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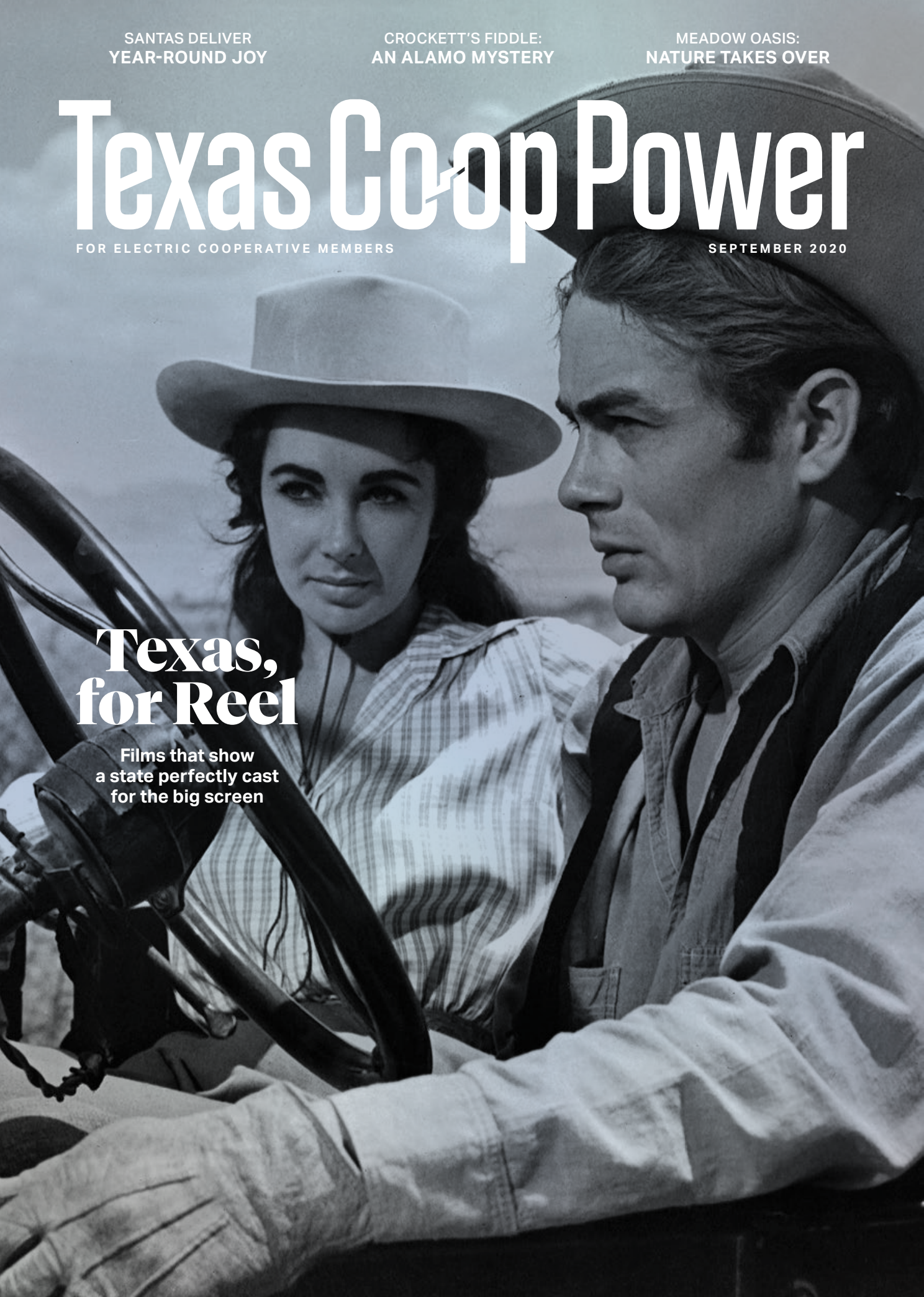
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SEPTEMBER 2020

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September 2020



08

Reel Moments

Film trails guide cinephiles through a slice of the state's silver screen history.

By Jessica Ridge

14 'Tis Always the Season

Lone Star Santas deliver joy when and where children need it.

*Story by Melissa Gaskill
Illustration by David Moore*

04

Currents

06

TCP Talk

18

Co-op News

Get the latest information plus energy and safety tips from your cooperative.

29

Footnotes in Texas History

Davy Crockett's Fiddle
By Gene Fowler

30

TCP Kitchen

Game Day Eats
By Megan Myers

34

Hit the Road

Fronds in High Places
By Chet Garner

37

Focus on Texas

Photo Contest: Shapes

38

Observations

Meadow Oasis
By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

ON THE COVER

Elizabeth Taylor and James Dean in *Giant*.

Photo by Warner Brothers | Getty Images

ABOVE

Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway in *Bonnie and Clyde*.

Photo by Fotos International | Getty Images

Where Trouble Was Brewing

JEFF GERRITT, editor of the *Palestine Herald-Press*, won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing in May. He received the award for a series of editorials revealing medical neglect and horrific deaths of county jail inmates in the paper's own Anderson County and other county jails in rural Texas, where inmates are awaiting trial.

Gerritt had stepped out for a cup of coffee before word came that he had won one of journalism's highest honors. The *Herald-Press* publisher greeted an astonished Gerritt with the news in the newspaper parking lot when he returned. "I just broke down and fell to the ground," he said.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I CAN'T BELIEVE I BOUGHT ...

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 city. Here are some of the responses to our July prompt:
It's not really summer until ...



BALES OF BENJAMINS

There's enough cotton in one bale, which weighs about 500 pounds, to make about 300,000 \$100 bills. The Texas High Plains produces 3.7 million cotton bales a year.

More than 4,500 films have been shot in Texas since 1910.

You hear a Texan say, "It ain't the heat; it's the humidity."

JESSICA MURRAY
BLUEBONNET EC
CALDWELL

The cicada symphony starts playing at sunset.

TONY HALL
VIA FACEBOOK

The lines start getting longer at the raspa (snow cone) stand.

LUIS GARZA
NUECES EC
ALICE

To see more responses, read Currents online.

eBay turns 25

The online auction site launched Labor Day weekend 1995 in San Jose, California.

📌 Did You Know?

Company founder Pierre Omidyar listed a broken laser pointer for \$1. It ended up selling for \$14.83—the site's first transaction.



Roll Call

The *American City Business Journals* compiled enrollment figures for U.S. colleges and compared the 2019 numbers to those from 2013 to determine the fastest-growing colleges in Texas.

TEXAS' TOP FIVE

with their enrollment increase

- 1 University of Texas Permian Basin, Odessa **75%**
- 2 University of Texas at Tyler, Tyler **52%**
- 3 Angelo State University, San Angelo **51%**
- 4 Parker University, Dallas **46%**
- 5 University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg **44%**

Pass the Guac

OUR RECIPES THIS MONTH, starting on Page 30, feature Game Day Eats. The largest crowd ever to see a football game in Texas, 110,633, was at Kyle Field in College Station on October 11, 2014, when Texas A&M University hosted Mississippi.

Kyle Field is the fourth-largest college football stadium in the country with a capacity of 102,733.

Our dishes may not feed quite that many.



TCP Contests and More

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Learn more about plein air painting in Texas.



COURTESY CHET GARNER

Georgia O'Keeffe in Texas

Thank you for the brilliant story on Georgia O'Keeffe by Chris Burrows [*Palo Duro Love Letters*, July 2020]. It is great with the large photos and timely information about the new book. We had visited the Canyon campus in 2015 and had a very hard time locating the tiny O'Keeffe section of its holdings. I am so delighted that a new person has taken such an interest.

