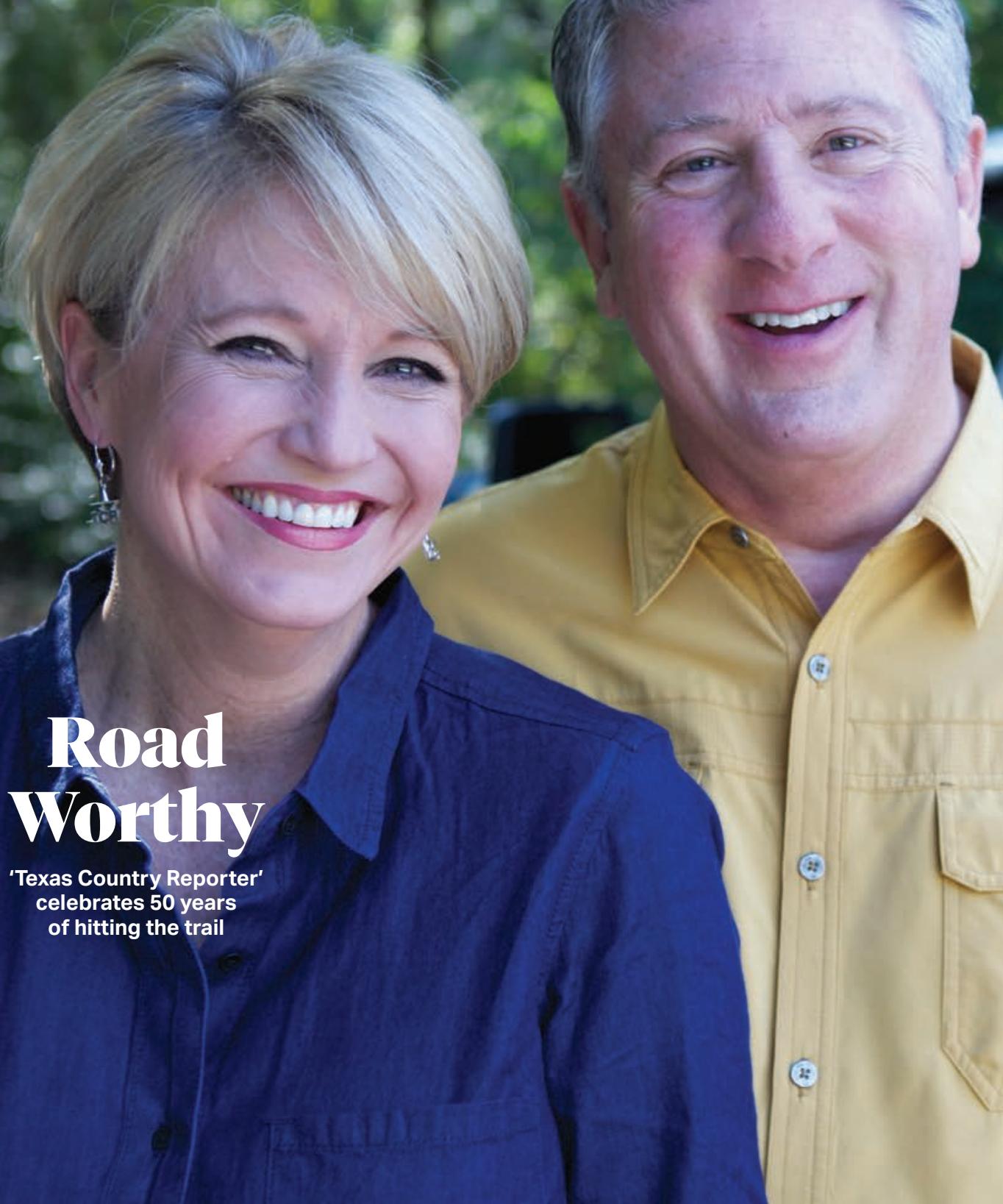
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December 2021



08

An Evolving Ranch Reality

Fennessey Ranch turns to conservation and education to diversify its mission.

*By Clayton Maxwell
Photos by Erich Schlegel*

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How Bob Phillips has spent 50 years bringing regular folks into Texas homes.

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By Babs Rodriguez

ON THE COVER
Kelli and Bob Phillips of the *Texas Country Reporter*.
Photo by Dan Stricklin | Phillips Productions
ABOVE
A barred owl on the Fennessey Ranch.
Photo by Erich Schlegel

A Wonderful Flick

THE HOLIDAY CHESTNUT *It's a Wonderful Life* debuted 75 years ago, and it was kind of a flop.

Reviews were frosty after the film's premiere, December 20, 1946, at New York's Globe Theatre, and it bombed at the box office.

But in the 1970s, it landed on cable TV and has been pretty much unavoidable during the holiday season ever since.



“Look, Daddy. Teacher says every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings.”

—ZUZU BAILEY

TRUE TREKKER

As a little girl, Vanessa Wyche watched Nichelle Nichols portray Lt. Nyota Uhura in *Star Trek*. “I got inspiration by seeing someone on a TV screen that looked like me, that made me think that I could do that,” Wyche said in a July interview with *Texas Standard*.

Wyche, below, director of the Johnson Space Center in Houston since June, is the first Black woman to lead a NASA center. The multi-decade veteran of the space agency prioritizes safety and inclusivity in her leadership.

“Part of [leading a team] may be understanding that diversity of thought and personnel is very important for us to bring everything to bear,” she said.



TCP Contests and More

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All Wet

RECOMMENDED READING

Underwater Theater, from December 2011, took readers along with divers off the Texas coast to see a cast of extraordinary coral reef creatures.



Be Enlightened

If every American replaced one incandescent lightbulb with an LED, we would save about \$600 million in annual energy costs and stop 9 billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions per year, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. That's enough to power 3 million homes and roughly the amount of gas produced by 800,000 cars in a year.



A Red-Letter Day +

CLARA BARTON, founder of the American Red Cross, was born 200 years ago this month.

The Red Cross, started in 1881, was largely devoted to disaster relief for its first 20 years. Barton participated in her last relief mission in September 1900, when, at the age of 78, she distributed financial assistance and supplies to survivors of the deadly hurricane and tidal wave that struck Galveston.

Barton was born December 25, 1821, in Massachusetts.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

THE HARDEST JOB IN THE WORLD HAS TO BE ...

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 October prompt: **I wish I was there when ...**

Stevie Ray Vaughan played at Antone's.

**KIM GROSSMAN
PEDERNALES EC
JONESTOWN**

Neil Armstrong famously landed on the moon.

**LEANN HOLT
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC
ALLEN**

The winning lottery ticket was being passed across the counter.

**JULIA BRYANT
SOUTH PLAINS EC
SPUR**

To see more responses, read Currents online.

**Making It Happen**

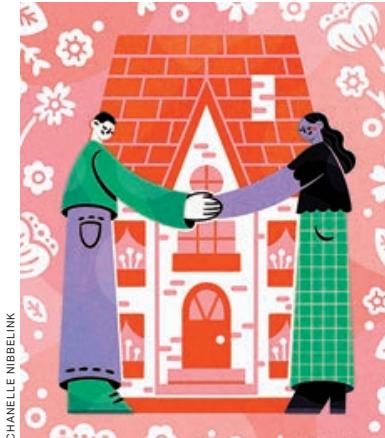
The evening of the big freeze, I drove from my home in Crawford to Marble Falls to visit my disabled brother [Co-ops Shine, October 2021]. My wife was left alone to face the rigors of the freeze, and because of the work of Heart of Texas EC, she had power almost the entire time. I am deeply appreciative of all the work the co-op employees put in to make that happen.

Stan and Jane Jarosz
Heart of Texas EC
Crawford



Our San Patricio EC is excellent [Co-ops Shine, October 2021]. Always great service in the field and at the office. They keep customers informed and repair in a timely manner. We never lost power during the freeze.

SUE SPARKMAN
VIA FACEBOOK

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Earliest Inconvenience

“So much respect for all our co-op guys. They go wherever they’re needed, whenever they’re needed, and stay as long as they’re needed.”

PEGGY LAGING
VIA FACEBOOK

A Stable Career

We sure need more horse vets [Second to None, September 2021].

Kate Jacobs
Via Facebook

Finding Contentment

I am content with my old house, too [Not About To Fixate, October 2021]. I've been through the remodels, and all get old and out of style sooner than later. It's wonderful to be content with what one has. I'm glad to know that there is someone else out there who feels like I do.

M.C. Watts
Sam Houston EC
Chester

Walking Through History

As a kid my brothers and I scoured this same Hill Country looking for arrowheads and other stuff, even chasing a few goats along the way [Raising the Stakes, September 2021].

John Taliaferro has a way of telling a story that makes you feel like you're walking along with him and getting a history lesson at the same time. He talks Texan.

Dale Yardley
Cherokee County EC
Jacksonville

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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

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

Texas Co-op Power

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3,000-Year-Old Beauty Secret Revealed

Turquoise — the original fashion icon — comes full circle for an amazing price.

She's been around for thousands of years, but she's never gone out of fashion. We're talking turquoise, one of the world's most ancient gems. Egyptian queens adorned themselves with turquoise jewelry more than 3,000 years ago. And the blue beauty is even more coveted now than she was a millennia ago.

