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Sly Catchers

How the Big Thicket's
carnivorous plants
trap and feast
on tiny victims



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February 2023



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Four of the five species of carnivorous plants in the U.S. are found in the Big Thicket.

*By Pam LeBlanc
Photos by Dave Shafer*

Breaking Up

Sailors offer bon voyage and watch the USS Kitty Hawk's final journey—to a South Texas recycling yard.

*By Eileen Mattei
Photos by John Faulk*

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A pitcher plant awaits its next meal.

Photo by Dave Shafer

ABOVE

Bob Hope entertains aboard the USS Kitty Hawk in the Philippines in 1962.

Photo by Corbis | Getty Images

Walk This Way

HOW'S THIS for a carbon footprint?

The state's severe drought last summer mostly dried up the Paluxy River that runs through Dinosaur Valley State Park, exposing dinosaur tracks from around 113 million years ago.

Scientists say 15-foot-tall *Acrocanthosaurus* left tracks in sediment that hardened into what is now limestone in the park, about 60 miles southwest of Fort Worth.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE RAINY DAYS MAKE ME ...

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

Below are some of the responses to our December prompt: **I can't believe I used to wear ...**

Bib overalls, no shirt, a straw hat and I went barefoot.

OTIS LINAM
VICTORIA EC
VICTORIA

Blue suede cowboy boots.

LEON CASTANEDA JR.
PANOLA-HARRISON EC
MARSHALL

White lipstick in the '60s—and we thought we looked good.

GWEN SPIESS
BLUEBONNET EC
BRENHAM

Underwear with no slot in front—made by my mom from flour sacks.

JACK HOWARD
WOOD COUNTY EC
WINNSBORO

Parachute pants.

GLENN QUESENBERRY
HAMILTON COUNTY EC
HICO

Leisure suits and platform shoes.

JOHN MONK
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GODLEY

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what he can do
until he tries.”

—CARTER G. WOODSON

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988 Saves Lives

PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP or counseling in a crisis can now call or text 988 to reach the national suicide prevention lifeline from anywhere in the U.S. The hope is that the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline becomes synonymous with mental health care, just as 911 is with public safety.

Suicide rates in rural America were 18.9 per 100,000 people compared to 13.2 in urban areas in 2021, according to the National Institutes of Health. And the difference in suicide rates between rural and urban areas widened between 1999 and 2019.

Stress and anxiety from raising crops or livestock, depression from being in a remote setting, and the stigmatization of mental illness are factors that sometimes lead to suicidal thoughts, according to Rural Health Information.



A Raw Deal

“My mom would make meatloaf, and once all the seasoning was mixed in, she and I would eat a tiny bite before she cooked it.”

BROOKE ZUCHA
VIA FACEBOOK

Fish Fanfare

Nowadays the accepted way to display a bass is to grip it by the lower jaw and allow it to hang perfectly vertical [*Lakes' Allure*, November 2022]. Alternatively, you can grip the lower jaw and support it under the belly if you want to display it horizontally.

In either case, you *do not* want to twist the fish's jaw to force it open, as the two anglers on Page 14 [below] seem to be doing.

Alan Buckner
CoServ
The Colony

These events have exploded in popularity in the past 8–10 years and offer a great experience for many kids who don't play traditional sports. You mentioned a few of the organizations but left out the Southeast Texas High School Fishing Association.

Randy Hanna
Houston County EC
Zavalla

I like a rare steak, but I'm not sure I could try this [*A Raw Deal*, December 2022].

JANELLE
OVERHOUSE
VIA FACEBOOK



COURTESY JULIAN CLEPPER

The Wonder of Waylon

The Arable Twos [November 2022] was happy, positive, beautifully written and, for me, quite uplifting. I could picture Waylon doing all those things Martha Deeringer so perfectly described. It had me smiling the entire time.

Art Farias
Pedernales EC
Lampasas

We raised our two boys this way (in Ohio, not Texas), and I know this is how children become accomplished and confident men and women. Adults, no matter what job they hold, have the roots that built them strong from childhood.

The story is worded so profoundly that it brought tears to my eyes.

Jody Brown
Tri-County EC
Perrin

Under His Guidance

In 1980, Bill Steele took our coed Scout Explorer post and a few of us sponsors on a winter trip to Bustamante, Nuevo León, Mexico, to explore the caves there [*Uncharted Territory*, October 2022]. We learned so much and have many great memories of that trip.

Ed Palmer
Pedernales EC
Dripping Springs

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.

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER Volume 79, Number 8 (USPS 540-560). *Texas Co-op Power* is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives. Periodical postage paid at Austin, TX, and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 77 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power's* website is TexasCoopPower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or email editor@TexasCoopPower.com.

SUBSCRIPTIONS Subscription price is \$4.44 per year for individual members of subscribing cooperatives and is paid from equity accruing to the member. If you are not a member of a subscribing cooperative, you can purchase an annual subscription at the nonmember rate of \$7.50. **Co-op members:** Please notify your co-op of address changes or other subscription requests.

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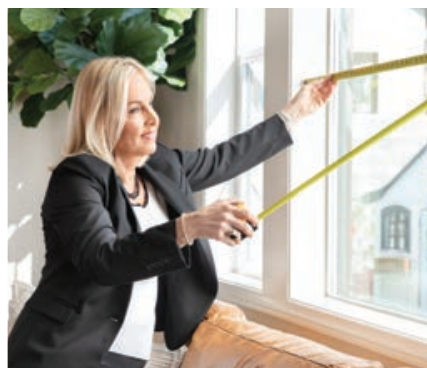
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Caught Cuisine

The Big Thicket's four species of carnivorous plants entice then consume unwary insects

Hundreds of slender, funnel-shaped plants line a boardwalk at Big Thicket National Preserve, where I'm trailing biologist Andrew Bennett on a warm April morning.

They look hungry.

The lime green, red-veined throats of the foot-tall plants gape, like baby birds awaiting a worm delivery from a parent. But these unusual plants have other plans for dinner: unsuspecting insects.

Four of the five types of carnivorous plants that grow in North America—the pitcher plants we're now admiring, along with sundews, bladderworts and butterworts—are found here and elsewhere in East Texas. (Venus' flytraps, whose eating parts resemble a hinged lima bean with teeth, don't grow in Texas; they're endemic to the Carolinas.)

I'm on a quest to find all four Texas natives, and Bennett, acting chief of resource management at Big Thicket, has offered his help.

We're off to a good start. We have no trouble finding these trumpet-shaped pitcher plants, which grow by the thousands along the mile-long, aptly named Pitcher Plant Trail in the Turkey Creek Unit of the 113,000-acre preserve.

Carnivorous plants, Bennett says, thrive in soils that are low in nutrients. They're not endangered, but they do require a very specific habitat, and these East Texas bogs provide it.

First, pitcher plants need wetlands. The groundwater in this part of the preserve is close to the surface, so the ground tends to stay wet. They also need periodic fire, to create a more open understory and to recycle nutrients into the soil. Rangers at the Big Thicket use prescribed burns to do that. And finally, they need insects, which provide nutrients in soils without much nitrogen. The Big Thicket has no shortage of those.

For some people, carnivorous plants call to mind the off-Broadway show *Little Shop of Horrors*, based on a 1960 film about a ravenous bit of vegetation. Audrey Jr., as it was called in the original film (it was remade in the 1980s), was a



cross between a Venus' flytrap and a butterwort, and it needed human blood—not just a few insects—to survive.

Unlike Audrey Jr., pitcher plants don't feed on humans. They don't use quick movements to hunt their food, either. And they're a lot smaller than the theatrical version of the plant.

Insects are attracted to pitcher plants because of their color, nectar and scent. When a bug lands on the waxy lip of the plant's funnel, it slides down into the tube, where downward-pointing hairs keep it from climbing out and

OPPOSITE Pitcher plants grow by the thousands in Big Thicket National Preserve in East Texas. ABOVE The entrance to the preserve's Pitcher Plant Trail is outside the town of Warren.





escaping. Eventually, it winds up in a tiny pool of fluid at the bottom of the funnel. Enzymes in that fluid slowly eat away at the wasps, ants and other foraging insects that land there, and the plant absorbs nutrients from the “bug soup.” Cut one open and you might find several disintegrating insects stacked up inside it.