Priscilla Poupore
Taylor EC
Clyde



I used to see them all the time growing up [*The Lizard Brigade*, June 2020]. I was wondering what happened to them. Good to know they are trying to bring them back.

GLADYS CLARIDGE
VIA FACEBOOK



Something's Fishy Here

"While I don't believe in paranormal activities, all of the items and foods mentioned make me really homesick for the 'old' days."

SARENA MICHAELS
COSERV
LITTLE ELM

Who's a Texan?

Pam LeBlanc's decision that she is indeed a Texan [*No Longer a Yankee*, July 2020] may be a bit premature. Stating that her "personal vehicle is a bicycle, with a Fiat Spyder convertible as a backup" tends to make me believe she is an Austinite rather than a Texan.

Charles Busbey
Pedernales EC
Dripping Springs

I have an opposite story from Pam's. I am a 67-year-old native-born Texan who has lived out of Texas since I was 25. I am still Texan, not Floridian.

Gayl Mikeska Brotherton Laird
Taylor EC
DeFuniak Springs, Florida

Vintage Winedale

The performances and, most of all, the students bringing Shakespeare's characters brilliantly to life are the highlight of the summer for me. I so enjoyed Clayton Maxwell's memory of Shakespeare at Winedale [*Sweet Adversity*, July 2020], with her perspective on what it was like to be a part of it all, onstage, 30 years before.

Linda St. Clair
Pedernales EC
Austin

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

Texas Co-op Power

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER Volume 77, Number 3 (USPS 540-560). *Texas Co-op Power* is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC). Periodical postage paid at Austin, TX, and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 75 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power*'s website is TexasCoopPower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or email editor@TexasCoopPower.com.

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

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Discovered! Unopened Bag of 138-Year-Old Morgan Silver Dollars

Unopened for
138 Years!

*Coin experts amazed by
“Incredible Opportunity”*

The Morgan Silver Dollar is the most popular and iconic vintage U.S. coin. They were the Silver Dollars of the Wild West, going on countless untold adventures in dusty saddlebags across the nation. Finding a secret hoard of Morgans doesn't happen often—and when it does, it's a *big deal*.

How big? Here's numismatist, author and consultant to the Smithsonian® Jeff Garrett:

“It's very rare to find large quantities of Morgan Silver Dollars, especially in bags that have been sealed... to find several thousand Morgan Silver Dollars that are from the U.S. Treasury Hoards, still unopened, is really an incredible opportunity.”

—Jeff Garrett

But where did this unique hoard come from? Read on...

Morgans from the New Orleans Mint

In 1859, Nevada's Comstock Lode was discovered, and soon its rich silver ore made its way across the nation, including to the fabled New Orleans Mint, the only U.S. Mint branch to have served under the U.S. government, the State of Louisiana and the Confederacy. In 1882, some of that silver was struck into Morgan Silver Dollars, each featuring the iconic “O” mint mark of the New Orleans Mint. Employees then placed the freshly struck coins into canvas bags...

The U.S. Treasury Hoard

Fast-forward nearly 80 years. In the 1960s, the U.S. government opened its vaults and revealed a massive store of Morgan Silver Dollars—including *full, unopened bags* of “fresh” 1882-O Morgan Silver Dollars. A number of bags were secured by a child of the Great Depression—a southern gentleman whose upbringing showed him the value of hard assets like silver. He stashed the unopened bags of “fresh” Morgans away, and there they stayed...

The Great Southern Treasury Hoard

That is, until *another* 50 years later, when the man's family finally decided to sell the coins—still in their unopened bags—which we secured, bag and all! We submitted the coins to respected



Actual size is 38.1 mm

- ✓ Historic Morgan Silver Dollars
- ✓ Minted in New Orleans
- ✓ Struck and bagged in 1882
- ✓ Unopened for 138 years
- ✓ 26.73 grams of 90% fine silver
- ✓ Hefty 38.1 mm diameter
- ✓ Certified Brilliant Uncirculated by NGC
- ✓ Certified “Great Southern Treasury Hoard” pedigree
- ✓ Limit five coins per household

third-party grading service Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC), and they agreed to honor the southern gentleman by giving the coins the pedigree of the “Great Southern Treasury Hoard.”

These gorgeous 1882-O Morgans are as bright and new as the day they were struck and bagged 138 years ago. Coins are graded on a 70-point scale, with those graded at least Mint State-60 (MS60) often referred to as “Brilliant Uncirculated” or BU. Of all 1882-O Morgans struck, *LESS THAN 1% have earned a Mint State grade*. This makes these unopened bags of 1882-O Morgans extremely rare, certified as being in BU condition—nearly unheard of for coins 138 years old.

Don't Miss This Rare Opportunity—Order Now!

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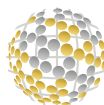
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BY JESSICA RIDGE

REEL MOMENTS

Film trails guide cinephiles through a slice of Texas' silver screen history



GIANT

Giant's outsize reputation precedes it. The 1956 movie's 201-minute running time, wide-open West Texas landscape and generations-spanning timeline all connote epic. The film, based on Edna Ferber's book of the same name, also garnered its director an Oscar. Despite that accolade, and the film's nominations for a passel of others, some present-day viewers are wary.

"I show this to my graduate students, who expect to hate it, and they wind up—I don't want to say they love it—but they wind up being amazed by this movie," says Tom Schatz, author and film professor at the University of Texas at Austin. He acknowledges the movie's challenging running time and its parallel cultural heft. "In its own way, it's an extremely progressive movie," he says, that influenced the perception of Texas as "more nuanced, more sophisticated, and more oriented toward Mexico and the Southwest."

The Texas Film Commission includes *Giant* on its Texas Classics Trail, one of the self-guided tours it offers from which cinephiles can build itineraries of film production sites statewide. Since 1971, the film commission has supported the state as a production hub by connecting filmmakers with locations, staff, grants and other resources. Through the choose-your-own-adventure setup of its film trails, the TFC encourages movie fans to explore Texas' silver screen history while supporting local communities and economies.

The making of *Giant* accomplished that latter aim, according to Vicki Barge, general manager of Marfa's Hotel Paisano, a stop on the trail and where the movie's cast stayed for the first two weeks of production. "At the time it

was filmed, it was this huge shot in the arm for Marfa," she says. "There were four hotels in town, and cast and crew filled every room."

Even after its famous guests had decamped to private residences nearby, the Paisano remained a hangout. "They took a lot of meals together here, even after they were not living here," says Barge. The U-shaped bar at the hotel's restaurant was at that time a lunch counter. Lined with windows at perpendicular angles, it's easy to imagine the film's stars—Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson and James Dean among them—lingering there in a desert light-filled inverse of Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*.

Giant cast photos today line the hotel's hallways, a primer for the uninitiated, who can watch the movie in full in a quiet corner of the gift shop. It's an opportunity at least some guests avail themselves of. "They don't often sit through the entire show but will watch for a while," Barge says. "It's a long movie!"

Still, "it's got its moments," according to Schatz, "where it's getting at the human element in a pretty touching way." The silent, somber homecoming of a Mexican American veteran of World War II; an underdog's insouciant wave as he exits a meeting; a woman's acidly articulated response to being shut out of a conversation about politics; and the film's parting look at two infants, whose contrasting skin tones don't preclude the sharing of a playpen and a lineage in 1950s Texas, despite the scene's discordant use of an epithet. "What it's doing with race and class and gender is pretty remarkable," Schatz says.

Elizabeth Taylor, foreground, on the set of *Giant*. The film's Reata Ranch and mansion facade are in the background.