Do you know someone who's even more beautiful now than when you first met? Then the Timeless Turquoise Pendant is for them — a stylish circle formed from seven total carats of natural turquoise and exquisite sterling silver metalwork. And the price? Let's just say we made sure timeless was attainable for less than you'd think.

Time is running out for timeless turquoise. Just because turquoise is timeless, doesn't mean supplies of it will last forever. Turquoise is only found a few places on Earth. Typically unearthed in arid climates like the American Southwest and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, turquoise requires a delicate balance of minerals and water to achieve its gorgeous range of blues. But even when conditions are optimal for turquoise to form, finding stones of gem-worthy quality is a challenge. There are very few turquoise mines left, and then, less than 5% of turquoise mined worldwide is of jewelry condition, making it rarer to come by than even diamonds.

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— The Jewellery Editor, 2021



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BY CLAYTON MAXWELL • PHOTOS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

AN EVOLVING RANCH REALITY



FENNESSEY RANCH TURNS TO CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION TO DIVERSIFY ITS MISSION

WALKING A WOODLAND TRAIL on the Fennessey Ranch, Sally Crofutt, former manager of this 3,250-acre spread on the Texas coast, stops at a tangle of woody branches. "Here's a grapevine," she says, holding a twisted branch in her hands. "We pick our grapes July Fourth 'cause that's about when they ripen. I make jelly. I got in the Refugio County Fair with it, and I won."

Crofutt managed this South Texas ranch of wetlands and coastal prairies for 26 years and has proved her ability to make this rough land bear fruit. She has transformed the Fennessey into a poster child among coastal ranches in the art of revenue stream diversification—a step many ranches must pursue now that increasingly complex production cost management means cattle operations alone will not do the trick.

"Over the past 30-plus years, input costs associated with cattle production have risen at a faster rate than cattle prices," says Clay Mathis, director of the King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. "It's more than just rising commodity prices and is particularly driven by the rise in fixed costs of land ownership. Today many ranches that are profitable have

achieved success by diversifying revenue streams to spread the fixed costs over more income-producing enterprises."

Crofutt carved out trails with award-winning wildlife photographer Dean Johnstone to build a photography shelter by the Mission River, 7 miles of which run through the ranch. It's a prime spot that entices photographers to pay for the opportunity to catch a shot of a painted bunting or a hawk soaring over the treetops.

She also leases an observation blind to birders. Located on the Central Flyway, the Fennessey is a birders' jackpot, with more than 420 species of resident and migratory birds recorded on the ranch. And she brought on beekeepers to coax 160 pounds of honey each year from the endless acres of scrubby huisache trees that greet you as soon as you drive through the ranch gates.

Jim Blackburn, an environmental attorney and professor at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, says the Fennessey is an excellent case of a ranch generating alternative sources of income. "The Fennessey's wildlife tours and catering to birdwatchers and photographers makes them a premier example of how to find cash sources well before others," he says. "My hat is off to them as trailblazers."



OPPOSITE A bald eagle returns to its nest with a squirrel on the Fennessey Ranch. ABOVE A pair of barred owls.

ABOVE Sally Crofutt, retired manager of the Fennessey Ranch, oversaw the wetlands and coastal prairies there for 26 years. BELOW A Texas rat snake.





The Fennessey is at the forefront of what may be the most meaningful way that ranches are diversifying: conservation and education. In his book *A Texan Plan for the Texas Coast*, Blackburn contends that one of the best things coastal ranches like the Fennessey can do to sustain the land, and therefore the Gulf, is simply remain intact. Although there are many critics of Texas' vast private land ownership—about 95% of the state's land is privately owned—some environmentalists believe large private landowners often are the best custodians of their land, as long as they can avoid parcelling it off.

"One of the biggest threats to the long-term future of the Texas coast (and perhaps Texas generally) is the potential breakup of large landholding," Blackburn writes. "The continued presence of these large tracts devoted to cattle ranching and wildlife is a centerpiece of the charm and ecological abundance and variety of the Texas coast. They provide fabulous wildlife habitat, holding ducks and geese on the ponds and short grass and deer in the woodland."

Mark Steinbach, executive director of Texas Land Conservancy, says unmitigated development changes the landscape in big ways, disturbing ecosystems and negatively impacting the water supply, air quality and light pollution levels.

In 2006 the Fennessey Ranch's owner, Brien O'Connor Dunn, a descendent of one of the oldest ranching families



TOP The McGuill Lake wetlands and Mission River on the Fennessey Ranch. ABOVE A painted bunting sings during spring migration.

in South Texas, signed an agreement for a conservation easement with the University of Texas Marine Science Institute. Headquartered in Port Aransas, the institute holds the easement in perpetuity and has made the ranch part of the Mission-Aransas National

Estuarine Research Reserve. As Dunn hoped, the ranch's lakes, meadows, prairie, freshwater wetlands and the Mission River are now an expansive classroom for university research and schoolchildren.

Education on the Fennessey hits full throttle during its March Madness program, when more than 100 fifth graders overtake a field edging the ranch's bulrush-filled marshes to tag monarch butterflies migrating to Mexico. Kids jump through hula hoops to mimic the nimble calculations monarchs must perform to avoid smashing into buildings, a reminder of why undeveloped flyways are key to the survival of winged creatures.



LEFT A greater roadrunner.
BELOW Wild turkeys.



RANCHERS AS conservationists is not a new concept: As far back as 1934, U.S. Rep. Richard Kleberg, “the Cowboy Congressman” from the King Ranch, championed the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act, requiring that a stamp be purchased by hunters of migratory waterfowl to raise funds for wetland conservation. The Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, an offshoot of the King Ranch, has for more than three decades studied the loss of native species in Texas and is now working with the Texas Department of Transportation to reseed 240,000 acres of Texas roadsides to restore native plants and habitat.

Apart from conservation programs, the ranchers and workers who live on the land and can read its rhythms—those who see what a heavy rain can do or where spoonbills land—are often its best stewards. Crofutt understands the Fennessey with an intimacy earned from decades of interaction. She can throw out an impressive sandhill crane call and then point to the bobbing tail of an eastern phoebe, a sight recognizable only to the practiced eye. She knows what the ranch’s many critters, from its lazy cattle to the one roaming mountain lion, are up to: “Bucks are in rut right now.”

Reflecting on her years on the Fennessey, Crofutt says that finding new ways to make money and keep those acres from being fragmented is her proudest accomplishment. Standing amid the tangle of foliage and trees that frame the Mission River, which feeds into Copano Bay and then out

into the Gulf of Mexico, her words show her pride and hard-won knowledge of the land.

Although Crofutt officially retired as manager of the ranch in 2020, she is still intimately involved with the Fennessey, coordinating efforts with the Marine Science Institute. She trains master naturalists and is resuscitating the ranch’s journals, a key way to keep track of changes on the land.

“I always kept a journal of rainfall, bird and wildlife sightings, what is happening day to day on the ranch,” Crofutt says. “After [Hurricane] Harvey, all of that wound up in the bay. So now it’s all there in Sally Crofutt’s brain, which isn’t all that steady. We are journaling again about what’s happening day to day so that we have a baseline. There are always changes, especially after the big freeze.”

It’s good to know that the Fennessey is in good hands, that its river won’t be surrounded by concrete and condos, and that it will continue to be a source of education and awe.

“I’ve been out here where I’ve seen a thousand hawks just lift off,” says Crofutt. “You see, the hawks have to have large trees to roost in. You want tall trees along the river so your migrating hawks will come in. We have a hawk watch every September that’s just amazing. We put guests on a hawk hayride. I can make a hayride out of anything.” ■

TCP WEB EXTRA See a slideshow featuring more wildlife found on the Fennessey Ranch.



Back in 1972, Bob Phillips took on an extra assignment as a news reporter for KDFW-TV in Dallas. He became the host of a new program called *4 Country Reporter*, going out into the Texas countryside to find interesting characters who told him their stories.

In 2002, Phillips even interviewed me and photographer Laurence Parent for our book, *Big Bend National Park*. Naturally, he conducted the interview halfway up the park's Lost Mine Trail.

Nearly 50 years and more than 3 million miles after he first hit the road, Phillips is still traveling around the state as host of *Texas Country Reporter*, talking to folks and sharing their stories. He's a juggernaut now, with a production company and a show that airs on 23 affiliates across Texas as well as the nationwide RFD-TV cable channel; a YouTube channel; *A Texas Tribute*, a touring presentation backed by a live symphony; and the TCR Festival in Waxahachie every October. For the past seven years, partner Kelli Phillips has been riding shotgun. Yes, they are married.

I caught up with Bob and Kelli at their Dallas home during a break in the show's 50th season.

The Domino Effect

Joe Nick Patoski: Real important question: How old were you when you started to drive?

Bob Phillips: I spent a lot of weekends and a lot of summers up on my Aunt Lena's farm in Grayson County. There was an old pickup out there that I could drive on the farm probably starting when I was about 9 years old. I couldn't go out on the road until I got my driver's license when I was 15.

JNP: What was the trigger to get into television?