During our walk, the sun lights up the pitcher plants like rows of bright green candles. Bennett and I admire them for a while, strolling up and down the boardwalk. Then he leans over, pointing out something low to the ground. I follow his finger and see it: a small, roundish plant hugging the ground. It’s made up of small arms, each one tipped with a fingernail-sized fleshy paddle flocked in glistening red hairs. Those hairs secrete a sticky substance—and beware any insect that sets foot in it. The sundew, like the pitcher plant, uses enzymes to slowly absorb any prey that gets caught.

The best time to see both plants is late April and May.

“It seems like people always expect them to be a lot bigger, especially sundews, or to trap more actively, like Venus’ flytraps do,” Bennett says. “These are more passive. They wait for bugs to fall in or get stuck.”

Still, they’re charismatic plants, and this concentration of them is among the largest in the U.S.

“I don’t know of a bigger stand in Texas,” Bennett says.

With pitcher plants and sundews checked off our list, Bennett and I head back to our trucks to continue our hunt.

It’s a 20-minute drive to our next stop down a quiet, narrow road inside the preserve, where we pull off and squirt a little bug spray on our ankles to fend off the mosquitoes before striking out into the forest.

The going is slow. There’s no trail to follow here, so we slog our way through thick underbrush and around tall trees. Everything looks the same to me, and it’s hard to maintain a straight line, so Bennett consults his GPS. He knows the exact coordinates of where we’ll find the bladderwort.

At one point a flash of movement catches my eye, and I spring back just in time to avoid a copperhead, a venomous pit viper with beautiful gray and rust-colored markings. The snake blends into the ground cover so well that it disappears from sight a moment later.

Soon we reach a swamp the size of a baseball diamond. The ground squishes underfoot at its edges, and the place smells organic and earthy. Emerald-colored moss covers logs like velvet, and tannins have turned the shallow water the color of tea. A barred owl hoots in the distance. The whole place feels primordial. I wouldn’t be surprised to see a dinosaur emerge from the gloom.

A shaft or two of light filters through the leaves into the bog in front of us, where tupelo trees stand knee-deep in the water. Bennett, who is wearing boots, sloshes in. A moment later, he’s found what he’s looking for.

Bladderwort, which looks like delicate strands of dill fringed with clusters of pinhead-sized balls, floats on the surface of the brown water. Those tiny balls are the plant’s namesake bladders, and they not only keep the plant afloat; they trap the tiny aquatic bugs that it needs to survive.

Biologist Andrew Bennett scoops bladderwort from a swamp.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Tiny, colorful sundews use enzymes to absorb insects that get trapped in their glistening hairs. Delicate strands of bladderwort. The elusive butterwort escaped the author's eye, but our photographer spotted one.

And unlike the pitcher plants, which passively trap their food, the bladderwort moves using a reflexive process called thigmotropism. As insects are lured into openings on the tiny bladders, they close, trapping the prey inside.

That leaves just one plant on my checklist: The wily and elusive butterwort.

This time, we're out of luck. We can't find any of the plants, with their taco-shaped leaves dotted with droplets of

TAKE A HIKE

If you want to examine East Texas' flesh-eating flora, hit these trails.

The Pitcher Plant Trail in the Big Thicket National Preserve's Turkey Creek Unit is a 1-mile loop about 40 miles north of Beaumont that's free to the public.

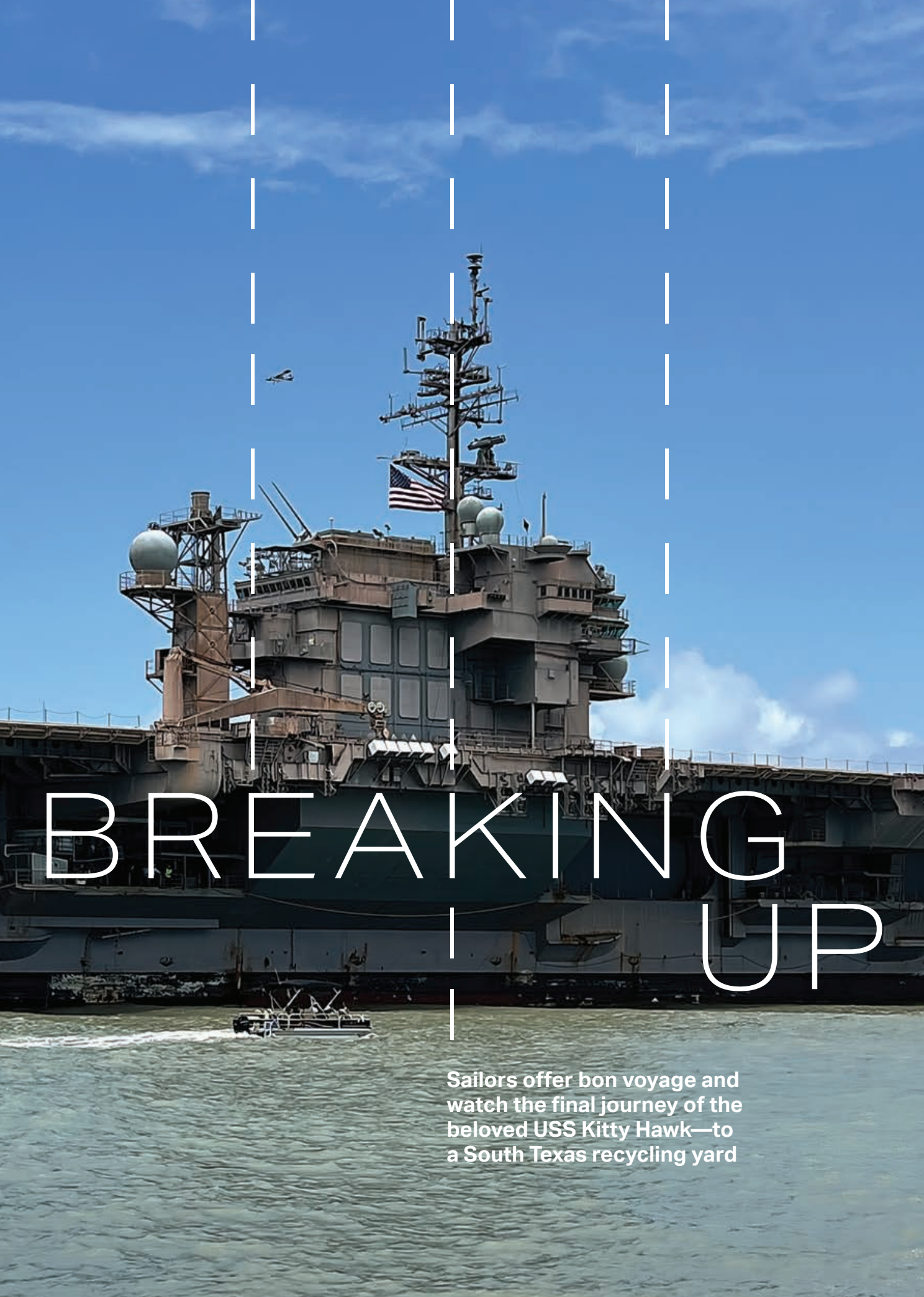
The Nature Conservancy's Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary is just down the road. The 6 miles of trails there are also free to access.



sticky ooze. Bugs looking for water get stuck in the butterwort's secretions, triggering enzymes that break down their soft body parts.

That's OK. Now I have another reason to return to East Texas: to continue my search for these unusual little plants.

I glance at the vegetation around me. Until now, I've thought of all these flowers, bushes, trees and vines as a sort of soft green wallpaper to the outdoors. Now, the carnivorous ways of some of these plants have given me a new jolt of respect. ■



BREAKING UP

Sailors offer bon voyage and watch the final journey of the beloved USS Kitty Hawk—to a South Texas recycling yard

David Gross stands among about 5,000 men and women who served on the USS Kitty Hawk between 1961 and 2009 as the towering super-carrier is towed through Brazos Santiago Pass.