★
SELENA

A trailblazer herself, Selena Quintanilla Pérez inspired the eponymous 1997 biopic on the Texas Classics Trail. And though it cites Corpus Christi's Swantner Park, the waterfront backdrop for a scene in *Selena*, trail-goers can veer from the official path to the coastal city's Selena Museum and bayside *Mirador de la Flor* to learn about the singer, who was murdered at 23 in 1995.

At the bilevel mirador, whose name translates to "view-point of the flower," a bronze likeness of Selena stands, accompanied by narration about the barrier-breaking Tejano artist, interspersed with snippets of *Como la Flor*. The song was one of Selena y los Dinos' first U.S. hits and has inspired a swath of genre-bridging covers from artists including country performer Kacey Musgraves and indie duo Dracula. The cumbia's effervescence almost obscures its narrator's lament, which likens the end of a love affair to a dying flower.

A performance of *Como la Flor* in *Selena* marks the sole instance in Jennifer Lopez's portrayal of the artist in which Lopez sings, the song's first few words only, in a scene where her



character must calm the crowd at an overcapacity outdoor venue, with the integrity of the band's stage threatened.

A different moment in the film can be experienced vicariously at the Selena Museum. A studio in which Lopez's Selena records in the movie—and where Selena herself recorded the song *Dreaming of You*—is housed at the museum. The studio's acoustic panels are the same ones that appear in the film, in a scene punctuated with a simple request: "Hey, Dad, pizzal!"

Selena's Porsche, which has a cameo in the movie, is on display at the museum, along with her Grammy—the first awarded to a female Tejano artist for best Mexican American album. Outfits rendered iconic as markers of specific performances are displayed, along with clothing designs sketched by Selena.

A less-trafficked corner of the museum bears a collage of Selena snapshots. In many, she's dressed casually and wears little or no makeup. Her smile radiates joy. In conjunction with *Selena*, the images hint at the person behind the performer. They also gesture to a lyric in *Como la Flor*: "*Cómo me duele.*"

How it hurts.

TOP LEFT Except for the first few words of *Como la Flor* in the Monterrey concert scene, Jennifer Lopez lip-synced her singing parts.
LEFT Selena in concert in 1995.



BONNIE AND CLYDE

Art imitates life again on the Texas Classics Trail, albeit several hours north and three decades earlier. Pilot Point's town square is home to the Farmers and Merchants Bank building, where a robbery scene from *Bonnie and Clyde* was filmed. To commemorate its spell in the limelight, the town north of Dallas hosts an annual Bonnie and Clyde Days Festival, which includes a reenactment of the scene.

Wayne Purser, a longtime member of CoServ, an electric cooperative in Corinth, coordinates, performs in and corals volunteers for the scene's annual reprise. Sometimes the wrangling requires some straight talk. In 2019 a prospective Clyde showed up to audition with long hair and a beard. Given the look's incongruity with hairstyles popular in the 1930s, when the movie is set, Purser put it plainly: "Dude, that's not gonna work." The man returned, less hirsute, and clinched the role, earning praise from Purser for his acting chops.

Purser plays the town sheriff in the reenactment, which is rife with antique vehicles, weapons that fire blanks, and actors and spectators in period dress. Whereas the movie scene occurs in and outside of the bank building, the reenactment satellites the Richardsonian Romanesque structure that today appears essentially identical to how it looks in the 1967 film.

Though the actual pair of outlaws never robbed Farmers and Merchants Bank, which closed during the Depression, the site doesn't want for history. The building dates to 1896 and has been home to Farmers and Merchants Gallery, a purveyor of antiques and art, since 1975. The space's erstwhile identity shines through occasionally. Marly McCullough, the gallery's manager, has found century-old checks tucked away in drawers used by the bank's tellers. "The oldest one I've come across was from 1906," she says. "I have a ton of those that I have kept."

Other handwritten finds have also popped up. A visitor in her 60s came across a book from her childhood. She knew it was hers because she had written her name in it, perhaps around the time a movie about a ragtag group on the lam was leaving its imprint on Pilot Point.

The alchemy of those moments echoes the power of movies to transport. "To me, it's magical. Like once I step inside there, it's another world, and the outside world is almost put on hold for a while," McCullough says. "It's my favorite place in the world."



TOP Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway played the title characters in 1967's *Bonnie and Clyde*.

ABOVE The gang races out of Pilot Point's Farmers and Merchants Bank building in a scene from the movie.



★
BOYHOOD

Boyhood is a different kind of movie. It follows its actors over 12 years as they age, change and criss-cross the state, then distills that footage into a 165-minute panorama of a fractured Texas family, moored in love, figuring it out as they go. Though its title implies a focus on a single character, the movie offers a naturalistic depiction of the interiority and ecology of a post-divorce family, anchored by Patricia Arquette's Oscar-winning portrayal of single parenthood. The film is included on the Texas Film Commission's Richard Linklater Trail, which guides visitors to seven *Boyhood* sites in Central, Southeast and West Texas.

From its second year of production in 2003 through *Boyhood*'s 2013 completion, Matt Lankes worked as the film's still photographer, capturing behind-the-scenes photos of cast and crew. As he was shooting those images, Lankes conducted a parallel photography project on the film's set: a series of black-and-white portraits of the movie's four main actors that culminated in his book *Boyhood: Twelve Years on Film*.

"It was like we became a family over the years," Lankes says. "It was always a wonderful reunion for the three to five days that we would shoot each year." The portraits he

made suspend time and mark its passage for each of Lankes' subjects. "We all were watching each other get older," Lankes says, "and it was amazing."

The closing scenes of *Boyhood* were filmed in West Texas in October 2013. Originally intended to be filmed in Big Bend National Park, a 16-day shutdown of the federal government scrambled those plans and diverted the movie's cast and crew to Big Bend Ranch State Park. Even a cursory look at the film's final few moments, backlit by a violet and pink sky, show that the finished product didn't suffer from the ad hoc change in locale.

"Thankfully, you know, that part of our state is so wonderful," Lankes says. The park's otherworldly rock formations at its Hoodoos Trail appear in the movie, along with Closed Canyon, whose soaring walls approximate hiking in a natural cathedral.

Boyhood's protagonist, Mason, college-age at this point in the film, meanders through the canyon with a trio of new friends near the film's end. "It's just a beautiful scene—they're in a real moment, and it's just kids doing what kids do," Lankes says. "The landscape is irreplaceable." ■

ABOVE Ellar Coltrane, left, and Jessi Mechler in the final scene of *Boyhood*, shot in Big Bend Ranch State Park.

TCP WEB EXTRA See a map of film trails in Texas.

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BY MELISSA GASKILL
ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID MOORE

'Tis Always the Season

Lone Star Santas
deliver joy when and
where there is a need

SANTA CLAUS LIVES IN TEXAS. Actually, hundreds of Santa Clauses do, and they spread cheer all year long through a group called Lone Star Santas.

"It's a calling," says Gene Goetz of San Antonio, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative. He got his first Santa gig in 1981 for a twins club where his boys participated. "I bought a suit and a fake beard, and it was a lot of fun," he says. "I did that for a few years and then started doing a lot of charity work." In 2014, Goetz took his first role as a professional Santa Claus at San Antonio's Ingram Park Mall. That's when he heard about Lone Star Santas.

One of the organization's co-founders, Jim Fletcher of Cypress—whose voicemail says, "Apparently, I'm off feeding the reindeer or packing toys or helping Mrs. Claus bake cookies"—became a Santa somewhat by accident. "My then-fiancée, Madge, invited me to a homeowners association meeting, where we learned that their usual Santa was ill," Fletcher says. "I didn't have a beard then, but I did have the girth. They asked me if I could be Santa, and I said sure, why not? I bought a suit and a book on how to be a Santa, dressed up, did the gig and fell in love with it."