BP: A guy named Eddie Barker who was both news director and the main anchor on the CBS affiliate in Dallas came to talk to my class—to my journalism class, when I was a first-semester freshman in college. This guy came and started telling stories. He was the first person to announce that John Kennedy had been killed in Dallas. He was five minutes ahead of Walter Cronkite. This was the guy that corralled Marina Oswald and did the first interview with her. He was a legend. I was mesmerized. As he was walking out of my class, I stopped him and asked him for his business card. He gave it to me and said, "What are you going to do with this?"

I said, "I'm going to ask you for a job." He gave me the greatest encouragement because he said, "You do just that." I gave him 30 minutes to get back to the office, and then I called him. He had me come in for an interview the next morning, and he hired me.

How Bob Phillips has spent nearly 50 years bringing regular folks into Texas homes

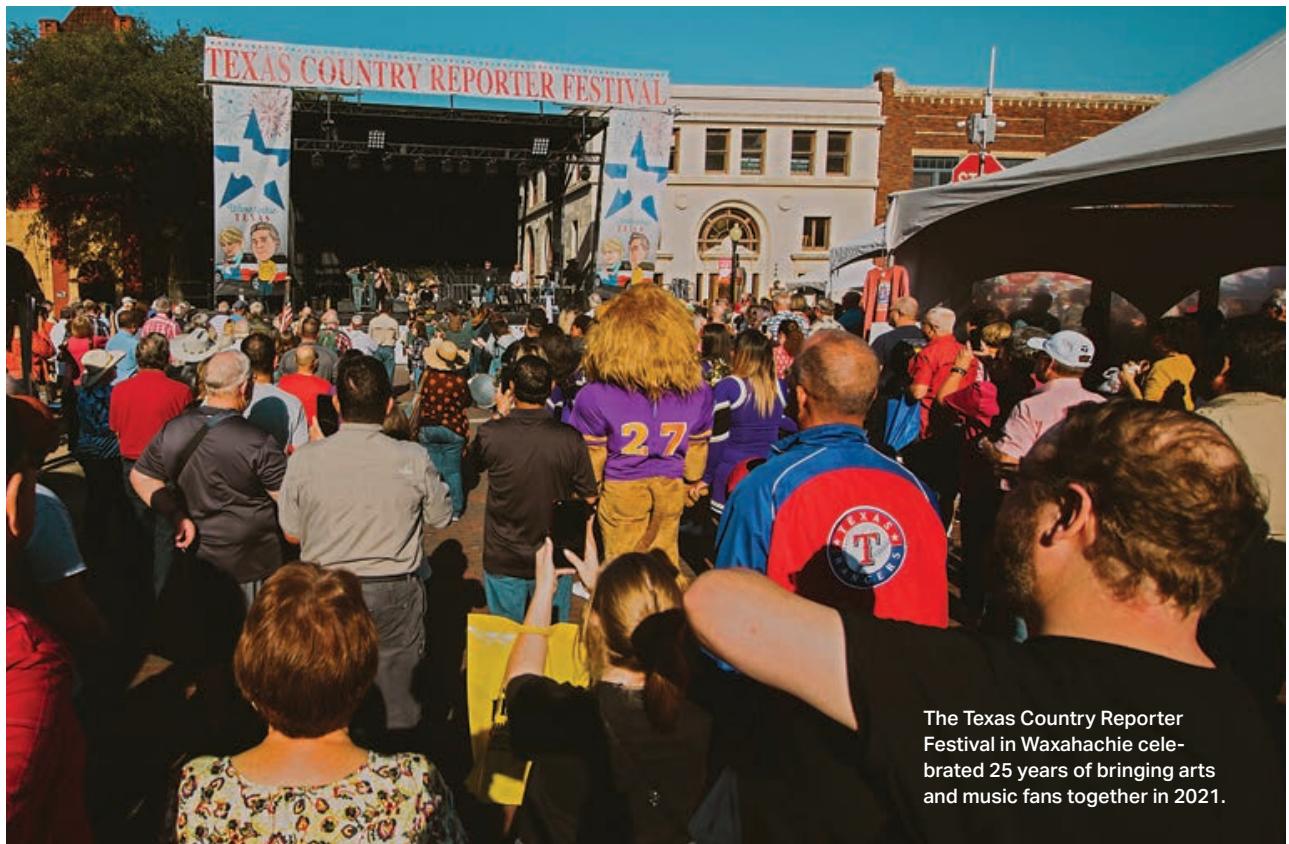
JNP: When did you get into the idea of driving around looking for characters who tell good stories?

BP: I rode around with my dad a lot when I was a really little kid, and he always had a fishing pole and a set of dominoes. He said, "I never know when I'm going to see a place where I want to drop a line, and I never know when I'm going to meet three other guys who want to sit down and play some 42."

After I had started working, I'm watching the *CBS Evening News With Walter Cronkite*, and there's a guy on there who's making a living doing what my dad did. It was Charles Kuralt, and I thought, "Oh, my gosh, my dad just did this for fun. That guy gets paid to do it." It looked like all Charles Kuralt did was drive around and talk to people who were playing dominoes and fishing and stuff.

I knew I had to put my own spin on it, so I went back to Eddie Barker and said, "OK, look. You know that Charles Kuralt guy that travels all over America? We can do the very same thing except we'll just travel all over Texas." He let me give it a try as a one-time-only deal. I did a few features on the news, and they kind of liked them. I clearly did not know what I was doing, but I cobbled them together. The audience response was good enough that they kept saying, "All right, do another one." Here we are at 50 years, still doing another one.

Kelli and Bob Phillips at Big Top Candy Shop in Austin.



The Texas Country Reporter Festival in Waxahachie celebrated 25 years of bringing arts and music fans together in 2021.

JNP: OK, honestly, the TV reporter going out on the road looking for stories like this was not a new concept. Others had programs like this. You had traction. Why do you think you resonated and the others didn't?

BP: I was talking to people who were just like my dad. In the very beginning, somebody was coaching me along and said, "When you're on camera, picture somebody that you love talking to." Well, that was my dad. To this day, when I look into the barrel of the lens, I'm looking at my dad's face. Every time, I thought about doing something else because you don't make any money in television news. I worked forever for two bucks an hour, but you're having a good time. Every now and then I thought, "Well, as I get older, I got to go find a real job." Then I would think, "But I love this so much." It also helps when people walk up to you almost every day of your life and say, "You must have the greatest job in the world." You start believing it when enough people say it to you.

Kelli Phillips: I also think it has something to do with the fact that when we go on stories, we don't have a preconceived idea of what this story is going to be. We honestly go in there with no questions in advance. We just sit down and talk with these people, and we develop a relationship. You see that transpire on the air.

BP: Yeah, she's right. I've never gone in with a list of questions for people. Frankly, I don't even think much about it ahead of time. We just sit down and have one of those, "Hey, how's it going?" chats and try to take people on a little journey to get them to tell us their life story and to forget there's cameras.

KP: And most of the time, they do.

BP: Yeah, for some reason, that's something we were pretty successful at. If you've got one of those huge crews like some shows do now, they've got a crew of 40 or 50 people on the set shooting these things. I always think, "How do they get anything done?" We go out with two or three or maybe four people, max, and the camera kind of disappears.

JNP: Bob, on that hike up Lost Mine Trail, I remember I'd gotten in hot water with Mike Levy, the publisher at *Texas Monthly*, and that eventually led to my departure from the magazine. But you actually had the most comforting words at the time when you said getting fired from Channel 4 was the best thing that ever happened to you.

BP: Well, yeah, it was because that's what propelled us. That made me. I'd done that show for 14 years. They didn't actually fire me; they just canceled my show. But it was like being fired because I wasn't going to stay there if they weren't going to let me do my show. That made me pull my britches up and say, "OK, you've got to do something about this," and that's when we syndicated the show all over the state and when I started producing it myself instead of through a television station. The show had been popular in Dallas-Fort Worth, but then it ...

KP: Exploded.

BP: Exploded all over the state. That was a good thing. ■

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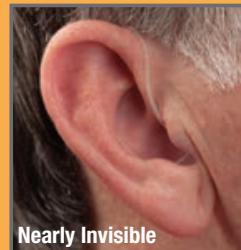
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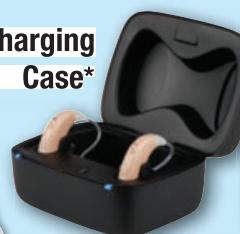
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**DARRYL SCHRIVER**

PRESIDENT/
CHIEF
EXECUTIVE
OFFICER

The Winter Forecast

THE END OF ANOTHER YEAR is quickly approaching. December kicks off the first official month of winter and brings about holiday festivities. In the back of your mind, however, you may be thinking: Are we really ready for another winter in Texas?

As Tri-County Electric Cooperative's President/CEO, many members have asked this question of me. Even though it has been 10 months since Winter Storm Uri, it is still fresh on our minds. While I cannot predict the weather, I can assure you that Tri-County Electric Co-op's distribution system is ready. In fact, our electric distribution system held up very well during Winter Storm Uri. However, due to statewide fuel supply issues, renewable generation not producing, and most importantly, generators not being properly winterized and encountering sustained outages, our members were out of power due to mandatory load shed directives. 10569004

During Winter Storm Uri, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) called for mandatory load shed to help preserve the grid. We do our best to provide a reliable flow of electricity to our members. Rotating outages went against everything we stand for, but we complied with the mandate to protect the integrity of the grid. After the event, we learned that the grid was less than five minutes away from a total blackout. If this were to occur, it would take weeks maybe months—to restore the grid to full functionality.