They're crowded onto South Padre Island's south shore to pay their respects and reminisce about the extraordinary aircraft carrier that had been their home away from home.

That home moved around: Vietnam and Afghanistan, in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, but mostly in the western Pacific, until it was retired 14 years ago as the last conventionally powered American carrier. But today, after 48 years of active service, the decommissioned ship arrived at the Port of Brownsville, never to sail again.

Watching the Kitty Hawk head to the recycling yard is "kind of like having the house you grew up in torn down," says Gross, who came from San Diego to see the carrier one last time. He served as a roof rat—part of the flight deck crew—40 years ago.

Veterans—from the Silent Generation, baby boomers, Gen Xers and millennials—roar in pride and appreciation as Gross raps out a long, proud tribute: "We are the Kitty, and we ride the back of a Hawk. We were young. We were strong, working day and night long—12 on and 12 off, jet exhaust we did cough. Yeah, we're the crew of the Kitty, and we walk the walk."

OCEANFRONT HOME

The Kitty Hawk, a small floating city (population 5,280) with a major airport, housed the ship's company, deployed air wing and the admiral's staff. Essential duties of those onboard ranged from air traffic controller, jet mechanic, roof rat and parachute rigger to pilot, electrician and cook working in 12-hour shifts. Many sailors were teenagers when they first came aboard and formed enduring bonds with their ship and shipmates.

"The Kitty was by far my favorite ship. Everyone had a can-do attitude," says Gordon Wilcox, a 21-year veteran who served two tours on the carrier. The Alvarado resident and United Cooperative Services member initially photographed shipboard events for news releases. Later he worked with reconnaissance cameras used by pilots.

Aviation electrician A.J. Reynolds served two tours on the carrier. "I was 18 or 19 when I first went on the Kitty Hawk," says the Bandera Electric Cooperative member. "It was special. I'll never forget it."

OPPOSITE The USS Kitty Hawk, home to 130,000 sailors in its history, sails in Texas waters for its final journey. **ABOVE** Sailors wave American flags as the supercarrier returned to a Japanese port in 2003 after operations in the Persian Gulf.



His sentiment was echoed by Joseph Houck of Somerset, who was aboard 1989–93. He came to South Padre to see the first ship on which he had served and recalled watching dolphins racing alongside as the carrier reached 30 knots. "For fun, we had roller chair derbies during sea trials," he says.

Jet engines once roared as catapults launched Phantoms, A-6s and Hawkeyes from the carrier's short deck. Coupled with the shrill whines of fighters and reconnaissance planes landing and coming to abrupt stops as their tail hooks caught a cable on the deck, sailors' attempts at sleeping could get complicated.

Another complication occurred in March 1984, when a nosy Soviet sub passed directly in front of the Kitty Hawk in the Sea of Japan. The carrier plowed over the nuclear vessel, which rolled underneath it. The sub remained mostly intact but left behind a propeller in the carrier's bow, a Cold War triumph still celebrated by the Kitty's crew. Sailors fondly remembered, too, the superb seamanship of the captain who heeled over the Kitty Hawk to pass under the Golden Gate Bridge without taking off the antennas.

Rich Orth was onboard for the Kitty Hawk's first voyage around the Horn of Africa in 1961, and he was among the 68 civilians invited on board for its last powered cruise, from San Diego to a reserve fleet at Bremerton, Washington. "It was a different Navy back then," he says. "Nothing compared to the Hawk."

GONE FROM SIGHT

Looming 140 feet above the water, taller than most island condo buildings, the Kitty Hawk slid past its devotees May 31, 2022, en route to the Brownsville Ship Channel while tour boats and fishing boats flitted around it like tiny remoras nibbling on a whale.

The Kitty Hawk came to rest at International Shipbreaking Limited after being towed almost 17,000 miles from Bremerton. ISL is one of three companies in the U.S., all in Brownsville, that meet the strict environmental, safety and health standards required to dismantle Navy and U.S.-flagged ships. ISL counts the aircraft carriers Independence, Ranger and Constellation among more than 80 U.S. Navy and Maritime



Kitty Hawk veterans sign a commemorative flag near Brazos Santiago Pass.

Administration vessels it has recycled since 1995.

ISL has a service contract with the Navy for each ship, secured by a penny payment, says Bob Berry, the company's co-founder and vice president. "We don't own the ship." But once pieces are cut up and set on the ground, they do own the salvaged metal. "Salvage material goes out by barge, rail and truck all over the world, depending on the best prices on the steel scrap market," he says. Armored steel plating, made with special alloys, is destined for a Pennsylvania mill that will remake it for use in other Navy ships.

By May 2024, 60,000 tons of metal (a remarkable 95% of the ship) will have been recycled from the Kitty Hawk, according to Berry. "We've done enough ships that we know exactly how much metal comes out," he says. With all their stainless and structural steel, aluminum, brass, and copper, ships are among the most recyclable manufactured products. (Cars are 65% recyclable.)

A monitor over Berry's desk shows views of the busy, noisy 80-acre recycling yard. He explained the Kitty Hawk first underwent environmental and safety inspections before a contractor removed asbestos and flammable materials. Then rectangles, 8 feet by 10 feet, were cut into the hull superstructure and folded outward like a sardine can lid to provide work crews with natural light and ventilation. After removing wiring and pipes for recycling, ISL employees use cutting torches to break up the 1,047-foot-long ship into sections.

Gawky cranes with giant magnets and grapples remove modular sections of the ship in the reverse order of their assembly 60-plus years ago at a New Jersey shipyard. The

towering structure known as the island, or mast, was the first section cut loose and lowered to the ground. The sections swung from the ship to shore weigh up to 10 tons each. Hydraulic shears and torches reduce the metals to manageable chunks. The carrier's four main steam-driven engines, which supplied up to 100,000 horsepower each, must be cut into segments before removal. Armaments are demilitarized and then cut into unidentifiable pieces.

Watching the Kitty Hawk head to the recycling yard is "kind of like having the house you grew up in torn down."

ISL donated switches and gauges from the Kitty Hawk to the USS Lexington Museum in Corpus Christi.

While former Kitty Hawk sailors and aviators had hoped the carrier would become a museum, they can console themselves with challenge coins cut from its brass and available from ISL. Hefty chunks of the flight deck have been cut into brick-sized mementos as well.

The public can see the dismantling progress only during the winter months, when South Padre tour companies offer ship channel cruises. The Kitty Hawk and the USS John F. Kennedy are among the eight ships ISL is breaking up in 2023.

"With the remaking of her earthly frame, her spirit will live on," says Chris Green, ISL president.

After the carrier reached its final mooring, one former sailor remarked on Facebook, "She got to go out with her kids all around her showing their love." ■



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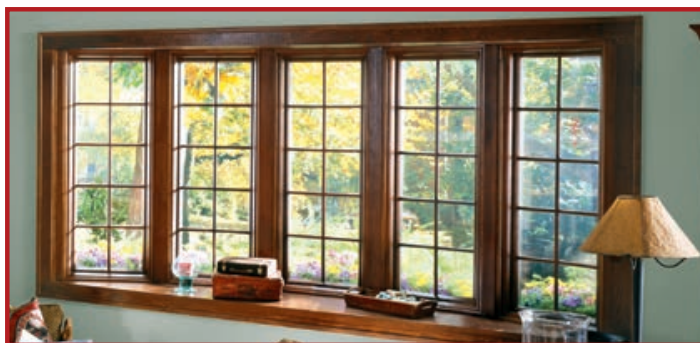
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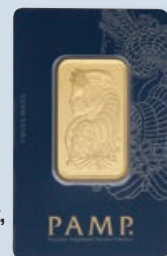
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LONE STAR MEN'S DIAMOND CHRONOGRAPH WATCH

A FINE JEWELRY EXCLUSIVE FROM THE BRADFORD EXCHANGE



Hand-set with a Sparkling Genuine Diamond



LONE STAR STATE is etched on the side of the watch case



Etched on the back with the distinctive state of Texas overlaid with the state flag, and the words TEXAS FOREVER

Crafted in Stainless Steel, with 3 Sub-dials, Date Window and Precision Quartz Movement

It's Time to Show Your Texas Pride!