When Fletcher and Madge married the following June, Madge walked down the aisle to the tune of *Here Comes Santa Claus* rather than the traditional *Here Comes the Bride*. In 2007 Fletcher and fellow Santa Gene Clayton decided to start Lone Star Santas. They welcome any Santa, Mrs. Claus, elf, reindeer herder or other Texan with the spirit—counting more than 400 members today.

After an EF5 tornado hit Joplin, Missouri, in 2011, Fletcher rounded up a bunch of members, collected toy donations and drove to Joplin to hand them out. The expedition inspired the group's ongoing mission, Convoy of Toys.

"When disaster strikes, we bring love, hope and joy, and a big Santa hug along with trailers full of toys," Goetz says.



"We go wherever houses get destroyed and kids are displaced and lose their toys. After the [Hurricane] Harvey flood in Houston, we went into the shelters. Everyone is sad, then a few Santas walk in and the entire mood changes."

The group also participates in the Belton Fourth of July parade each year, with many Santas wearing country-western-style suits. They attend a dinner with the Temple Elks Lodge and visit the area children's hospital and veterans facility. "The vets love us," Fletcher says. "We give them a stuffed toy and an American flag, and it brightens their day. And it brightens our day to see their reaction."

Karen Stagner, who works with the Elks Lodge to arrange the Fourth of July parade, says the Lone Star Santas are a hit wherever they go. "It's just a tremendous group," she says, "and some of the most caring people I've ever met."

Goetz says it takes a special heart to be a Santa. "You can go to all the classes and conventions you want, but if being a good Santa isn't in your heart, it isn't going to matter," he says. "People think it is easy, but you have to know how to talk to kids."

Even though 8 in 10 Santas bleach their hair white, Goetz's is naturally that way. His beard and belly are real,



TCP WEB EXTRA

Read about other co-op members who are making a difference in their communities in TCP's Power of Our People program.

too. "The more you look real," he says, "the more you have kids saying they met the real Santa."

That reality is not an inexpensive proposition, says member Dennis Queen. "I have about \$4,000 in each suit and have three or four of them," he says. Queen and his wife, Jane, a Mrs. Claus, relocate from Kerrville to San Antonio in a motor home each Christmas season.

All Lone Star Santas are volunteers. They pay for their own gas, hotel stays and meals on convoys. "Every penny donated to Lone Star Santas stays in it; none of it goes to our members," Goetz says.

Why go to all the trouble? "It's important for kids to believe in Santa, to have something to believe in," he says. "We try to make kids grow up too quick now. A lot of people say it is a calling, and I'm starting to believe it. I'll probably be buried in my Santa suit."

The organization sponsors at least one "Santa school" in Texas every year to help teach members the ropes. Jane Queen says she and Dennis also learn a lot from other participants. "Santas are so smart and willing to share their craft," she says.

"This is who I've become, all year long," Dennis Queen says. "I think I've become a different person because of it. Our Christmas tree is up all year long."

Jane Queen says that when the couple goes out, people regularly call them Santa and Mrs. Claus. "We wouldn't trade it for anything—meeting the other Santas, the friendships we've developed," she says.

Fletcher agrees that being Santa is a calling. "Once I put on the red suit and walk into a store or restaurant, invariably someone stops me and wants to get a picture with Santa," he says. When a child says "Hi," Fletcher explains, all of the attention goes to that child. He appreciates the smiles on every face when he leaves a restaurant because those smiles mean that the people forget about things that are going on and just enjoy a moment.

"I can't get over what we can do," he says, "Our brand is love, hope and joy. There's just a joy to being Santa." ■

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Only Crackpots Take Potshots

It doesn't take a crack shot to hit an electric insulator or transformer, just a crackpot. Careless shooters taking potshots at electric equipment can cause major problems for your electric cooperative. Here's why:

You are inconveniencing your fellow member whose electricity has been disrupted.

It could even be a matter of life and death to someone on a life-support system or who is hit by a stray shot.

Damage to electrical equipment is very expensive to repair.

Lines may be cut or weakened from a shot, and they may sag or break, becoming a severe hazard for anyone who comes in contact with the line.

Broken insulators can cause power outages that are hard — and expensive — to find.

WCEC encourages you to always practice safety.

Enjoy your sport, but be a responsible hunter.



WHARTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



MESSAGE FROM YOUR GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

GARY RAYBON

The Difference Between Conservation and Efficiency

THESE DAYS THE TERMS energy conservation and energy efficiency are often used interchangeably, but they have distinct definitions. I like how the U.S. Energy Information Administration differentiates the two based on behavior and technology.

Energy conservation is a behavior—using less energy. To achieve it, consumers have to change their habits: Turn off lights, unplug appliances or opt to use a clothesline instead of a clothes dryer. Conserving energy often requires effort.

While there is merit in adopting conservation habits to avoid waste, we have the option to use less energy without having to give up comfort or convenience.

That brings me to energy efficiency, which involves applying technology to use less energy while getting the same result or service.

Technological advances also allow us to automatically perform some actions we used to have to do manually. Because new electric products are able to do the same tasks with less energy, energy efficiency does not necessarily come with the trade-off of going without.

LEDs are considered energy efficient because they use less electricity to produce the same amount of light as an incandescent bulb.

In the same way, Energy Star-rated products are intended to deliver the performance consumers expect while using less energy. Energy Star-rated refrigerators, for example, keep food cool with about half as much energy as older models.

Ultimately energy efficiency may result in energy conservation—or using less energy.

Smart electricity usage is important to WCEC because it's beneficial to you, our members.

For one, using less electricity saves you money on your electric bill simply because you consume less. But it also benefits the co-op as a whole because our wholesale power costs fluctuate depending on the time of use.



CAROLYN WOODCOCK | ISTOCK.COM

You see, the cost of power increases during peak hours — typically 3–7 p.m. during the summer. So if we can diminish the use of power during those hot afternoons, then the cooperative's total wholesale power cost decreases. Those savings are passed along to you.

In addition, those in the electricity industry, including WCEC, are always trying to find ways to reduce consumption because there could be a shortfall of electricity generation in the future. Establishing energy conservation and energy-efficient habits now will help us use electricity more wisely down the road.

I encourage you to use the principles of energy conservation and energy efficiency together. Just because you install an energy-efficient LED in the light fixture on your front porch doesn't mean you should leave it on 24/7. And even if you have an Energy Star-rated clothes dryer, be a good steward and think twice about running it with anything less than a full load.

By combining energy-efficient technology with conservation-minded behavior, you can save electricity and money. ■

HOME TEAM SPOTLIGHT

Meet WCEC's Brayden Payne

AT WCEC, WE PRIDE ourselves on outstanding member service and make every effort to play a key role in our community.

As our employees interact with you, our members, we want you to get to know them beyond their job title. Each month, we feature a TEAM member here.

This month's HOME TEAM SPOTLIGHT features Brayden Payne.

Brayden has been a member of the WCEC HOME TEAM since 2016. He is an Apprentice Lineman in the final phase of WCEC's Apprentice Lineman Training Program.

WCEC's lineman training is a four-year program designed to teach the skills needed to safely and efficiently perform all type of electrical overhead and underground line work. It includes on-the-job training as well as off-premise classroom and hands-on training through Texas Electric Cooperatives.

If all goes according to plan, Brayden will be promoted to Journeyman Lineman later this year.

For Brayden, line work is in his blood.

"My dad was a lineman. I grew up respecting the profession and realized at a young age that it would be a rewarding career."

Brayden and his wife, Brittanie, moved from Southwest Missouri to El Campo four years ago. They enjoy the area because it reminds them of home.