This failure of the electric grid got the attention of the leadership and members of the Texas Legislature. Since then, the legislature has conducted hearings, passed bills that were signed into law and the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) is taking a serious look at market design and generator responsibility. We hope the work of our legislators and PUCT commissioners will yield the intended results. Only time will tell.

As for Tri-County Electric Co-op, we will continue to perform appropriate maintenance and invest in the necessary capital additions and improvement projects to harden our system and improve reliability. If another winter event were to hit our service area, our distribution infrastructure investments will stand strong, but keep in mind that our system can only perform properly if the state leadership, and the ERCOT generation and transmission providers, do their jobs.

Now that we have discussed system reliability, let's talk costs. Our wholesale power supplier, Brazos Electric Power Cooperative (Brazos), filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on March 1, 2021. We have kept you updated on this process that is far from over. However, it appears that Brazos may push for a plan to exit bankruptcy predicated on more debt and costs which would pass millions of dollars of costs directly on to you, the members, as end users. We will continue to fight for your interests while keeping you updated on the progress of the bankruptcy case. 800707558

Recently, natural gas prices have soared to levels unseen in over seven years. This has increased the cost of the wholesale power purchased by Tri-County Electric Co-op for this month and others. We are working with Brazos staff to understand the impact and learn of their solutions to have this additional cost of generating power under control. However, due to increases in the price of natural gas, members should start preparing now for an increase in their bills throughout 2022. We will share details with you once we receive the necessary information from Brazos to develop accurate projections.

The Tri-County Electric Co-op Board of Directors and staff will do everything we can to continue our mission of providing you with safe, reliable and affordable power. The board worked hard throughout the year to deal with many challenges, and I thank them for their dedication to the membership. I would like to formally welcome Michael Sivertsen to the board. He was elected to District 8 during the 2021 election. His background, education and experience will be a great asset to the board. The board of directors will continue to work hard and make decisions in your best interest. We are in this together.

We count our blessings this upcoming holiday season. From the Tri-County Electric Co-op family to yours, Happy Holidays! ■

A Seat at the Board Table



**MAX
WADDELL**

CHAIRMAN

DISTRICT 9

YOUR TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE Board of Directors works hard to serve you, the members-owners of the cooperative. As a member-owned and member-governed electric provider, it is important to keep you in the know. Over the past few years, our management team and communications team has worked hard to transparently communicate co-op news. The board would like to continue that trend by publishing key topics and considerations quarterly, and monthly when needed, we consider and discuss at our meetings. 8002857802

In addition to normal business, like hearing from staff who report on their departments, we discuss the following topics that affect you:

- **Brazos Bankruptcy:** Over the past few months, we have been deep in conversation regarding Brazos's bankruptcy. We instructed President/CEO Darryl Schriver to leave no stone unturned when investigating Brazos's practices during Winter Storm Uri and as the bankruptcy case unfolds.
- **Power Costs:** Your board has looked at the cost of natural gas and how it affects the cost of power. Wholesale power costs compose more than 70% of your electric bill, so we closely monitor generation and industry trends. Your rates are directly impacted by power cost and we are constantly looking for ways to keep your rates and costs low.
- **Rising Fuel Costs:** The price of natural gas continues to trend upward. Currently, prices are at the highest we have seen in over seven years. Natural gas is a key player in our state's electric generation portfolio, so we track prices closely.
- **ERCOT Grid:** Attention turned to the state's electric grid and its regulators after Winter Storm Uri. We have always kept an eye on the grid, but we continue to closely monitor legislative efforts and PUCT actions to identify how new laws will impact us as an electric provider, and you the member as an end consumer.
- **Member Benefits:** We are looking at ways to better our member engagement, programs and benefits. Next month, members will have a new way to monitor electric use and save money on your electric bill through energy efficiency. Look for the next issue of the *Texas Co-op Power* for more information.
- **Annual Meeting:** The board is reviewing feedback and surveys from this year's Annual Meeting and election. Your opinions help us prepare for future meetings and elections. We thank the members who took the time to participate in the democratic process.



**JOHN
KILLOUGH**

VICE CHAIRMAN

DISTRICT 6



**MARGARET
KOPREK**

SECRETARY/
TREASURER

DISTRICT 2

We hope you take the time to read your monthly *Texas Co-op Power* magazine to stay up to date on your cooperative. I also hope you enjoy this new addition and find that it brings added transparency to your cooperative. The board, management team and employees strive to keep you informed.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve on the board. On this page you will see the other eight members who sit at the table and make decisions on your behalf. Together, we comprise Tri-County Electric Co-op's regulatory and governing body. I would like to formally welcome Michael Sivertsen to the board. He came on the board this past October after Annual Meeting. We thank you for entrusting the co-op in our hands and we promise to uphold the membership's best interest while keeping you at the forefront of every decision. Just like every employee at the co-op, we work for you. ■



**KEVIN
INGLE**

DISTRICT 1



**JORDEN
WOOD**

DISTRICT 3



**JERRY
WALDEN**

DISTRICT 4



**STEVE
HARRIS**

DISTRICT 5



**LARRY
MILLER**

DISTRICT 7



**MICHAEL
SIVERTSEN**

DISTRICT 8



A Successful Annual Meeting

Hundreds of members joined the co-op for the second annual virtual membership meeting

BY ANNIE MCGINNIS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE held the 82nd Annual Meeting of the Members on Tuesday, October 5. This was the second year to hold the meeting virtually to protect the health and safety of members and employees during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's Annual Meeting commenced with the 2021 election. Members received their official election ballot, Annual Meeting notice, Annual Report and financial reports in the September *Texas Co-op Power* magazine. Survey and Ballot Systems, our third-party election partner, conducted the election and members could cast their vote online or by mail-in ballot. Voting closed at 5 p.m. on September 29. Survey and Ballot Systems tabulated the ballots and every member who cast a ballot by the deadline received a \$25 bill credit.

More than 670 members joined us online and by phone to listen to the Annual Meeting. Members were welcomed to the meeting, heard the invocation and National Anthem. Janet Rehberg, Chief Strategy Officer and Vice President of Engineering, introduced the board of directors before inviting President/Chief Executive Officer Darryl Schriver to help announce the first round of door prizes, a member favorite.

Rehberg called on board chairman and District 3 director, Jorden Wood to call the meeting to order. Wood welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Darryl Schriver as the meeting chairman. Schriver reported on the election and determined the meeting quorum. According to our co-op's bylaws, a minimum of 3 percent of the membership must be in attendance to conduct quorum. 800877144

"Since 97,723 members received a notice, the quorum requirement for the 82nd Annual Meeting of the Members is a minimum of 2,931 members," Schriver reported.

Survey and Ballot Systems provided the official voting

report for the meeting. The report stated 4,363 ballots were cast online and 3,503 ballots were submitted by mail for a total of 7,866 ballots cast in the election, or 8 percent of the membership. This was the second year of offer both online and mail-in balloting. More than 55% of members chose to cast their ballot online using Survey and Ballot Systems secure voting website.

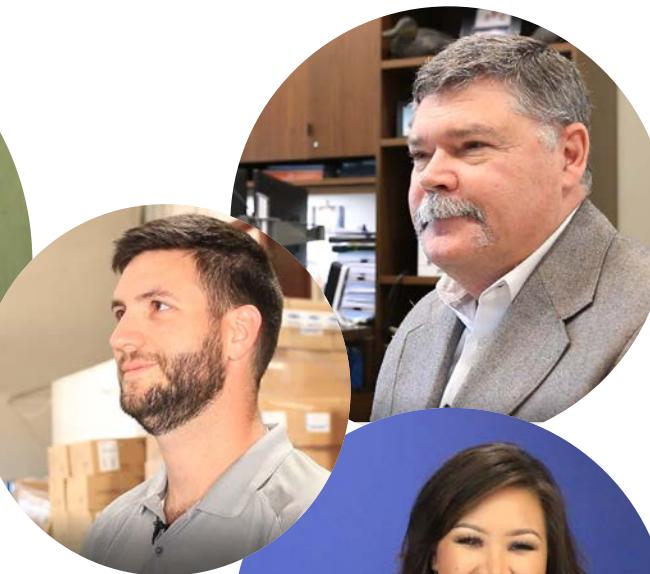
Schriver proceeded with the business portion of the meeting by asking the membership to approve the minutes of the 81st Annual Meeting of the Members, and to confirm the Committee on Nominations and Qualifications. Both passed with sufficient numbers. Schriver asked for board secretary/treasurer and District 6 director, John Killough, to deliver his treasurer's report. 800902418

Killough reported the co-op's financial stance remains strong. The fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, showed cooperative assets totaled \$701,341,297, revenue exceeded \$261,497,208, and margins were \$7,580,273. Killough said the co-op model is one of the strongest operating models because any margins are allocated back to the members.