Now you can with a custom-designed timepiece as distinctive and bold as its namesake—the great state of Texas. Crafted in rugged stainless steel, our “Lone Star” Men's Diamond Chronograph Watch showcases a genuine diamond-studded sheriff's badge design on a rich gold-tone watch face, which features 3 sub-dials for seconds, minutes and hours, a date window, and the words TEXAS FOREVER and LONE STAR STATE.

The watch also has a rotating tachymeter bezel, and the stainless steel and gold-tone bracelet is accented with the state's proud Texas Longhorn and the famous Texas star. Etched on the side are the words LONE STAR STATE, and the back is etched with the state of Texas overlaid with the state flag and the sentiment TEXAS FOREVER. The watch's Precision Quartz Movement and adjustable C-clasp provide dependable accuracy and a comfortable fit.

Limited-time Offer... Order Today!

Complete with a deluxe case and a Certificate of Authenticity, the “Lone Star” Men's Diamond Chronograph Watch is an exceptional value at \$199.99*, and you can pay for it in 5 easy installments of \$40.00. To reserve yours, backed by our unconditional 120-day guarantee and a full-year limited warranty, send no money now; just fill out and send in the Reservation Application. But hurry... this is a limited-time offer!

Order today at bradfordexchange.com/133752

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Shown actual size

PRIORITY RESERVATION

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YES. Please reserve the “Lone Star” Men's Diamond Chronograph Watch for me as described in this announcement.

LIMITED-TIME OFFER

Reservations will be accepted on a **first-come, first-served basis.**
Respond as soon as possible to reserve your watch.

*Plus a total of \$15 shipping and service (see bradfordexchange.com). Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of your jewelry after we receive your initial deposit. Sales subject to product availability and order acceptance.

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER

KATHI
CALVERT

How We Approach Load Shedding

WE ARE AT THE two-year mark since the winter cold snap that caused many electric utilities, including Houston County Electric Cooperative, to implement load shedding, or rolling outages. Recently, with the arctic blast over this past Christmas holiday, we had another test of the electric grid. Fortunately, Texas fared much better as regulators and utilities have been working hard to prevent such a disaster from happening again.

I'd like to explain a little about why load shedding happens. The Electric Reliability Council of Texas manages the flow of electric power to more than 26 million Texas customers, which represents about 90% of the state's electric load, while the Southwest Power Pool manages most of the remainder of the power grid. As system operators, these regulators schedule power on an electric grid that connects thousands of miles of transmission lines and hundreds of generation units.



Texas' main power grid is a network of more than 46,500 miles of long-distance, high-voltage transmission lines and substations that carry bulk electricity to multiple utilities for distribution to homes and businesses. The ERCOT grid, which has more than 86,000 megawatts of available generation capacity, delivers most of the electricity used by Texas consumers.

During times of high electricity usage, energy emergencies or other major events, ERCOT or SPP

may request that we alert our members and ask them to conserve energy.

Energy conservation measures include:

- ▶ Turning down thermostats to 68 degrees in the winter.
- ▶ Turning off and unplugging nonessential lights and appliances.
- ▶ Avoiding using large appliances such as ovens and washing machines.
- ▶ Businesses minimizing the use of electric lighting and other equipment.
- ▶ Large consumers of electricity shutting down or reducing nonessential production processes.

As a last resort during energy emergencies or other major events, the grid operator may instruct utilities, including Houston County EC, to reduce consumer demand for electricity by shedding load through implementing forced outages for consumers. These events are often referred to as rolling blackouts.

We only implement rolling blackouts when directed by the grid operator during emergency situations that require a reduction in load to prevent the system from failing.

Houston County EC will make every effort to limit the duration of outages during forced load shed events. We also attempt to rotate outages to minimize your time without power while maximizing the amount of time your power remains on. However, load shed events are dynamic with unpredictable circumstances, and Houston County EC cannot guarantee specific outage and restoration time frames when facing rolling blackouts.

We always will attempt to inform members of planned outages but cannot guarantee that advance notice will be possible during load shedding events.

Stay informed during any emergency situation by following us on Facebook or checking our website, houstoncountyelec.com, for updates. ■

February 2021 Winter Storm Financial Recovery Update

MEMBERS OF HOUSTON COUNTY Electric Cooperative should be proud of the financial strength of our cooperative. We have continued to make progress addressing the cost of electricity during the winter storm two years ago. As a reminder, our initial power bill for electricity during the storm was \$24.9 million, which was higher than our normal power cost for an entire year.

Houston County EC borrowed funds to pay the power bill that we owed, and we have been steadily recovering the costs from our members to pay off the debt associated with the high cost of electricity during the winter storm. As of December 31, 2022, the remaining balance from the winter storm is below \$16.5 million.

We appreciate your commitment to Houston County EC. ■



SERVING YOU

Being there, every minute, or every day. As your hometown electric cooperative, it's not just our way of doing business, it's our way of life. And as a Houston County Electric Cooperative member, that means value that goes far beyond the energy we provide, value you can't really put a price on.



HCEC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Houston County Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Crockett, TX 75835
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Toll-Free 1-800-657-2445
Web houstoncountyelec.com

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24/7

Outage Hotline Number

For information and to report outages, please call us.

TOLL-FREE
1-800-970-4232

ABOUT HOUSTON COUNTY EC

HCEC owns and maintains more than 5,100 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 15,000 members in Anderson, Angelina, Cherokee, Freestone, Houston, Leon, Madison, Trinity and Walker counties.

BUSINESS HOURS

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

MEMBER SERVICE

For general information during business hours: (936) 544-5641 local, 1-800-657-2445 toll-free

- To report an outage, press 1.
- To update your contact information, press 2.
- To check your account balance or make a payment using the automated system, press 3.
- To speak to a member services representative regarding your account, press 4.
- Para hablar con un representante de habla español, presione 5.
- To connect, disconnect or transfer service, press 6.
- To report outdoor lighting issues or other nonemergencies regarding your electric service, press 7.

VISIT US ONLINE

houstoncountyelec.com



Check us out at
TexasCoopPower.com/houston



JAMES PAULS | ISTOCK.COM

We Love Serving Our Co-op Members

VALENTINE'S DAY ISN'T just for the lovebirds. It's also the perfect time to let our friends, family, co-workers and other special people in our lives know we care about them.

So Houston County Electric Cooperative created our list of the top five reasons we love serving you.

1. We love serving our members because without you, the co-op would not exist. Our purpose is to provide you with reliable, economical and safe electricity. Simply put, Houston County EC exists to serve you. That's why we were formed—to bring power to our local area when for-profit utilities would not.

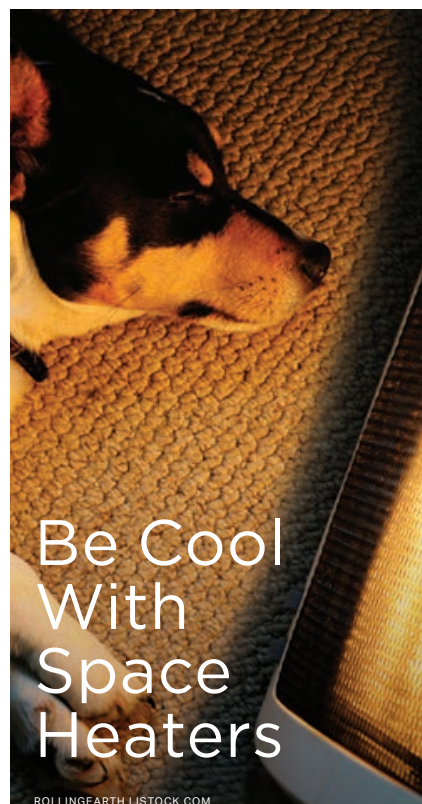
2. You enable us to complete our mission to give back by supporting our efforts. A major part of our mission is to serve our community and the greater good. With your assistance, we're able to help the most vulnerable members of our community through food and toy drives and programs that support local charities and can help local families pay their energy bills when times are tough.