"El Campo is pretty similar to where we are originally from," Brayden says. "It's the perfect place to raise our boys, Brody and Baker."

Brayden enjoys working at WCEC especially with guys on the line crew.

"It's a great group of guys. I hope to still be working with them in the next ten years and beyond."

In his spare time, he enjoys hanging out with family and friends especially at the lake or the beach. He hopes to travel to Dubai one day to see that part of the world.

When asked who he would have lunch with out of anyone, alive or dead, he says, "My good buddy, Justin. He passed away unexpectedly three years ago."

Brayden describes himself as funny, hardworking and loyal. He is a part of the WCEC line crew's future and we are proud to have Brayden on your HOME TEAM. ■





Save Energy at Your Small Business

SMALL BUSINESSES in the U.S. spend a collective \$60 billion on energy each year, according to the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program.

Employers and small business owners want to run their operations as efficiently as possible, and businesses have significant potential to save energy. Here are some ideas for increasing the energy efficiency of your workplace with upgrades or behavioral changes.

Consider an energy audit. You can hire a professional to assess energy use, or check out online options. An expert can identify areas of weakness and suggest solutions.

With an accurate energy assessment, you can set energy-saving goals. Setting goals and tracking results is a great way to make progress toward saving energy and money.

Get employees involved. Without their cooperation, you might not see any changes. Tell them how to save energy and encourage them to cut down on energy costs. Rewarding energy-efficient behavior with gift cards or time off incentivizes changes.

Tune up your heating, ventilating and air conditioning system, just as you would your system at home. Regular maintenance will help it run more efficiently.

Change or clean your HVAC filters. Dirty filters cost more to use, as they force the system to work harder.

Control sunlight by drawing the blinds closed to reduce heat in hot weather. Open them to allow the sun's warmth to enter during colder times.

Plant trees to shade your building and help clean the air. Strategically planted trees can also block chilling winds.

Fans can help employees feel comfortable without having to lower the thermostat on hot days. Just remember to turn them off when no one is in the room.

Seal air leaks with weatherstripping and caulk. A tight building envelope keeps that expensive conditioned air in and outside air out.

Set the thermostat to comfortable yet energy-efficient temperatures. During summer when employees are at work, set the thermostat to 78 degrees and higher when the building is unoccupied. In colder weather, set the thermostat to 65 degrees during work hours and lower when employees are away. A smart thermostat can make these changes for you automatically, so consider an upgrade.

Loosen up the dress code. A casual dress code might allow employees to wear more comfortable, cooler clothing during hot weather. If they're comfortable, you might be able to turn up the thermostat a little more.

Just like it does at home, turning off the lights at work saves energy and money on the electric bill. Encourage employees to turn off lights when not in use. Installing automatic lights controlled by sensors can help ensure the lights are off when an area is not in use.

Swap obsolete bulbs for energy-efficient lighting options. Switching from incandescent bulbs to energy-efficient LEDs saves energy.

Turning off computers, printers and other office equipment when they are not in use can result in huge savings.

Plugging electronics into power strips allows you to turn off multiple devices at once, eliminating "energy vampires" that continue to draw electricity as long as they are plugged in.

Consider switching to laptops, as they consume less power than desktop computers.

Reduce paper use by printing only when necessary. If you do print, print on both sides of the paper to reduce the number of sheets and energy used to run the printer. ■



VITRANC | ISTOCK.COM

Use Ladders Safely Outdoors

ANYONE WHO USES a ladder should take extra precautions when working outdoors around electrical hazards—to prevent shock or electrocution.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has recommendations for work sites that can be applied to anyone using a ladder—whether for personal use or on the job.

- ▶ Before using a ladder, identify nearby overhead power lines. Note their distance from work areas and always assume power lines are energized.
- ▶ Consider the length of the ladder you're using, allowing room for raising and lowering the ladder.
- ▶ Contact Wharton County Electric Cooperative if work needs to be done near overhead power lines.
- ▶ Don't use metal ladders near power lines.
- ▶ Ensure conductive objects are kept at least 10 feet away from lines.
- ▶ Make sure that ladders are stable, level and supported to prevent movement into a power line.
- ▶ Carry ladders horizontally, not vertically, and have someone help carry and set up large ladders.
- ▶ For every 4 feet between the ground and the upper point on which the ladder rests, set the feet of the ladder out 1 foot horizontally.
- ▶ Never touch a person or ladder that has made contact with an overhead power line. Call 911 and WCEC immediately.

Falls are always a possibility when using ladders. Follow these guidelines from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to avoid a spill.

- ▶ Inspect ladders for damage before use.
- ▶ Only use ladders on stable, level surfaces.
- ▶ Always face the ladder and maintain three points of contact when climbing it.
- ▶ Do not use a ladder while it's in a closed position.
- ▶ Do not use the top step of a ladder unless it was designed for that purpose.
- ▶ Do not move a ladder while a person or piece of equipment is on it.
- ▶ Observe the maximum load rating of the ladder and be aware of the user's weight combined with any equipment.
- ▶ Place nonfolding ladders so that they extend at least 3 feet beyond the point of support. ■

Make Over Your Manufactured Home

A MINI MAKEOVER of a manufactured home to increase energy efficiency can yield big savings. Consider the following tips from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to enhance the operation of your home.

- ▶ Roll or spray a reflective, cool-roof coating onto the roof.
- ▶ Drain a gallon of water from the water heater yearly to remove sediment.
- ▶ Clean or replace the furnace filter and air conditioner filters.
- ▶ Insulate the water heater and its pipes and set the thermostat to 120 degrees.
- ▶ Apply polyethylene film or disposable plastic insulation to windows.
- ▶ Clean light fixtures to improve brightness.
- ▶ Only use LED lightbulbs.
- ▶ Remove or cover window air conditioners during cold months.
- ▶ Install a well-sealed insulated skirt around the base of the home.
- ▶ Seal duct ends and connections with mastic.
- ▶ Check and add insulation under the floor. ■



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MEINDERT VAN DER HAVEN | ISTOCK.COM

Lightning Strike Q&A

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has answers for your questions on lightning safety

Who is at greatest risk for lightning strikes?

Men are more likely to be struck by lightning, and most victims are 15–34 years old and frequently work or play outside. Those working in the construction or farming industries are most often struck. The average person's chances of being hit by lightning are about 1 in 500,000.

How does lightning cause injuries?

Lightning can cause injuries in various ways, including through:

- ▶ Direct strikes, which often cause death.
- ▶ Contact, when a victim is touching an object that lightning strikes.
- ▶ Side flashes, which occur when lightning bounces or “splashes” off an object and onto a victim.
- ▶ Ground currents that pass from a strike point in the ground to a victim.
- ▶ Streamers, which can come up from objects near the ground.

What happens to the body when lightning strikes?

Blunt trauma, neurological effects such as muscle or eye injuries, skin lesions, burns and death can result from lightning strikes. About 10% of people struck by lightning die from it.

What should I do if I see someone get struck?

Call 911 immediately. It is safe to touch a victim who has been struck by lightning.

How can I protect myself from lightning?

If outside during a thunderstorm, seek shelter immediately, ideally in a fully enclosed building or hardtop vehicle with the windows rolled up. Do not lie down on the ground or go under a tree.

If inside during a thunderstorm, follow these safety tips:

- ▶ Do not use corded phones, computers or electronic equipment.
- ▶ Stay out of the shower and away from plumbing.
- ▶ Stay away from windows and doors. ■

Don't Post Signs on Utility Poles

ALTHOUGH SEEMINGLY innocent enough, putting signs or other items on utility poles creates serious safety hazards. Staples, nails and tacks used to hang signs—as well as the signs themselves—pose dangers to Wharton County Electric Cooperative's lineworkers who must climb poles when restoring power after storms or while performing routine maintenance to ensure system reliability.