"In July 2021, the board of directors voted to retire \$5 million to the members in capital credits," he said. "Members who received electric service in 2002 received a bill credit or a check last month. This is just a reminder that you are not only a member, but an owner of this cooperative."

Schriver then presented the 2021 director election results for director districts 3, 6 and 8. The Committee on Nominations and Qualifications set the ballot as follows: District 3 - Jorden Wood, incumbent; District 6 - John Killough, incumbent; and District 8 - Jarrett Armstrong, incumbent and Michael Sivertsen, nomination candidate.

Survey and Ballot Systems provided the voting results for



the election. Incumbents Jorden Wood and John Killough ran unopposed in their districts and received 100 percent of the votes. Jarrett Armstrong and Michael Sivertsen were on the ballot for District 8. Survey and Ballot Systems certified that Armstrong received 3,570 votes and Sivertsen received 4,003 votes. Sivertsen received 52.9 percent of the votes and was elected to district 8. Schriver congratulated the winners on their three-year terms and concluded the business portion of the meeting.

Schriver and Rehberg announced another round of door prize winners before the co-op update. Schriver called this past year the year of tidal waves. The “waves” were events and challenges like changes to the co-op’s governance structure, exponential growth, added member benefits, the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as Winter Storm Uri and its aftermath. 800741413

Schriver discussed the first wave, Winter Storm Uri, and the challenges the co-op faced during the long, cold days. Tri-County Electric Co-op’s employees worked around the clock

from February 12 through February 21 to take care of you.

“It was so cold and miserable,” he said. “Keeping fuel in our trucks from freezing, keeping linemen from freezing, and keeping the freezing from wearing us out was all a challenge.”

David Hollingsworth, System Operations Manager, said the co-op started tracking the storm the week before it hit. Several outlets were predicting winter weather. Winter preparations continued through member notification and the operations department stocking up on materials and performing maintenance on vehicles. Linemen were divided into three shifts to ensure crews were rested and ready to work. System operators, communications and staff continuously monitored the ERCOT grid. Hollingsworth said the co-op received the first load shed order at 1:27 a.m. on Monday, February 15, and the load shed requirements continued to increase throughout the

Board Spotlight



**MICHAEL
SIVERTSEN**
DISTRICT 8

Michael Sivertsen joined the Tri-County Electric Cooperative Board of Directors in October. He comes to the table with experience and knowledge in the electric utility industry, as well as physics and engineering. Mr. Sivertsen earned a bachelor’s degree in physics from the University of Minnesota, Institute of Technology, and a master’s degree in knowledge management.

Mr. Sivertsen recently retired from Lockheed Martin Aeronautics in Fort Worth. Prior to his tenure at Lockheed, Sivertsen spent 15 years in the electric utility industry, which included scientist

position in radiation physics and information systems. Throughout his career, he has received numerous awards and recognitions, including the Aero Star Award, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics highest award.

Outside of work, Mr. Sivertsen is involved in the community by delivering presentations to schools and conducting science teacher workshops. He enjoys going on bike rides with his granddaughters and elk hunting. Mr. Sivertsen and his wife have three grown children and eight grandchildren. ■

day.

"This quickly put us over 100 megawatts of load shed obligation, and by 6:50 p.m. that same night our obligation was at its peak of 192 megawatts," he said.

Providing information to members during the rotating outages was a priority. Danielle Voss, Communications Specialist, said updates were posted to the co-op's Facebook and website as available. Voss reported the team posted to Facebook 14 times, including six live video updates the week of February 15. Additionally, the team engaged with more than 450 members through Facebook Messenger and our website received more than 248,000 views.

Throughout the storm, the Member Services team was available to answer phones and emails. Nichole Eshbaugh, Chief Technology Officer and Vice President of Business and Technology, said the phone system was updated with a emphasis on providing information on the rotating outages and tracking down members experiencing continuous outages.

The winter storm was truly a team effort. One of the biggest challenges was feeding employees who were working since local restaurants and grocery stores were closed. Melissa Watts, Chief Financial Officer and Vice President of Finance, said she and a few other staff members would travel to the closest grocery store to purchase food for breakfast and lunch.

"We would have food available for the MSRs who were taking your phone calls and the linemen who were working out in the field," she said. 7000003204

Hollingsworth reported that system operators were able to restore consistent power to all members at 12:06 a.m. on Thursday, February 18. Tri-County Electric Co-op's distribution system held up very well during the winter storm.

Wesley Scheets, Chief Operations Officer and Vice President of Operations, said

approximately 2,400 outages were weather-related. Establishing three shifts of crews worked well to ensure linemen were in the field while others rested.

Ralph Revilla, Safety Director, said employees worked 8,631.5 hours without injury.



"This was a huge accomplishment," he said. "Especially since our linemen and crews faced treacherous driving conditions and exposure to consistent sub-zero temperatures."

Schrivier continued and said that months later, we are still feeling the aftereffects of the winter storm. As you may be aware, Brazos Electric Power Cooperative, our wholesale power provider, filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy on March 1, 2021. Schrivier has kept members up to date through his monthly columns in the *Texas Co-op Power* magazines. He said he has kept the members in mind throughout the entire process and been transparent in communications.

Through investigations, Schrivier said Brazos's generation units designed to protect the 16 member-cooperatives from the volatility of the ERCOT market did not perform during the storm. Brazos racked up more than \$2.1 billion in power bills, which is more than three times the cost of power for the entire 2020 year.

Schrivier said that Brazos entered bankruptcy quickly and did not provide much notice to member-cooperatives, which created a problem the co-op has little control over. The Tri-County Electric Co-op Board of Directors has asked for resignations from Brazos management so the generation and transmission co-op can progress and serve the member-cooperatives.

Next, Schrivier reported the second wave, changes to the cooperative's governance structure. Major changes to the bylaws included a new director nomination process and new director boundaries. Interested and eligible members seeking nomination now have two paths to the ballot: through the Committee on Nominations and Qualifications or through member petition. The director boundaries were redrawn to reflect our diverse membership, including our urban, suburban and rural areas.

Your co-op continues to persevere through the coronavirus pandemic. Schrivier said the lobbies were closed for the health and safety of our members and employees, and will continue to be closed until we understand more about the virus. Throughout the past year and a half, we have managed to keep the workforce healthy and working to take care of you, the members.

Melony Block, Director of Human Resources, reported that COVID-19 cases and exposure has been limited due to protocols in place.

"For the past 19 months, our COVID protocols have allowed our employees working day in and day out serving our members," she said.

Throughout the pandemic, the Member Services team has been available to answer the phone when you



call. The team set up payment arrangements to assist members who have been impacted by the virus.

Growth, the fourth wave, has been a blessing and a challenge over the past year. Schriver said the north Texas region is one of the fastest growing regions in the nation, increasing by one person every four minutes, 15 people per hour, or 362 people a day.

Eshbaugh said since last Annual Meeting, we have welcomed nearly 5,000 new members, our member services team answers an average of 800 calls a day, and our field services team conducted more than 9,600 field visits for new service. Maintenance goes hand-in-hand with growth. Kelsey Gustainis, Engineering Manager, reported that engineering, field services and operations departments fulfill the work plan that increases capacity and reliability across the system. Watts said that while we are investing in infrastructure, we continue to keep an eye on the bottom line. Tri-County Electric Cooperative grew by 4.73 percent in 2020 and is on track to grow around five percent in 2021. The average electric co-op grows less than one percent.

Tiffany Whisenant, Senior Lead Member Services Representative, said we track member satisfaction using the American Customer Satisfaction Index. Members scored us an 81 in 2019, an 84 in 2020 and an 85 this year. We continue to improve our service and hope to increase your satisfaction.

In June, the member services team launched a new online service application that provides a better experience and is user friendly. The online member portal and TCEC Connect allow members to track electric use, make payments, report outages and more. Cole Shirley, Manager of Metering and Field Communications, said the AMI meter system provides the daily reads to the member portal and app.

Transparent communication was a primary focus for the communication team. Throughout the many tidal waves, it was our goal to keep members informed. 800873946

Schrivier wrapped up the co-op update by thanking the members for joining by phone and online. Rehberg joined him at the podium for the last round of door prizes. More than 175 prizes were given out at the meeting. Survey and Ballot Systems drew winners at random from the pool of members who voted in the election by the deadline. Tri-County Electric Co-op thanks our vendors who donated prizes to the meeting.

The meeting ended with a question and answer session. Schriver answered more than 50 questions from members listening by phone and watching online. Topics included the winter storm, ERCOT, Brazos bankruptcy, rates, and solar.

If you missed this year's meeting, a recording is available at tcectexas.com/annual-meeting. ■

I Work for You



JANE HALL

**Work Order Technician
Field Services**

Jane Hall is no stranger to the electric utility business. Jane, a 38-year industry veteran, joined the Tri-County Electric Cooperative family in 2007 as a member services representative. In 2019, she transitioned to the field services department to help members establish new service.

As a work order technician, Jane administers member jobs from the first contact through the power turning on. She schedules field site visits with staking technicians, processes easements, and works with the member on completing every step of the process.

Jane says she loves working at the co-op because her days are never the same and there is always something to learn. Additionally, she loves working with the members.