3. Members of our co-op also serve on the board of directors. They provide guidance for setting priorities and helping make big decisions. Because our board members live in the area, they're able to serve as the pulse of the larger community, identifying immediate and long-term needs.

4. You help us get it right. Our members are great about keeping us in the know. We do our best to avoid power outages, but Mother Nature occasionally throws us a curveball; our members are quick to report any power disruptions and are patient as our crews work to safely restore power. We know outages are frustrating, and your support as we work through storms means so much to our employees. We also appreciate your feedback on co-op programs and services.

5. You and other Houston County EC members make up the community we serve—and for us, it's all about community. Our employees live and work here too and care about our community the same way you do. We're invested in working to help it prosper.

As a co-op, our mission is to enhance the quality of life in our community. We love serving our members—our friends, neighbors and family. ■



Be Cool With Space Heaters

ROLLINGEARTH | ISTOCK.COM

Space heaters are meant to provide supplemental heat, not replace your home's heating system. If used incorrectly, space heaters can pose fire and burn risks. When using your portable heater, heed these rules:

Read and follow the manufacturer's warnings and the operation and care guidelines before using a space heater.

Space heaters need space. Keep them at least 3 feet away from any combustible materials such as bedding, drapes and furniture.

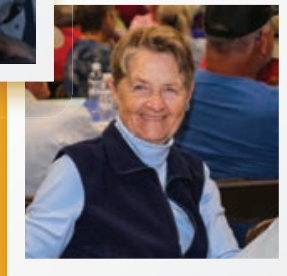
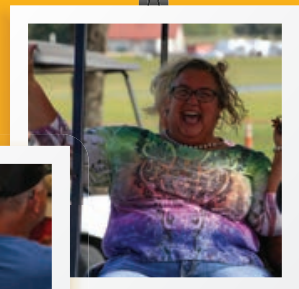
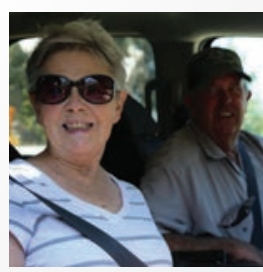
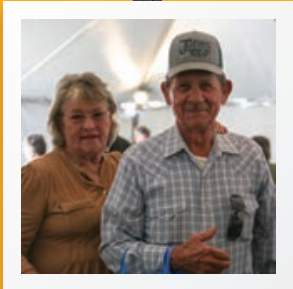
Never use space heaters around unsupervised children or pets.

Always turn the heater off and unplug it when leaving the room or going to sleep.

Plug space heaters directly into an outlet. Do not use an extension cord.

Houston County EC encourages you to always practice safety.

DO YOU KNOW AN INTERESTING HCEC MEMBER? TELL US!



THE MISSION:

Find members with unique stories to share



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Do you know someone with an inspiring tale, quirky hobby or unique small business? We want to showcase the complex lives our members lead and shine a spotlight on their efforts!

Do you know an HCEC member willing to share what sets them apart?
Email kbond@houstoncountyelec.com with details.



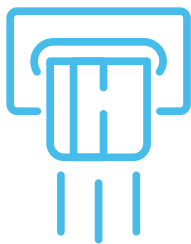
Are you utilizing the E-Biz features?

If you want to track and manage your electric consumption, before you're billed for it, HCEC's online E-Biz platform puts the power in your hands! You can log in using the app or web portal to see how much electricity you've used for the year, month, or even a specific day.

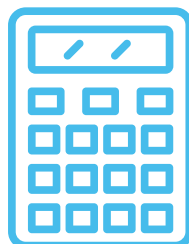
Monitoring your usage is made simple with graphs and tables so that you can see the effects outdoor temperatures and your behaviors have on your bill.

Additionally, you can easily pay your bill, schedule payments, set up automatic draft payments, and sign up for alerts!

To access E-Biz on a computer visit www.houstoncountyelec.com, or download the free app on your smartphone or tablet.



**PAY YOUR
ELECTRIC BILL**



**MONITOR YOUR
ELECTRIC USAGE**



**SCHEDULE PAYMENTS
AND SETUP PAYMENT
REMINDERS**

Search 'HCEC' on your smart
phone's app store and look
for the badge:



NEED ASSISTANCE? Call us at 936-544-5641 or toll-free at 1-800-657-2445

Generator Safety

Portable generators are a godsend during a prolonged electrical outage—just be sure to use extreme caution while operating them.

Never try to power the house by plugging the generator into a wall outlet. This dangerous practice, known as backfeeding, reverses the electricity flow and sends it out of your house, endangering electric workers and your neighbors. If you must connect the generator to the house wiring, have a qualified electrician do it.

Plug appliances directly into the generator or use an extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Check that the entire cord is free of damage and that the plug has all its prongs.

Keep the generator dry and do not use it indoors, in a garage, near open doors or windows, or in rainy or wet conditions.

Houston County Electric Cooperative encourages you to always practice safety.



Yummy Ummy Bars

½ cup (1 stick) butter, melted
1½ cups graham cracker crumbs
1 can sweetened condensed milk (14 ounces)
½ cup chopped peanuts
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1 cup peanut butter chips

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Pour butter into a 13-by-9-inch glass baking dish and sprinkle graham cracker crumbs evenly over top. Pour sweetened condensed milk over crumbs. Top with peanuts, chocolate and peanut butter chips, pressing down firmly.
3. Bake 25–30 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool. Cut into bars.

MAKES 15 BARS

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

ARZAMASOVA NATALIYA | ISTOCK.COM





A Subtle Champion

Remembering Texan Emmett Jay Scott and his advocacy during Black History Month

BY GENE FOWLER

EMMETT JAY SCOTT, a Texan born 150 years ago this month, established a remarkable record of achievement, mostly out of the public eye. His long life was so full that a biography of the writer, educator, government official and right-hand man to Booker T. Washington took author Maceo Dailey some 50 years to complete.

Scott's name doesn't come up often in tributes during Black History Month, yet decades ago his significant championing of African American rights warranted a commentary in *The Pittsburgh Courier*, a Black newspaper that potently pegged him as a quiet leader.

"He exhorts an influence upon public men which is unique and inimitable; but the basis of his influence is subtle, intangible and difficult to define. ... He holds no public office, does not manipulate any political organization, nor does he arouse public emotion by any spectacular appeal. He does not possess great wealth nor profess great learning; he carries no votes in his vest pocket. But nevertheless his counsel is sought and heeded by men who do things and want things done."

Those words, published in 1936, were an unlikely testimonial to a man

Emmett Jay Scott worked behind the scenes in academia, government and industry to advance African Americans' rights.

born February 13, 1873, to formerly enslaved people and raised in the Freedmen's Town section of Houston. Scott attended Wiley College in Marshall from 1887 to 1890. (He dropped out to give other members of his family the same educational opportunities he had.)

To help fund his education, he carried mail, chopped wood, fed hogs and kept books for the college's president. Back home, he worked his way up from janitor to journalist at *The Houston Post*. In the 1890s, Scott co-founded and edited *The Texas Freeman*, one of the first Black newspapers west of the Mississippi.

The biography by Dailey, *Emmett J. Scott: Power Broker of the Tuskegee Machine*, describing Scott as a Renaissance man, scholar and political fixer, is in the works at Texas Tech University Press.

Scott's influence grew beyond Texas when he met Washington for the first time. Washington, the distinguished educator and foremost Black leader at the turn of the 20th century, presented the commencement address at what is now Prairie View A&M University in 1897, and Scott was there. Washington recruited the Texan to assist with his work at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

For the next 18 years—until Washington's death in 1915—Scott served as his closest confidant, adviser, ghostwriter and unyielding champion.