Posters or other objects (birdhouses, balloons, flags and even basketball goals) can be dangerous obstacles. Also, the nails and tacks left behind from signs can snag utility workers' boots or puncture safety clothing, putting lineworkers at risk of slipping or even electrocution.

In addition to being hazardous, tampering with utility poles can be costly. Posting signs or attaching other objects to utility poles is strictly prohibited by the cooperative, and we have the right to remove and dispose of any signs or objects attached to our poles or equipment.

WCEC appreciates your help in keeping utility poles clear and our linemen safe. ■



NRECA

Landscape With Energy Efficiency in Mind

THOUGHTFUL LANDSCAPE DESIGN can help keep your home cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter—a boon for your electric bill. The smart placement and selection of trees enhances not only the appearance of your property but also its energy efficiency.

A well-placed tree can save up to 25% on a home's air conditioning bill, and a shady, grassy yard can be much cooler than a sunny, paved yard. Plus, mindful landscaping can provide erosion control and clean the air by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen.

Plant deciduous trees on the south and southwest sides of the house to provide shade from the sun in the summer. After deciduous trees lose their leaves in winter, the sunshine will help heat your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs on the north and northwest sides of your home to provide shade year-round.

Evergreens also provide a windbreak, so plant them where they will protect the home from cold wind in winter and hot wind in summer. For maximum protection, plant windbreaks at a distance from your home of two to three times the expected height of the mature tree. Windbreaks have the added benefit of reducing noise, sights and smells and creating wildlife habitat.

In more temperate areas, consider arranging landscaping features to direct summer breezes through the house.

Before planting trees or other plants, consider their proximity to the house and power lines. Avoid planting any trees too close to the home if they require frequent watering.

If there are overhead power lines in the neighborhood, plan to leave plenty of space between what will be the tree's mature size and the lines.

To identify the location of underground power lines and other utilities, call 811 before you dig. ■



Can A Mylar Balloon Be Dangerous?

The metallic coating on Mylar balloons conducts electricity, and can cause a short circuit or power surge when in contact with power lines. This can lead to large-scale power outages, melting of electrical wires, fires, and possible injuries or property damage.

Never release Mylar balloons outdoors especially near power lines.



PHOTOSIMYSIA | ISTOCK.COM

Baked Pepper-Cheese Squash

2 pounds summer squash, sliced
8 slices bacon
1 large onion
8 ounces shredded jalapeño or pepper jack cheese
½–1 cup dried breadcrumbs

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
2. Boil squash until tender.
3. Fry bacon until crisp and remove from pan.
4. Peel onion and slice into rings. Brown onion in the bacon drippings.
5. Crumble bacon.
6. In a 9-by-9-inch baking pan, layer half of squash, then half of bacon, onion and cheese. Repeat layers with remaining ingredients and top with breadcrumbs. Bake 40 minutes.

SERVES 10

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



Get Ready for Labor Day

Play ball, eat outdoors, go swimming, take pictures of the kids. In other words, have fun and celebrate the day safely.

To help keep your day safe, here are some reminders:

- ▶ When you cook outdoors, keep away from bushes and dry grass and be extra careful if it's windy.
- ▶ Make sure someone is always in charge of the grill, barbecue or campfire.
- ▶ Appoint an adult or responsible teenager to oversee the kids' fun and games, especially swimming.
- ▶ Don't drink and drive.

Reflect for a moment on the meaning of this special day and enjoy it—safely and happily—with your family and friends. ■

LABOR DAY

Monday, September 7

Our offices will be closed in observance of the holiday.

NRECA



Wharton County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

Gary Raybon

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Outside Influence

The beauty and joy of painting the Texas landscape en plein air

BY BRENDA KISSKO • ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW COOK

THE TEXAS LANDSCAPE is difficult to summarize. Its mountains rise tall, its canyons drop deep. It boasts red dirt, beach sand and limestone; mesquites, oaks and longleaf pines. Rivers, beaches and lakes; hills, plains and desert. When words fail to contain it, art succeeds.

For generations, artists have documented the landscape of the state, capturing its essence with vibrant pastels, soft watercolors and luxuriant oils. The specific practice of painting *en plein air*, French for “in open air,” is a tradition that allows the artist to engage with and respond to the natural world. Events such as San Angelo’s annual EnPleinAirTexas also allow art appreciators to engage in the creative process by observing artists at work.

During EnPleinAirTexas in 2015, San Angelo-area rancher Gretchen Noelke observed artist Patrick Saunders working at his easel. “Several of his paintings really said something to me,” Noelke recalls. The next year during EnPleinAirTexas, she invited Saunders to paint on her ranch, which has been in her family for more than 160 years.

Saunders headed out to Noelke’s ranch expecting to paint cattle. Instead, he found a natural scene—a tree looming over a draw—that inspired him.

“If it’s a good plein air painting, the viewer not only sees the scene that you’ve painted, but they get a sense of the actual experience that you had with that subject,” Saunders says. The artist’s reaction to a fast-moving storm or a brilliant sunset will be expressed in the way the paint is applied, he explains. “It is about the emotion that comes from being right there,” he says.

En plein air is not a style of painting, explains Donald Demers, the 2019 EnPleinAirTexas awards judge. Rather, it is a discipline that dates back to the 1500s. “Styles range far and wide,” Demers says, noting that the best-known practitioners were French impressionists.

EnPleinAirTexas is a juried competition that, in its seventh year, is the state’s largest. More than 150 artists from across the country apply to compete, but only 30 individuals are selected to join the previous year’s winners to work in San Angelo for the week. Four winners receive cash prizes totaling \$20,000. The event, October 18–25 this year, includes opportunities for visitors to watch the artists paint-

ing at sites around San Angelo. At the end of the week, the paintings go up for sale, and 40% of sales support the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts.

Barbara Rallo, an artist and event co-chair, was inspired to start EnPleinAirTexas after her travels to similar events. “When you paint outside, your eye sees more,” Rallo says. A shadow that appears black in a photograph appears to be a combination of colors when you’re outside, she says. “Painting outdoors actually trains you to be a better artist, even if you continue to paint in your studio.”

Saunders explains that visitors and collectors get very excited about the event because they will see paintings that are about their lives and about their environment. “When you see a painting being created, you suddenly feel like you were a part of that creation experience,” he says.

EnPleinAirTexas continues a legacy that began decades ago. The Texas Artists Camp in Christoval, 20 miles south of San Angelo, was the first major plein air artist event in Texas. The camp, founded by local bluebonnet painter Mollie Crowther, was active 1921–1927. In those seven years, the camp attracted the state’s top artists.

Howard Taylor, director of the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, says that in America, landscapes became a major subject of paintings in the last half of the 19th century. During those years, artists turned their attention away from religious and historical subjects.

“Landscape has been very much more important in America than other countries because they had history, yet we had the grandeur of nature,” says Taylor.

Saunders is one of the many artists documenting the grandeur of Texas. He painted *Gretchen’s Oasis* that day on Noelke’s ranch, and she purchased it. “I bought it so I can give it to my grandchildren,” she says, “and they can see what the ranch means to their grandmother.” ■

TCP WEB EXTRA

Learn more about plein air painting in Texas.



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**.

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WEB EXTRA

Listen to the strains of the Witte Museum's Crockett fiddle.

Davy Crockett's Fiddle

Did the Alamo legend and frontiersman have musical chops?