"Co-ops are member-owned and forming a relationship with the local members is special," Jane said.

As a local electric provider, our employees live and work in the communities we serve. Jane says she loves seeing members out in the community, like at the local farmers market, and keeping up with their lives.

"I love being able to hear what people are doing," she said. "You learn so much with daily conversations."

What does Jane love more than helping the members? Working for a company where she can help others. She is an avid supporter of Tri-County CARES, the co-op's benevolent committee that helps in time of need. Jane never misses a chance to participate in the fundraising events, especially when she can dress up!

Jane and her high-school sweetheart, Lee, will celebrate 45 years of marriage at the end of this month. They are proud parents of two adult daughters. ■





Community Holiday Events
December 4



Trumpeting in 2022
January 9

Your Co-op's Community Calendar

December

1-31

Radiance! A Holiday Light Spectacular
radiancechristmas.com

4

Azle Christmas on Main
azlechamber.com

Christmas in the Park
haslet.org

Christmas on the Square
weatherford-chamber.com

Christmas Tyme in Aledo
aledo-texas.com

23-24

Offices Closed for the Holiday
tcectexas.com

24-25

Christmas Holiday

31

New Year's Eve

NOTE: Events are subject to postponement or cancellation due to COVID-19 guidance. Please check the event resource for updates.

Interested in promoting your event in the next issue of Texas Co-op Power?
Email pr@tcectexas.com with the event name, date and where readers can find more information.

Tri-County Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

CONTACT US

200 Bailey Ranch Road
Aledo, TX 76008
Phone 817-444-3201
Email customer_service@tcectexas.com
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President/CEO

Darryl Schriver

Board of Directors

Max Waddell, District 9 - Chairman
John Killough, District 6 - Vice Chairman
Margaret Koprek, District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer
Kevin Ingle, District 1
Jorden Wood, District 3
Jerry A. Walden, District 4
Steve V. Harris, District 5
Larry Miller, District 7
Michael Sivertsen, District 8

24/7

Outage Reporting

For information and to report outages, please contact us.

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App: TCEC Connect
Phone: 817-444-3201

ABOUT TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP

Tri-County Electric Co-op owns and maintains more than 9,510 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 98,300 members in Archer, Baylor, Denton, Foard, Haskell, Hood, Jack, King, Knox, Palo Pinto, Parker, Stonewall, Tarrant, Throckmorton, Wilbarger, and Wise counties.

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Aledo
200 Bailey Ranch Road, Aledo 76008

Azle
600 NW Parkway, Azle 76020

Granbury
1623 Weatherford Highway, Granbury 76048

Keller
4900 Keller-Hicks Road, Fort Worth 76244

Seymour
419 N. Main, Seymour 76380

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Swedish Tea Ring

BY COLEEN JONES
COLLEYVILLE

DOUGH

2 cups milk
1 tsp. salt
1 stick margarine, softened
½ cup sugar
2 pkgs. Dry yeast (not rapid rise)
1 egg
5 lbs. flour

FILLING

2 sticks butter/margarine
Cinnamon
Cardamom, powdered
3 cups sugar
3 cups brown sugar
Chopped pecans

1. Turn on oven to 200°F for 15 minutes, then turn off.
2. In a saucepan, heat milk, salt, 1 stick margarine and sugar until very warm (not scalding or hot to touch). Remove milk mixture from heat.
3. In a glass mixing bowl, empty yeast packages, milk mixture, egg and about 2 cups of flour. Mix together with large spoon. Keep adding a little flour until dough is soft but not sticky.
4. Cover with towel and put in warm oven to rise until double. This will only take about 30 minutes.
5. While dough is rising, melt 2 sticks of butter/margarine and have ready for filling.
6. When dough has doubled, remove, punch down and knead to get air bubbles out. Add a little more flour to make dough soft again.
7. On a floured surface, take half of the dough and make a ball. Roll dough out to a 12" x 17" rectangle. Dough will be thin, but not transparent.
8. Pour half of the melted butter on dough. Make sure all dough is covered. Use your hands to smooth butter all around. Sprinkle lots of cinnamon and cardamom over the buttered dough. Sprinkle half of the sugar and brown sugar. Add pecans.
9. Roll into a jellyroll and put on a greased cookie sheet. Have ends meet. With a serrated knife, make little slits all around the top, from end to end. Cover and let rise again until double.
10. Repeat procedures with the rest of the dough, or make balls about the size of a handball, and put into greased cake pan and let rise for regular rolls.
11. Bake at 350°F until golden brown on top. When cool enough to lift off the pan, remove and put on service tray.
12. Frost with powdered sugar frosting and sprinkle with red or green sugars. To make the powdered sugar frosting, combine 2 tablespoons melted butter, milk, vanilla and powdered sugar to make a thick, honey-like frosting.

Enjoy!



Tri-County Electric Co-op Member Recipe Submission Form

MEMBER _____

CITY _____

EMAIL or PHONE NUMBER _____

RECIPE NAME _____

SUBMITTING YOUR RECIPE:

EMAIL: Please include the above information with your recipe and send to pr@tcectexas.com

ONLINE: tcectexas.com/recipe-submission

MAIL: Please detach and submit this form with your recipe and mail to:

Tri-County Electric Cooperative
Attn: Recipe Submission
200 Bailey Ranch Road
Aledo, Texas 76008



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	Shipping	FREE!	
	Sales Tax	FREE!	
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Littleton NH 03561-3737



Final Issue



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A D V E R T I S E M E N T

Clogged, Backed-up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

DEAR DARRYL: My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



Dear
Darryl

My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

Clogged and Smelly – Houston, TX

DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY: As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs are designed to work on any septic system regardless of design or age. From modern day systems to sand mounds, and systems installed generations ago, I have personally seen SeptiCleanse unclog and restore these systems in a matter of weeks. I highly recommend that you try it before spending any money on repairs. SeptiCleanse products are available online at www.septicleanses.com or you can order or learn more by calling toll free at 1-888-899-8345. If you use the promo code "TXS14", you can get a free shock treatment, added to your order, which normally costs \$169. So, make sure you use that code when you call or buy online.

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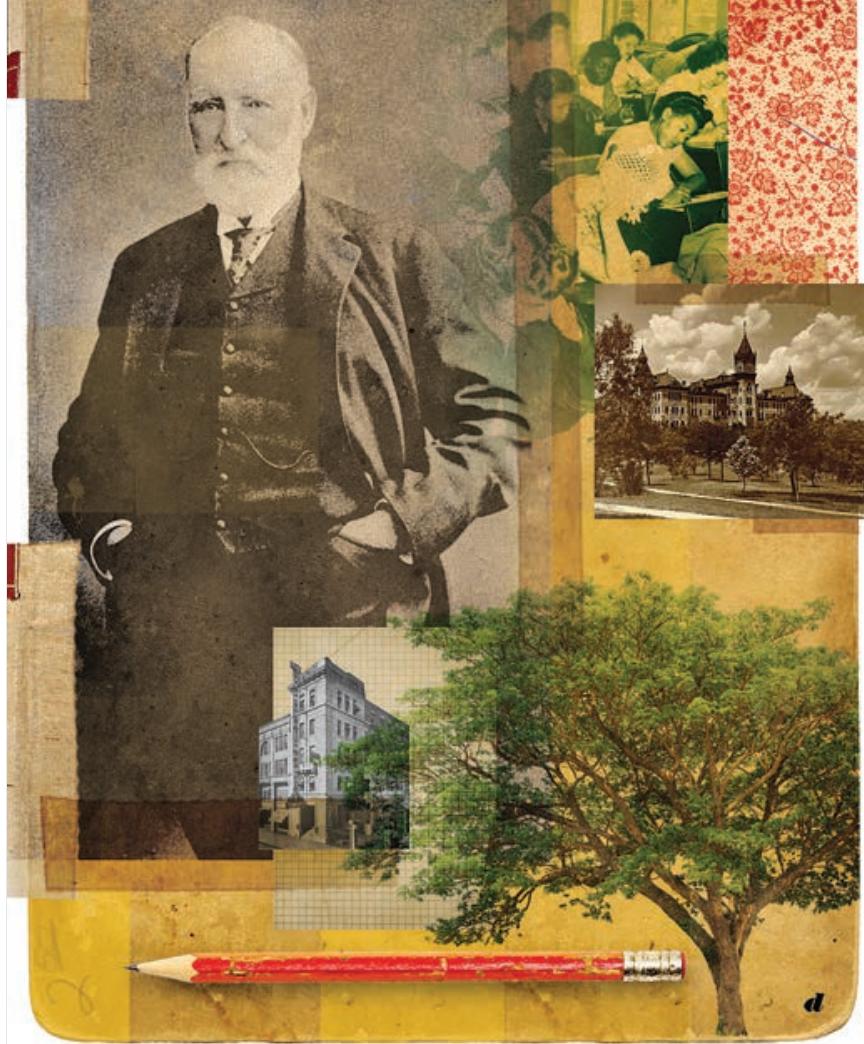
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TCP WEB EXTRA

Listen to W.F. Strong read this story.

in 1910. That land today includes a municipal golf course, the Brackenridge Field Lab and student housing.