Washington and Scott sought to produce a film based on Washington's autobiography. That project ended with Washington's death, but Scott pursued another film project—a counter to the racist stereotypes presented in D.W. Griffith's 1915 blockbuster epic *The Birth of a Nation*.

Scott envisioned a film that would present “the true story of the Negro—his life in Africa, his enslavement, his freedom, his achievements—together with his past, present and future relations with his white neighbor. It will bring close the future in which the races—all races—will see each other as they are.”

The project soon morphed into a three-hour epic rebuttal, *Birth of a Race*. Sadly, the version that eventually was made—a lone print of which survives in the Library of Congress—bore no relation to Scott's vision.

But Scott's focus soon changed as the U.S. moved closer to war. Woodrow Wilson was elected president, and Scott was named to the War Department in 1917. Among his duties were improving the morale of Black troops and investigating racial incidents and charges of unfair treatment.

Though the nearly 400,000 Black soldiers who went overseas faced racism (the Marines banned Black people from enlisting, for example) and many were relegated to

support roles, Scott documented their combat heroism in his books *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War* and *The True Story of the Harlem Hellfighters in World War I*.

Some 15 years after the war, Scott addressed Black veterans, decrying the ingratitude of the nation for their sacrifices.

“I have always contended that a country worth fighting for is worth living for,” Scott was quoted as saying in the *New Journal and Guide*, an African American newspaper in Virginia. “At the same time, I have always contended that a man who is brave enough to carry a gun in defense of his country's honor should be honored with all of the rights and privileges of untrammelled citizenship.”

Noting the exodus of Black southerners that intensified during World War I, Scott wrote *Negro Migration During the War*. Nearly a half-million African Americans left the South during the Great War, and over the next half-century, participants in the Great Migration swelled to 6 million.

“They left as though they were fleeing some curse,” he wrote, describing the “solemn ceremonies” performed by 147 migrants from Mississippi as they prepared to cross the Ohio River. “These migrants knelt down and prayed; the men stopped their watches and, amid tears of joy, sang the familiar songs of deliverance.”

Scott himself took his family north after the war. From 1919 to 1934, he served as secretary-treasurer and business manager of Howard University in Washington, D.C.

During World War II, he was hired to oversee recruiting by the Sun Shipbuilding and Drydock Co. in Chester, Pennsylvania. According to one source, more than half of the company's 35,000 workers were Black. Sun was reportedly the world's largest shipyard during the war.

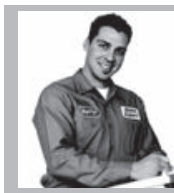
Sun's shipyard No. 4 was staffed fully by African Americans. Scott emphasized the valuable role that vocational training could play in improving race relations. And he was quoted as saying that Black workers' accomplishments in the shipyard would help to remove the “doubts and fears regarding the capability of the Negro craftsman.”

Scott advocated for education as one of the strongest tools for lifting his people out of poverty. He later returned to Wiley College and earned a master's degree, and all five of his children achieved college degrees. He and his wife also raised his five younger sisters, who also earned their degrees.

Elaine Brown, a granddaughter, inherited his passion for racial justice, becoming chairwoman of the revolutionary Black Panther Party. ■

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 – Lewisville, 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.

This fast-acting bacteria multiplies within minutes of application and is specifically designed to withstand many of today's anti-bacterial cleaners, soaps and detergents. It comes in dissolvable plastic packs, that you just flush down your toilets. It's so cool. Plus, they actually Guarantee that it restores ANY system, no matter how bad the problem is.

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.septicleanse.com or you can order or learn more by calling toll free at 1-888-899-8345. If you use the promo code "TXS18", 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.



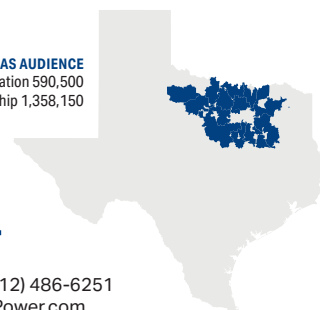
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Bad to the Bone

Full tang stainless steel blade with natural bone handle —now **ONLY \$79!**

The very best hunting knives possess a perfect balance of form and function. They're carefully constructed from fine materials, but also have that little something extra to connect the owner with nature. If you're on the hunt for a knife that combines impeccable craftsmanship with a sense of wonder, the **\$79 Huntsman Blade** is the trophy you're looking for.

The blade is full tang, meaning it doesn't stop at the handle but extends to the length of the grip for the ultimate in strength. The blade is made from 420 surgical steel, famed for its sharpness and its resistance to corrosion.

The handle is made from genuine natural bone, and features decorative wood spacers and a hand-carved motif of two overlapping feathers—a reminder for you to respect and connect with the natural world.

This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of \$2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99, 8x21 power compact, binoculars and a genuine leather sheath **FREE** when you purchase the **Huntsman Blade**.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the impeccable craftsmanship. If you don't feel like we cut you a fair deal, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

Limited Reserves. A deal like this won't last long. We have only 1120 **Huntsman Blades** for this ad only. Don't let this beauty slip through your fingers. Call today!

Huntsman Blade ~~\$249*~~

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A squad leader of the highly decorated 442nd patrols the front lines in France.

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



Rescue of the Lost Battalion

How Japanese American units saved Texans in World War II

BY W.F. STRONG

THERE'S A LONG LIST of honorary Texans. John Wayne is one. No surprise there. Chuck Norris, born in Oklahoma, was made an honorary Texan in 2017, and Gov. Allan Shivers extended the honor to Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

But one case that stands out is when Gov. John Connally awarded honorary Texan status to hundreds of men simultaneously in 1962. He made the entire 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Infantry Battalion of the U.S. Army honorary Texans after World War II.

The story begins with the Alamo Regiment, a Texas National Guard unit that

in October 1944 found itself cut off and surrounded behind enemy lines in the mountains of southern France.

The Texans were on top of a mountain and had the advantage of high ground, but they were still pounded by German artillery. It was foggy, rainy and very cold. They quickly dug fighting positions in the wet, muddy soil and covered themselves with tree limbs, rocks and dirt. The Lost Battalion, as it was known, was also running out of food and water.

The U.S. Army redirected its push toward the Rhine River to focus on saving the battalion from the Germans. Ameri-

can forces tried pounding the German lines with their artillery, but the forest was so thick they weren't having much effect. Two infantry battalions tried to break through the German lines, but each was repelled by hailstorms of bullets.

This is when the 442nd, which had joined with the 100th, was called in. Battle-hardened, they had a reputation for succeeding in just these situations. It took them five days of brutal, close-quarters combat on muddy terrain in bone-chilling weather to reach the Texans. The 442nd suffered hundreds of casualties to save 211 soldiers of the Lost Battalion's original 275.

After almost a week, they were freed from the German onslaught.

What makes this story especially significant: The 442nd was a Nisei regiment, composed of second-generation Japanese Americans. Most of them, along with their families, had been detained in camps operated by the War Relocation Authority at the beginning of the war. These men, however, asked if they could fight rather than sit out the war.

And they were extraordinary fighters. The 442nd was called the Purple Heart Battalion because they received more Purple Hearts than any other unit their size in World War II.

When the 442nd returned from Europe, President Harry Truman said, "You have fought not only the enemy, but you have fought prejudice—and you have won."

For Connally, making them all honorary Texans was his way of demonstrating to these soldiers, and their descendants, the solemn gratitude of Texas. ■

Cupcakes

One might not be enough when serving these delightful treats

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Cupcakes are riding waves of trendiness, but for us they're classic. There's just something about a plate of cupcakes that brings a smile to your face, whether you're celebrating a birthday, graduation or holiday. These cupcakes, inspired by the classic confection, are my favorite Valentine's Day treat, but they're great for any special day.