BY GENE FOWLER • ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN A. WILSON

DAVID CROCKETT'S frontier celebrity arrived in San Antonio before he entered the city on February 5, 1836. The 1833 book *Sketches and Eccentricities of Col. David Crockett of West Tennessee* and the 1831 New York stage play *The Lion of the West* established his public image with more tall tales of wilderness exploits than truth about his accomplishments. As a three-term congressman from Tennessee, he'd been courted as a possible presidential candidate before he told his constituents that they could go to hell and he'd go to Texas.

After Crockett died at the Alamo, his legend grew like wildfire. And more than

a century later, as the 1955 Disney film *Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier* inspired coonskin cap mania, the Crockett story remained a swirling churn of folklore and fact. That same year, country-western singer Red River Dave McEnery recorded *When Davy Crockett Met the San Antonio Rose* with a fiddle that reportedly had belonged to Crockett himself. But as Alamo researcher William Groneman III, author of *David Crockett: Hero of the Common Man*, observes, "We don't really know for sure that it was Crockett's instrument or that he even played the fiddle."

Curators at San Antonio's Witte

Museum, which has possessed and periodically exhibited the fiddle since 1934 (it was lent in 1934 and formally donated to the museum in 1950), have always been careful to qualify that the instrument was *reportedly* owned by Crockett. Documents on file at the Witte track the fiddle's acquisition in 1934 by San Antonio Mayor C.K. Quin from T.S. Quinn (no relation), an Alabama violin maker and repairman. The affidavits further state that Quinn obtained the fiddle from one Frank Hollis of Tennessee, whose father had obtained it from David Crockett's son, Joseph Crockett. But Davy Crockett did not have a son named Joseph.

Further—and equally uncertain—indication of ownership is penciled inside the instrument: "This fiddle is my property, Davy Crockett, Franklin County, Tenn. Feb. 14, 1819."

The earliest mention historians have found of Crockett playing a fiddle in San Antonio—or anywhere else for that matter—is a quote from Alamo survivor Susanna Dickinson published in James M. Morphis' 1875 volume, *History of Texas, from its Discovery and Settlement*, that Crockett often took up his violin and "played his favorite tunes" during the siege. While it appears certain that Crockett did not tote the Witte's instrument to the Alamo, another Davy fiddle that could have been played during the siege surfaced in 1936.

John Houston Thurman of Longview, described in news reports as "an 80-year-old drover" and "an oil field fiddler," displayed an instrument his father had obtained in Mexico while fighting in the Mexican War. Carved into the fiddle's neck was "D. Crockett. Tenn. 1835. D. C. Texas, 1836." ■

Game Day Eats

We've got you covered, from tailgating to the fourth quarter

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Forget crunchy leaf piles, cozy sweaters and apple cider. In Texas, fall means football—a tradition we hope continues this year. Even if tailgating isn't an option this season, game day snacks are still a great opportunity to try new twists on favorite dishes. These chicken wings allow time to prep other snacks or catch some of the game while they bake. The plum jam adds a touch of sweetness, with even my 6-year-old gobbling these up.

Sticky Plum Chicken Wings

3 pounds chicken wings

½ cup plum jam

⅓ cup soy sauce

¼ cup water

1 green onion, diced, white and green parts divided

2 tablespoons rice vinegar

2 tablespoons chopped fresh ginger

2 large garlic cloves, chopped

1–2 teaspoons chili garlic sauce or other hot sauce

COOK'S TIP I've used chili garlic sauce for a light heat, but you can use your favorite hot sauce to taste.

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil, then top with a wire baking rack (or use a broiler pan). Coat lightly with nonstick spray and arrange chicken on top. Bake 35 minutes.
2. While the chicken bakes, make the sauce. In a small saucepan, whisk together jam, soy sauce, water, white parts of green onion, rice vinegar, ginger, garlic and chili garlic sauce and simmer over medium heat. Cook until reduced by half, whisking occasionally, about 15 minutes.
3. When chicken is done, put pieces into a large bowl. Pour sauce over chicken and toss gently with tongs to fully coat, then put chicken wings back onto the baking pan and cook an additional 5–10 minutes, letting the sauce caramelize. Remove to a plate and garnish with remaining green onion.

SERVES 6

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Bacon Onion Dip.



Everything but the Kitchen Sink Cheeseball

PATRICIA HEFTI
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

This cheeseball is Hefti's favorite for game day snacking. She recommends making it a few days in advance so all the flavors have time to mingle. Be sure to let it stand at room temperature for 15–30 minutes before serving so that it's spreadable.

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened**
- ½ cup sour cream**
- ¼ cup finely chopped yellow onion**
- 1 jar (2 ounces) diced pimientos, undrained, optional**
- 2 tablespoons sweet pickle relish**
- ½ cup chopped cooked bacon (about 4 slices) or bacon bits, divided use**
- ½ cup finely chopped pecans, divided use**
- Dash salt**
- Dash pepper**
- 2 cups shredded Swiss cheese**
- 2 cups shredded colby or American cheese**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley, optional**
- 1 tablespoon poppy seeds**
- Assorted crackers, to serve**

1. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese and sour cream until fluffy. Add onion, undrained pimientos, pickle relish, ¼ cup bacon, ¼ cup pecans, salt and pepper and stir to incorporate. Stir in cheeses and mix well.
2. Cover with foil or plastic wrap and chill in refrigerator until firm, about 4 hours.
3. In a small bowl, combine the remaining bacon bits, remaining pecans, parsley and poppy seeds. Turn cheese mixture

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

Magic Red Chili

MAGDALENA AVILA
FARMERS EC



Chili is always a crowd-pleaser. This flavorful recipe gets a boost from cascabel chile sauce, which can easily be doubled to use for enchiladas or pork stew, says Avila. Serve the chili with onions and cheese or enjoy it atop hot dogs or corn chips.

SERVES 8

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 2 cups diced onion, divided use**
- 1½ pounds ground beef**
- 1 pound bulk chorizo**
- 1 can (10.5 ounces) chili sauce**
- 1 can (15 ounces) pinto beans, drained**
- 1 tablespoon chili powder**
- 1½ teaspoons garlic powder**
- 1½ teaspoons onion powder**
- 1½ teaspoons oregano**
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt**
- ½ teaspoon cumin**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 1 tablespoon crushed red pepper flakes, optional**
- 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper, optional**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- 4 cascabel chiles**
- 2 large cloves garlic**
- 2 cups water**
- Shredded cheddar cheese, for topping**

1. Into a stock pot or Dutch oven set over medium heat, pour the vegetable oil. When the oil is hot, add 1 cup diced onion and sauté until softened, about 5 minutes.
2. Add ground beef and chorizo and cook until browned. Stir in chili sauce, pinto beans, chili powder, garlic powder, onion powder, oregano, seasoned salt, cumin and bay leaf. Add crushed red pepper flakes and cayenne pepper, if using, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and let simmer on medium-low while you make the red sauce.
3. To make the red sauce, remove stems and seeds from cascabel chiles, then rinse under warm water. Add to a small saucepan with garlic and cover with water. Bring to a boil and let simmer for 10 minutes, or until chiles are soft. Let cool slightly, then pour chiles, garlic and cooking water into a blender and purée, taking care to let steam escape. Strain if desired, then stir into chili.
4. Cook chili another 5 minutes to let flavors meld, then serve with remaining diced onion and cheddar cheese.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

QUICK BREADS AND MUFFINS DUE SEP 10

Do you love muffins? Does your family go crazy for your quick breads? Send us your tried-and-true favorites or heirloom recipes. Enter our February contest by September 10.

RECIPES CONTINUED

onto waxed paper and form into a ball. Roll the chilled cheeseball into the bacon mixture to coat, pressing gently to adhere to cheese.