Brackenridge made the bulk of his fortune as president of San Antonio National Bank and San Antonio Loan and Trust.

He was troubled by the fact that his father had enslaved people, so the younger Brackenridge attempted to create his own reparations plan. He calculated how much money should have been paid to the enslaved people and gave hundreds of thousands of dollars for African American education.

Brackenridge also championed the admittance of women into UT. He insisted on hiring female faculty and demanded complete equality for women. When women couldn't attend the university's medical school in Galveston for a lack of housing, he donated funds to build a dormitory. He supported women's suffrage because he believed women would help build a better society through political influence.

He never married and had no children, and upon his death, at age 88, Brackenridge put the bulk of his wealth into the George W. Brackenridge Foundation—the first of its kind in Texas. The foundation now emphasizes support for charter schools. Brackenridge preferred to invest in people rather than buildings, and he especially loved investing in young people. During his life he loaned untold sums to students for college, and all they had to do was sign a contract that said, "I agree to repay when circumstances permit."

By his own standards, Brackenridge lived a successful life. He said that he wished the world would be a little better place for his having lived in it. ■

The Grand Giver

Brackenridge's goodwill and generosity continue to enhance life for San Antonio parkgoers and students across Texas

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID VOGIN

GEORGE WASHINGTON BRACKENRIDGE may have given more to Texas than anyone else. He donated 199 acres for his namesake park in San Antonio, which now includes a zoo, museums, a golf course, a Japanese tea garden and other features in an enchanting setting that today encompasses 343 acres.

But Brackenridge Park was not the philanthropist's most impactful gift. That was the oil money that supports the University of Texas and Texas A&M University systems. As the longest-serving University of Texas regent—25 years—Brackenridge insisted that West Texas lands set aside for the university by the Legislature be transferred from the state to university control.

Not long after Brackenridge died in

1920, Santa Rita No. 1 brought in the first oil money and the start of the Permanent University Fund, which provides for construction of university buildings. Brackenridge's influence made sure the money stayed with UT and A&M and was not siphoned off by the Legislature.

Brackenridge was so protective of UT that when Gov. James "Pa" Ferguson threatened to eliminate university funding because he disagreed with the institution's hiring practices, Brackenridge pledged to cover the university's operating costs for the biennium if Ferguson made good on his threat. It didn't come to that.

In addition to his visionary services as a regent, Brackenridge donated 503 acres along the Colorado River in Austin to UT

Recipes for Gifting

Co-op Country kitchens offer perfect selections for one-stop shopping

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

I've been giving homemade food gifts at the holidays ever since I was a kid, when I'd box up packages of fudge and hot chocolate spoons for my entire family. From hot sauce to homemade bread, edible gifts are economical, personal and, of course, delicious. Granola is one of my go-to gifting recipes because it is endlessly customizable and keeps well in the pantry. Use your favorite dried fruits, nuts and spices to make your own signature blend.



Lemon Blueberry Granola

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
1/2 cup honey
4 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
1 cup sliced almonds or chopped walnuts
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup dried blueberries
Zest of 1 lemon

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees and line two rimmed baking sheets with parchment.
2. In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, melt together butter and honey.
3. In a large bowl, combine oats, nuts and salt. Pour butter mixture over the top and stir well to coat.
4. Spread evenly onto baking sheets and bake 30 minutes, stirring halfway through.
5. Immediately after removing from oven, scatter on dried blueberries and lemon zest and pat down gently with a spatula. This will help the ingredients adhere and cluster as the granola cools.
6. Let cool completely, then break into pieces and store in airtight containers or glass jars for gifting.

MAKES 5 CUPS

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Smoked Salt Caramel Corn.



Lacy Farm Apple Pie Jelly

JESSICA LACY
HOUSTON COUNTY EC

Homemade jelly is always a good gift, and this spiced apple version can be used for breakfast or as a glaze on pork chops. Be sure to let jars cool completely before moving them, which will help ensure a proper seal and set.

4 cups apple juice
1 tablespoon maple syrup
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 box (1.75 ounces) Sure-Jell powdered fruit pectin
5 cups sugar

COOK'S TIP If using low-sugar Sure-Jell, reduce sugar to 2.5 cups.

1. Fill a large canning pot with water and heat to boiling. Carefully lower jars into water and heat for 10 minutes to sterilize. Measure sugar into a bowl and set aside.
2. In a heavy saucepan or Dutch oven, combine apple juice, maple syrup, cinnamon, nutmeg and Sure-Jell and bring to a rolling boil that can't be stirred down.
3. Add sugar all at once, stir to dissolve and bring back to a rolling boil. Boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat.
4. Remove jars from canner and ladle jelly into jars, leaving $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch headspace. Wipe rims with a wet cloth and apply lids and bands, then lower carefully into boiling water bath. (If you have a partially filled jar, let it cool on the counter.) Place cover on canning pot and process 10 minutes. Turn off heat, remove cover and carefully remove jars.

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

Mom's Knock-Out Cake

NAOMI RAWLE
WISE EC



Rawle, 94, remembers getting electricity for the first time more than 70 years ago, with one outlet for the whole house. Her fruit and nut cake is terrifically moist and bakes in mini loaf pans, making it ideal for gifting.

MAKES 5 LOAVES

2 cups sugar
4 eggs
1 cup vegetable oil
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 apple, cored and chopped
1 banana, mashed
1 cup golden raisins
3 cups flour, divided use
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Coat 5 mini loaf pans (5 $\frac{3}{4}$ -by-3 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch) with cooking spray and lightly flour. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together sugar, eggs, oil and vanilla until blended. Stir in apple, banana and raisins. Let soak while preparing remaining ingredients.
3. In another bowl, sift together 2 cups flour, salt and baking soda. Stir into wet ingredients until no dry bits remain. In the same dry bowl, mix together remaining 1 cup flour, walnuts and cinnamon. Stir into batter until blended.
4. Divide batter among prepared loaf pans and place onto a baking sheet. Bake 35–40 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center of each pan comes out clean.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

PICKLES AND JAMS DUE DECEMBER 10

One of the great rewards of home gardening is home preserving. What is the pride of your pantry? Enter your best pickles and jams recipe at TexasCoopPower.com/contests by December 10 for a chance to win \$500.



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RECIPES CONTINUED

5. Let jars cool overnight. Once cooled, check to make sure lids have popped. Any jars that have not properly sealed should be stored in the refrigerator. Store sealed jars in a cool, dark area until ready to serve or gift. Refrigerate after opening.

MAKES ABOUT FIVE 8-OUNCE JARS



Potato Soup Mix

SANDY WELLBROCK
BLUEBONNET EC

Soup is an excellent gift in the wintertime, and this mix turns instant mashed potatoes into a creamy, warming meal. Add cheese powder for a cheesy soup.

- 2 cups instant mashed potatoes**
- 2 cups instant nonfat dry milk**
- 2 tablespoons chicken bouillon granules**
- 2 teaspoons dried chopped onion**
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley**
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt**
- ¼ teaspoon dried thyme**
- ½ teaspoon ground white pepper**
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric**
- ½ cup cheese powder (optional)**

1. In a large bowl, mix together all ingredients and package into jars. Or divide ingredients evenly and layer into jars for an attractive presentation.

2. For gifting, prepare a label or tag with preparation instructions: "To prepare 1 serving of soup, add ½ cup soup mix to 1 cup boiling water. Let stand 2 minutes for water to be absorbed, then stir well and add toppings as desired, such as bacon bits, sliced green onion and shredded cheese."

MAKES 8 SERVINGS



Susie's Victorian Toffee

CANDICE HUNT
COSERV

A crowd favorite, homemade toffee is easier to make than you might think. Use your favorite chocolates or nuts or other toppings, such as crushed pretzels.

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 1 tablespoon water**
- 4 ounces chocolate, broken into pieces**
- 1 cup pecan halves, chopped**

- 1.** Line a rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil and set aside.
- 2.** In a nonstick skillet over medium heat, melt butter, sugar and water together. Stir constantly in figure eights with a rubber spatula until mixture is bubbly and golden, about 10 minutes.
- 3.** Carefully pour mixture onto prepared baking sheet and let cool 3–5 minutes, then scatter chocolate across the top. Using a rubber spatula, gently spread chocolate across the top as it melts, reaching all the edges. Scatter nuts over the chocolate.
- 4.** Let cool overnight. If your kitchen is warm, the process can be sped up in the refrigerator or freezer. Once toffee is solid, break into pieces and store in an airtight container for up to two weeks.

MAKES 1 POUND TOFFEE

TCP WEB EXTRA Find other recipes suitable for gift giving at TexasCoopPower.com/food, where you can search through nearly 1,000 recipes.

TCP

holiday GIFT GUIDE

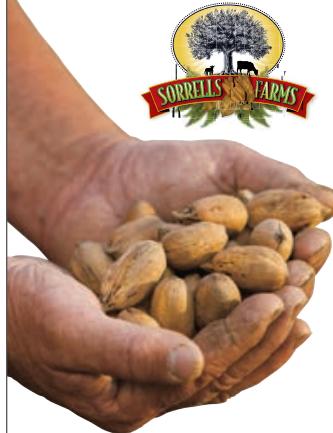
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

A Jaw-Dropping Collection

A Seguin museum's nutcracker compendium honors the pecan

BY CHET GARNER

I REMEMBER THE CHILDHOOD pain caused by suffering through performances of *The Nutcracker* and always associated it with the scolding I got for trying to use my family's decorative nutcracker to actually crack a nut. The heirloom's broken jaw never recovered despite hot glue treatments.