Chocolate-Covered Strawberry Cupcakes

CUPCAKES

8 ounces strawberries, divided use
2½ cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup (1 stick) butter
1½ cups sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
⅔ cup milk

ICING

¾ cup heavy cream
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

- 1. CUPCAKES** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line muffin pans with 18 paper liners.
- Stem, halve and purée half the strawberries to yield about ½ cup of strawberry purée. Set aside.
- In a bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Set aside.
- In a large bowl, cream together butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time, then mix in vanilla and strawberry purée until blended and smooth.
- Alternately add the flour mixture and milk, beginning and ending with the flour mixture. Scrape down the sides of the bowl between additions and make sure everything is incorporated before the next addition. Beat batter until smooth.
- Divide batter among prepared cups. Bake 20–25 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool completely on a wire rack.
- 1. ICING** Heat heavy cream in a small saucepan over medium-high. Add the chocolate chips to a bowl. Once cream is lightly bubbling, remove from heat and pour over the chocolate. Whisk to melt until completely smooth. Let cool until slightly thickened.
- Holding a cupcake upside down, lower it into the chocolate, twisting to evenly coat. Lift and let excess drip back into the bowl, then flip and place on rack to set. Repeat with remaining cupcakes.
- Slice remaining strawberries into halves and place one half on top of each cupcake. Let cupcakes rest until chocolate is firm.

MAKES 18 CUPCAKES

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Hummingbird Cupcakes.



Cookie Butter Spice Cupcakes

AUTUMN PRINCE
WISE EC

COOK'S TIP Cookie butter spread can be found in the peanut butter aisle. It's also available online.

CUPCAKES

- ½ cup sugar**
- ¼ cup crunchy cookie butter**
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, softened**
- 1 egg**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves**
- ¾ cup flour**
- 1 teaspoon baking powder**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons milk**

ICING

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, softened**
- 2 tablespoons crunchy cookie butter**
- ¾ cup powdered sugar**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- Biscoff cookies (optional)**

- 1. CUPCAKES** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line a muffin pan with 6–8 paper liners.
- 2.** In a bowl, cream together sugar, cookie butter and butter until fluffy. Beat in egg, vanilla, nutmeg and cloves until smooth.
- 3.** Add flour, baking powder and salt until just combined. Scrape down sides, then beat in milk until batter is smooth.
- 4.** Divide batter among prepared liners. Bake 20–22 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean and tops are firm. Let cool completely on a wire rack.

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

OJCs (Orange Juice Cupcakes)

CHUCK BURGESS
HEART OF TEXAS EC



These delightful cupcakes are full of orange flavor, especially from the orange-flecked icing. Take the time to grate fresh orange zest—it's worth it.

MAKES 24 CUPCAKES

CUPCAKES

- 1½ cups sugar**
- ¼ cup brown sugar**
- 2½ cups flour**
- 2½ teaspoons baking powder**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 2 eggs**
- ⅔ cup milk**
- ⅔ cup orange juice**
- ¾ cup (1½ sticks) butter, melted and cooled, divided use**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

ICING

- 3 cups powdered sugar**
- 2 large oranges**

- 1. CUPCAKES** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line muffin pans with 24 paper liners.
- 2.** In a large bowl, mix together sugar, brown sugar, flour, baking powder and salt. Beat in eggs, milk, orange juice, ½ cup melted butter and vanilla until smooth.
- 3.** Divide batter among prepared liners, filling about halfway. Bake 25–30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in the pan 10 minutes, then remove to a wire rack to cool completely.
- 4. ICING** Place the powdered sugar in a bowl. Zest the oranges and add to the sugar. Halve the oranges and juice to get ¼ to ⅓ cup juice, removing seeds. Add juice and remaining ¼ cup melted butter to the sugar and whisk ingredients until completely blended and smooth. Dip cupcakes in icing and return to wire rack until set.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

GARDEN BOUNTY DUE FEBRUARY 10

What grows in your garden? Share your favorite recipes for making the most of summer produce. Submit them on our website by February 10 for a chance to win \$500.



RECIPES CONTINUED

5. ICING Cream together butter and cookie butter. Add powdered sugar $\frac{1}{4}$ cup at a time until completely blended. Add vanilla and salt and beat until light and fluffy. Ice cupcakes and decorate with half a Biscoff cookie or cookie crumbs, if desired.

MAKES 6-8 CUPCAKES

Mint Chocolate Cupcakes

SUSAN PRAUSE
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

CUPCAKES

1 cup flour
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cocoa powder
1 teaspoon baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable oil
3 eggs
3 tablespoons sour cream or plain yogurt
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup buttermilk



FROSTING

$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups ($2\frac{1}{2}$ sticks) unsalted butter
4-5 cups powdered sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup heavy cream
1-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons mint extract
Green food coloring (optional)
Mini mint or chocolate chips (optional)

1. CUPCAKES Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line muffin pans with 18-24 paper liners. In a bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda and salt.

2. In a large bowl, beat together sugar, vegetable oil, eggs, sour cream and vanilla until smooth. Slowly beat in half the flour mixture, then half the buttermilk, completely mixing in before adding the remaining flour mixture and buttermilk. Scrape down sides and beat until smooth.

3. Divide batter among prepared cups. Bake 15 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool completely on a wire rack.

4. FROSTING Beat butter with a stand mixer or hand mixer until fluffy. Turn to low speed and add powdered sugar $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time until desired sweetness is reached.

5. Once the sugar is fully incorporated, turn the mixer to high and beat 5-10 seconds. Beat in heavy cream 1 tablespoon at a time until desired consistency. Beat in mint extract a little at a time, tasting until desired flavor is achieved, then add food coloring (if using). Frost cooled cupcakes and decorate with mint or chocolate chips, if desired.

MAKES 18-24 CUPCAKES



Based on an 1818 painting that depicts John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin presenting a draft of the Declaration of Independence

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Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest—but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and purchased it for our **Sedona Turquoise Collection**. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over \$1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for **just \$99**.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Important Entry

After hurricanes, little remains of the once-bustling city of Indianola

BY CHET GARNER

ASK SOMEONE to name the largest cities in Texas, and you'll probably get the correct answers. But rewind the clock to the mid-1800s and you'll find that some of Texas' biggest cities were much lesser-known locales, including one that was practically wiped off the map. With my history books in hand, I drove south to explore the disappearance of Indianola.

I started at the Calhoun County Museum in Port Lavaca, a great place to get some perspective with numerous exhibits, paintings and models of the once-bustling city, which had been a camping site for Karankawa natives. It's likely Germans were the first Europeans to arrive, in 1844, and two years later, Indianola was on its way to becoming one of the new state's major ports of entry.

The town grew to more than 5,000 residents as European families immigrated through Indianola to begin their new lives. Indianola grew in influence until 1875, when a terrible hurricane decimated the town and killed hundreds. The city rebuilt on a smaller scale, only to be leveled by a second hurricane in 1886. Within a year the townsite was abandoned.

I followed the edge of Matagorda Bay about 12 miles south, where very little evidence remains of Indianola's former glory. The smattering of residents there are Victoria Electric Cooperative members. I read the historic markers and found remnants of old foundations, including the original courthouse, which sits submerged in the bay as erosion has moved the waterfront.

In the old cemetery, home to more than 2,000 graves, only a few dozen tombstones remain. It is fascinating and sobering to think that a town so vibrant could be almost completely lost. But as long as we keep telling the story of Indianola, it will never truly disappear. ■

ABOVE Chet stands on all that remains of a statue of French explorer René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle.

TCP Chet visits the sparse remains of Indianola. Check out the video on our website and see all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

FEBRUARY

09

Bellville Chocolate Walk,
discoverbellville.com

**Bandera [9–11] Cowboy
Mardi Gras**, (830) 796-4849,
facebook.com/
11thstreetcowboybar

10

**Fredericksburg [10–11]
Hug-In**, (830) 997-3224,
luckenbachtexas.com

**Clute [10–12, 17–19] Agatha
Christie's *Murder on the Ori-
ent Express***, (979) 265-7661,
bcfas.org

**Victoria [10–12, 16–19]
Always ... Patsy Cline**,
(361) 576-6277,
theatrevictoria.org

**Galveston [10–12, 17–19, 21]
Mardi Gras! Galveston**,
info@yagasevents.com,
mardigrasgalveston.com

**Fredericksburg [10–12,
17–19, 24–26] *Dirty Rotten
Scoundrels***, (830) 997-3588,
fredericksburgtheater.org

**Matagorda [10–11, 17–19,
25–March 4] County
Fair**, (979) 245-2454,
matagordacountyfair.com

11

**Amarillo Los Tigres del
Norte**, (806) 378-3096,
amarillociviccenter.com

**Brenham Sweet Valen-
tine With Sweet Baby
James**, (979) 337-7240,
visitbrenhamtexas.com

La Grange Uncorked,
(979) 968-3017,
visitlagrangetx.com

Nocona [11-18] Mardi Gras Nocona Style,
(940) 825-3526, nocona.org

16

Tyler Joel McHale,
(903) 566-7424,
cowancenter.org

Beaumont [16-19] Mardi Gras of Southeast Texas,
(409) 721-8717,
mardigrastx.com

17

Laredo [17-18] Washington's Birthday Celebration Association Jalapeño Festival, (956) 722-0589,
wbcalaredo.org

Fredericksburg [17-19] Trade Days, (210) 846-4094,
fbgtradedays.com

Los Fresnos [17-19] Rodeo,
(855) 537-6336, lfrodeo.com

18

Buda The Steeldrivers,
(512) 312-9456,
bucksbackyard.com

Stephenville Cowgirl Crop, (254) 434-1512,
scrapbookcowgirl.com

Belton [18-19] Mother Earth News Fair, 1-800-234-3368,
motherearthnewsfair.com

19

Fredericksburg Emily Jumes Oskins,
fredericksburgmusicclub.com

Huntsville Shake Rattle & Roll, (936) 293-8681,
oldtowntheatre-huntsville.org

Texarkana Run the Line Half Marathon, runsignup.com/runthelinehalfmarathon

20

Brenham [20-25] Fort-nightly Club Used Book Sale, (979) 525-7414,
booksalefinder.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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






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EARL NOTTINGHAM | TPWD

Pick of the Month

Black History Month Hike

Karnack, February 11
(903) 679-3351
tpwd.texas.gov

In honor of the historic contributions
of Black Americans, Caddo Lake State
Park hosts a history hike that teaches
about the Buffalo Soldiers and Black
conservationists, scientists and envi-
ronmentalists.

FEBRUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

21

**Abilene [21–22] Texas
Farm, Ranch and Wildlife
Expo,** (325) 677-7241,
abilenechamber.com

22

**Huntsville [22–25]
Prison City Film Festival,**
info@prisoncityfilmfestival.com,
prisoncityfilmfestival.com

23

**Big Spring Tate's Place
Western Night Benefit,**
tatesplaceservingothers@gmail.com,
tatesplace.com

**Junction Astronomy With
Buddy,** (325) 446-3994,
tpwd.texas.gov

**Port Aransas [23–26]
Whooping Crane Festival,**
(361) 749-5919,
portaransas.org

**San Antonio [23–March 6],
Remember the Battle of
the Alamo,** (210) 225-1391,
thealamo.org

24

**Boerne Royal National
Dance Company: Fire of
Georgia,** (830) 331-9079,
boerneperformingarts.com

25

**Amarillo [24–25] Star Wars
and Beyond: An Evening
of John Williams,**
(806) 376-8782,
amarillosymphony.org

**La Grange [24–25] The
Best Little Quilt Show
in Texas,** (979) 236-4298,
coloradovalleyqq.com

**Brenham The Jersey
Tenors,** (979) 337-7240,
thebarnhillcenter.com

**Granbury Paluxy River
Children's Advocacy
Center Gala,** (817) 573-0292,
paluxyrivercac.org

Greenville The Everly Set,
greenvilleentertainmentseries.com

**Washington [25–26] Texas
Independence Day Cele-
bration,** (936) 878-2214,
wheretexasbecametexas.org

28

**Midland The Power of
One: Luncheon and
Children's Style Show,**
(512) 635-4152,
casawtx.org

**Houston [28–March 19]
Livestock Show and
Rodeo,** (832) 667-1000,
rodeohouston.com

MARCH

02

**Bastrop The Farm Street
Opry,** (512) 332-8981,
farmstreetopry.com

**Tyler Trinity Irish Dance
Company,** (903) 566-7424,
cowancenter.org

03

**Lufkin Dragons and
Mythical Beasts,**
(936) 633-5454,
angelinaarts.org

04

**Kerrville Classical Music
Festival,** (830) 321-0303,
hillcountrychorale.org

First Responders

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1

1 DEBRA CHANDLER
LIGHTHOUSE EC

Plainview firefighters search through rubble after a downtown building fire.

2 JACK GOUGE
TRINITY VALLEY EC

Trinity Valley EC lineworkers make repairs after a large oak tree toppled onto power lines and a garage in Eustace. "They were our heroes on a hot Texas July night."

3 KELLY KOENIG
PEDERNALES EC

A Killeen Fire Department training exercise.

4 WENDY ALLEY MLADENKA
SAN BERNARD EC

Mladenka, a captain with the Columbus Police Department, captures game wardens launching a rescue boat after Hurricane Harvey in 2017.



2



3

Upcoming Contests

DUE FEB 10 Dad
DUE MAR 10 Waterfalls
DUE APR 10 Hoof and Horn



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more First Responders photos from readers.



4



T-Shirt Weather

Commemorating those days that leave a lasting impression on a kid

BY LORI GROSSMAN
ILLUSTRATION BY MITCH BLUNT

THE WEATHER was the last thing on my mind when I got home from school on January 11, 1985. Mom was waiting for me at the door, and she seemed agitated about something. We have to get groceries, she said. Right away.

Snowfall was predicted—light at first, then heavy. It could be heavy enough to prevent us from going anywhere.

Snow? I'm a native San Antonian, and here, snowfall—any amount—is rare. When my brother and I were growing up, snow flurries were cause for celebration. Several inches almost brought life to a screeching halt.

Mom and I were lucky to beat the rush to the stores that day. Texans know to stock up on the essentials—milk, bread, eggs, toilet paper and beer. By the time we got home, I was excited. Bring it on!

Mother Nature did just that. A band of heavy snow started south of Del Rio and gradually moved north and east toward Bexar County. The frozen precipitation didn't stop until two days later. I couldn't believe my eyes. The views from our windows reminded me of vintage Christmas card scenes (without ice skaters, unfortunately). Dad found a yardstick, and I went out to measure the depth. Thirteen inches!

San Antonio closed down. The city had no snowplows, of course. Kids and a few hardy adults went out to play, but most citizens were stuck indoors until it melted. The official total of 13.5 inches dwarfed the previous record of 6.4 inches in January 1926. I doubt that the new record will ever be broken. It was such a big deal that someone made and sold T-shirts that boasted, "I Survived Winter '85 San Antonio, TX."

A few years later, my family moved to Dallas, where I looked forward to seeing snow more often. The thought of possible bone-chilling cold never crossed my mind. The coldest temperature I remembered in San Antonio was in the low teens.

That personal record was shattered December 23, 1989, when the thermometer plunged to minus 1 degree.

I had to experience it to believe it. Leaving my coat inside, I walked out on our front porch. No snow this time—just cold. I didn't know what to expect. Would I freeze solid?

I don't remember any wind. I actually felt comfortable for a few minutes. Truthfully, I wasn't that impressed.

Still, it made me think somebody should print up T-shirts.

No, better make it sweatshirts. ■

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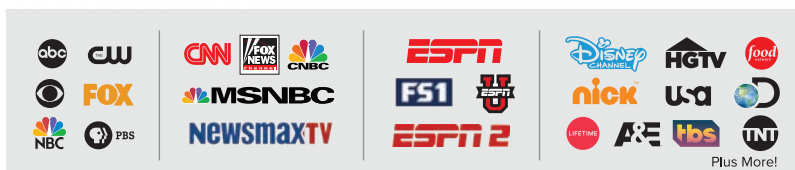
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