After that experience, I never liked nutcrackers. But a trip to see one of the world's largest nutcracker collections, in a Seguin museum, helped me realize I had more to learn about one of the world's oldest tools.

Seguin's known pecan history includes Native Americans who lived in the Guadalupe River valley and 16th-century Spanish explorer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, who survived by eating the river's native nuts. Seguin now lays claim to three of the world's largest pecans, including the 10-foot fiberglass pecan sitting outside the Pape Pecan House. But the real treasure of Pape Pecan sits inside its retail store: a museum of more than 8,000 nutcrackers of every shape and size.

I had seen different nutcrackers before, most depicting a bearded soldier wearing a fancy uniform. At Pape Pecan House, you'll find nutcrackers in an astounding array of shapes, sizes and designs, including dozens of Santas as well as President Lyndon B. Johnson and Darth Vader. Some of these nutcrackers were carved and painted by hand more than 100 years ago.

Each character is distinctive, but each can be identified by its hinged jaw.

Kenneth Pape began collecting nutcrackers in the 1950s as an extension of his successful pecan business. His first nutcracker was a 6-foot-tall cowboy that now stands guard by the gift shop's cash register. A bonus to visiting the museum is leaving with some of Pape Pecan's locally grown nuts.

I prefer to let them crack the shells for me. After all, they are the experts. ■

ABOVE Chet cozies up to a life-size nutcracker at Pape Pecan House.

TOP WEB EXTRA If Chet's take on Texas cracks you up, you'll want to see all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

Know Before You Go

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

DECEMBER

07

Nederland Lighted Christmas Parade, (409) 722-0279, nederlandtx.com

09

Sugar Land The Elf on the Shelf: The Christmas Musical, (281) 207-6278, smartfinancialcentre.net

10

Victoria [9-12] Victoria Ballet Theatre: The Nutcracker, (361) 575-2313, victoriaballet.org

Grand Prairie Michael Martin Murphey's Cowboy Christmas, (972) 854-5050, texastrustcuttheatre.com

Lake Jackson Tracy Byrd, (979) 230-3658, brazosport.edu/clarion

Cuero [10-11] Christmas in Downtown, (361) 485-8008, cueromainstreet.com

Fredericksburg [10-11] A Christmas Journey, (830) 997-2069, bethanyfredericksburg.com

Grapevine [10-11] It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play, (817) 410-3100, grapevinetexasusa.com

Ingram [10-12] A Christmas Carol, (830) 367-5121, hcacf.com

Montalba [10-12] A Walk Through Bethlehem, (903) 764-8048, visitpalestine.com

Tomball [10-12] German Fest Christmas Market, (281) 350-5484, tomballgermanfest.org

Chappell Hill Chappell Hill Garden Club Christmas Homes Tour, (713) 562-6191, chappellhillgardenclub.com

Corsicana The Nutcracker, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

Frankston Frankston Garden Club Christmas Tour of Homes, (817) 913-1982, frankstontexas.com/events

Grapevine Farmstead Christmas Celebration at Nash Farm, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com/nash-farm

Howe Christmas Parade, (903) 532-6080, howechamber.com

Huntsville Houston Family Christmas, (936) 294-1832, samhoustonmemorialmuseum.com

Mesquite Christmas on the Corridor, (972) 204-4927, visitmesquitetx.com

Palestine Dogwood Jamboree: Just in Time for Christmas, (903) 729-7080, dogwoodjamboree.com

Port Arthur Holiday Downtown Celebration, (409) 983-8105, portarthurtx.gov

Surfside Beach Nighttime Kites, (979) 233-1531, surfsidetx.org

Seguin Mid-Texas Symphony: Home for the Holidays, (830) 463-5353, mtssymphony.org

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your event online for February by December 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

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Pick of the Month

Winter Wonderland

Muenster, December 11

(940) 759-5299

heritageparkmuenstertx.com

Heritage Park in this North Texas town features a synthetic ice skating rink, ornament making, cookie decorating, bounce houses, dance and music performances, and an obstacle course. Oh, and Santa will be there, too.

DECEMBER EVENTS CONTINUED

16

Palestine Christmas Carol Sing Along, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

Grapevine [16-17] Frank Sinatra & Dean Martin Christmas Tribute, (817) 410-3100, grapevinetexasusa.com

Anson [16-18] Texas Cowboys' Christmas Ball, (325) 696-9040, texasccb.com

17

Wharton Snow on the Square, (979) 532-1862, whartonchamber.com

Abilene [17-23] Abilene Zoo Christmas Celebration, (325) 676-6085, abilenezoo.org

18

Big Spring Big Spring Symphony: Holiday Spectacular, (432) 816-5196, bigspringsymphony.org

Brenham Celtic Angels Christmas, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Fort McKavett Victorian Christmas Fair, (325) 396-2358, thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/fort-mckavett-state-historic-site

Lewisville The Grand Ol' Christmas Show, (972) 219-8446, gochristmasshow.com

Lubbock Lubbock Symphony: Merry & Bright, (806) 762-1688, lubbocksymphony.org

Mesquite Carols and Cocoa, (972) 216-6450, visitmesquitetx.com

Temple Bend of the River Christmas, (254) 298-5690, templeparks.com

West Columbia Candlelight Christmas, (979) 345-4656, visitvarnerhoggplantation.com

Grapevine [18-19] Christmas With the Petersens, (817) 410-3100, grapevinetexasusa.com

19

Stonewall LBJ Tree Lighting, (830) 644-2252, tpwd.texas.gov/calendar

31

Fredericksburg New Year's Eve Countdown to 2022, (830) 997-6523, visitfredericksburgtx.com

07

Spring The Four Freshmen, (281) 440-4850, cypresscreekface.org

JANUARY

07

Galveston Mavis Staples, (409) 765-1894, thegrand.com

Bridges

On deck this month are bridges from readers spanning the Lone Star State. These tower over the others we received.

BY GRACE FULTZ

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT

JIM BLAKE
COLEMAN COUNTY EC
The Waldrip Bridge at night.

RICHARD REEVES
JASPER-NEWTON EC
Part of a Neches River bridge between Evadale and Silsbee. "I remember riding over it as a child."

PAIGE KILLIAN
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
The Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge over the Trinity River in Dallas.

BUDDY PARK
PEDERNALES EC
Bluebonnets along a rail line in Llano County.



Upcoming Contests

DUE DEC 10 All Wet

DUE JAN 10 Feathered Friends

DUE FEB 10 Industrial

Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Focus on Texas on our website for more Bridges photos from readers.



Carpe Diem, Mom

Impromptu, simple celebrations set an entertaining standard

BY BABS RODRIGUEZ
ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA GODEASSI

MY MOTHER, WHOM I firmly believe invented staycations to save herself the extended stress and unique exhaustion of traveling with five children (and a rooster, a chipmunk and two dogs), had the ability to make the everyday feel magical. Part and parcel of that superpower was her skill for impromptu entertaining.

I think Mom's way with last-minute meals and celebratory mood changers was honed while constantly responding to the needs of her squad of kids and a husband whom the U.S. Air Force had on call. Any day that work and school and flight schedules allowed all seven of us to be at the table, she'd whip up a loaves-and-fishes miracle from whatever she had on hand. Candles were always lighted just because. And even backyard picnics were graced with flowers in Mason jars, decades before that sort of practical elegance was trendy.

Her can-do spirit focused on honoring our family's together time whenever possible with whatever was on hand.

Holiday events were executed with equal ease. Christmas Eve dinner might be waffles and eggnog. On New Year's Eve we'd dance in the backyard under the stars. A maraschino cherry in anything from ginger ale to iced tea heralded a toast.

Mom's recipe for pig pie, a foraged blackberry cobbler topped with shortbread in the shapes of piglets, welcomed summer into our house. And her compulsive seasonal collections of seashells, pine cones and dried flowers worked their way into the decor that celebrated holidays and birthday bashes.

There was a do-it-yourself eccentricity to my mother's carpe diem spirit, and I see pale imitations of it now in trends from factory chic to urban farmhouse.

I am thinking the world is filled with similarly celebratory traditions conceived by mothers. Moms, grandmothers and aunties who casually influence a family's style of entertaining only to witness their rituals and recipes take root in the next generation. Which isn't to say fathers, granddads and uncles never set a mood—or a table—but, in my circle, the male influences were more pragmatic than emotional.

When I write stories about people's homes, how they live in them, what they collect, I sometimes find that they own furniture made by a family patriarch. But the mismatched heirloom platters of food that parade across that table or buffet most often showcase the collections and tastes of a mom or a sister.

So, I'd just like to give my mother a shoutout for teaching me to celebrate any and every event. More importantly, she taught me that rather than merely holding onto things I find meaningful, I should pass them along and make the sharing the special occasion. ■



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