4. Wrap the completed ball in waxed paper, then in plastic wrap or foil. Chill until ready to serve.

SERVES 16

Sweet and Spicy Pretzel and Nut Mix

BARBARA REISS
PEDERNALES EC

It will be hard to keep from diving into this snack mix while it cools. Fragrantly spiced with just a bit of heat, it will stay fresh for about a week when stored in an airtight container.

4 cups mixed raw nuts, such as pecans, almonds and cashews



1/3 cup dark brown sugar
3 tablespoons maple syrup
2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter, melted
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa
1 teaspoon allspice
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4–1 teaspoon cayenne pepper, to taste
4 cups unsalted pretzels
2 teaspoons kosher salt

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with foil or parchment. Spread the nuts in an

even layer and bake about 10 minutes, turning the sheet and stirring halfway through, just until the nuts are lightly toasted and become fragrant.

2. While the nuts are toasting, place the brown sugar, maple syrup, melted butter, cocoa and spices in a large bowl and stir to combine. Pour in the warm nuts and stir until well coated.

3. Add in the pretzels and salt, and stir until thoroughly blended and coated, taking care not to break up pretzels. Spread the mixture onto the baking sheet. Bake 12–15 minutes, stirring twice during baking and watching to make sure nuts do not burn.

4. Remove from the oven and let cool completely on the pan before storing in an airtight container.

SERVES 12

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Fronds in High Places

Sabal Palm Sanctuary in Brownsville brings hikers into archaic avian grove

BY CHET GARNER

THE PLANTS AROUND ME were so thick that I could barely see beyond the hiking trail. Above me, the fronds of native, 50-foot palm trees swayed with the breeze. Suddenly the green canopy overhead erupted into a squawking symphony so loud I thought I was being attacked. I wanted to run for my life. Instead I calmly looked up to see a flock of birds dancing atop the palms. My pocket guide identified them as chachalacas. It was the first of more than two dozen bird species I would identify that day.

I was hiking along the trails of the Sabal Palm Sanctuary, a 557-acre preserve operated by the Gorgas Science Foundation in southeast Brownsville, near the southernmost point in Texas. This refuge was part of a sugar cane plantation in the 19th century, when steamboats churned along the nearby Rio Grande. The sanctuary's visitors center sits inside the immaculate Rabb Plantation House that was built in 1892 and is worth a visit on its own. However, most visitors don't stay long in the mansion, as they're eager to hit the 3 miles of trails and identify avian species they can add to their birding life list.

Hiking below the palms was an experience that transported me to a tropical environment that seemed more likely to be in a different part of the world. Sabal palms, particularly native ones, are rare in Texas. This grove is the last piece left of a native palm forest that once extended 80 miles inland, throughout the Rio Grande Valley. As I stood on the Rio Grande observation deck without a fence or a building in sight, it wasn't hard to imagine a world without humans, where palm trees prosper and chachalacas can scream to their hearts' content. ■

ABOVE Chet Garner among the sabal palms and other tropical plants.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Chet's video from the Sabal Palm Sanctuary and check out his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

Know Before You Go

Some events may have been affected by COVID-19. Call or check an event's website for scheduling details.

SEPTEMBER

09

Tyler [9-13] Texas Rose Classic, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

11

Fairfield [11-12] Show of Wheels, (903) 389-5792, fairfieldtexaschamber.com

Fredericksburg [11-13] Fall Planting Days Kick-Off, (830) 990-8080, wildseedfarms.com

12

Jacksonville Cherokee Craft & Trade Fair and Old-Fashioned Quilt Show, (903) 268-1598

Kerrville Run for Riverside 5K, (830) 257-4837, riversidenaturecenter.org

Lake Jackson Farmers Market, (979) 285-2501, visitbrazosport.com

Sanger Sellabration, (940) 458-7702, sangertexas.com

17

Georgetown Virtual Benefit Concert, (512) 924-3911, faithinactionngt.org

18

Nacogdoches Wood & Wire, (936) 564-6631, facebook.com/millardscrossing

Fredericksburg [18-19] Admiral Nimitz Foundation Annual Symposium, (830) 997-8600, pacificwarmuseum.org

19

Levelland [18-20] Texas High School Rodeo Association Region 2 Rodeo, (806) 894-4161, malleteventcenter.com

Tyler [18-20] Texas Rose Dressage Fall Classic, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

Freeport Texas Navy Day, (979) 233-0066, visitbrazosport.com

Onalaska Annual Cow Plop, (936) 433-2710, business.polkchamber.com

24

Amarillo [24-26] Tri-State Rodeo, (806) 376-7767, facebook.com/amarillo.tristate.fair

Kerrville [24-26] Texas Heritage Music Days, (830) 792-3535, schreiner.edu

25

Levelland [25-26] Senior Team Ropers Association Team Roping, (806) 894-4161, malleteventcenter.com

26

Canadian Canadian River Beach Club Calf Fry & State Championship BBQ Cook-Off, (806) 323-9413, facebook.com/canadianriverbeachclub

New Braunfels Cody Johnson, (830) 964-3800, whitewaterrocks.com

Tyler [26-27] Feathered Horse Spring Classic, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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

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Event Calendar

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Pick of the Month

Oktoberfest

McKinney, September 25–27
 (972) 547-2660
mckinneytexas.org

The original Oktoberfest in Munich celebrated local breweries and their traditional craft. This festival showcases McKinney's own Franconia and Tupps breweries. Crafts and food, including German-style fare such as brats, sausages, schnitzel and strudel, are also main attractions.

EVENTS CONTINUED

OCTOBER

01

Tyler [1–4] Texas Rose Spring Festival—Horse Show, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

02

Fort McKavett [2–4] 50 Miles by Wire, 1875, (325) 396-2358, facebook.com/visitfortmckavett

03

Bryan Buffalo Stampede Half Marathon & 5K, (979) 776-2195, brazosvalleymuseum.org/buffalo-stampede

Marble Falls Main Street Car Show, (512) 657-1699, marblefallskiwanis.org

Mason Mason County Republican Women's Home Tour, (325) 347-2221

Powderly Red River Valley Veterans Memorial Concert, (903) 517-0904, rrvvm.org/concert

Shapes

Ordinary objects become extraordinary on the right canvas, where repetition, lighting and perspective change everything. This month has shaped up to be one of our best. So don't be a square. Check out these diamonds in the rough.

GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

REAGAN FERGUSON
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

Light fixtures cast shadows on a building in Fort Worth.

JOHNATHAN KANA
BLUEBONNET EC

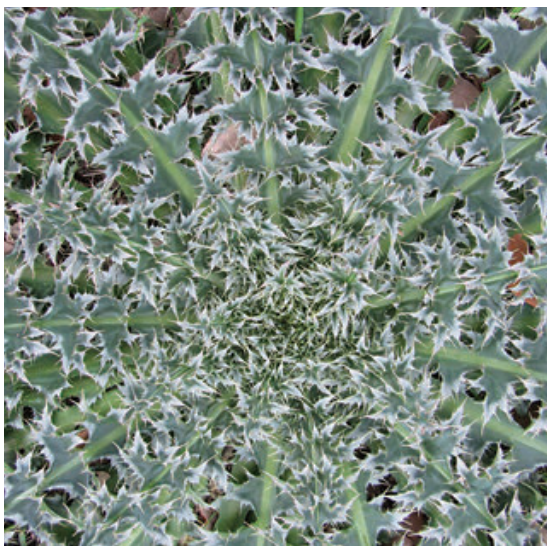
The Fred Hartman Bridge connects Baytown and La Porte.

RANDALL GAY
PEDERNALES EC

The amazing pattern of a thistle plant.

MARLENE VOTION
COSERV

Eggsactly three dozen.



Upcoming Contests

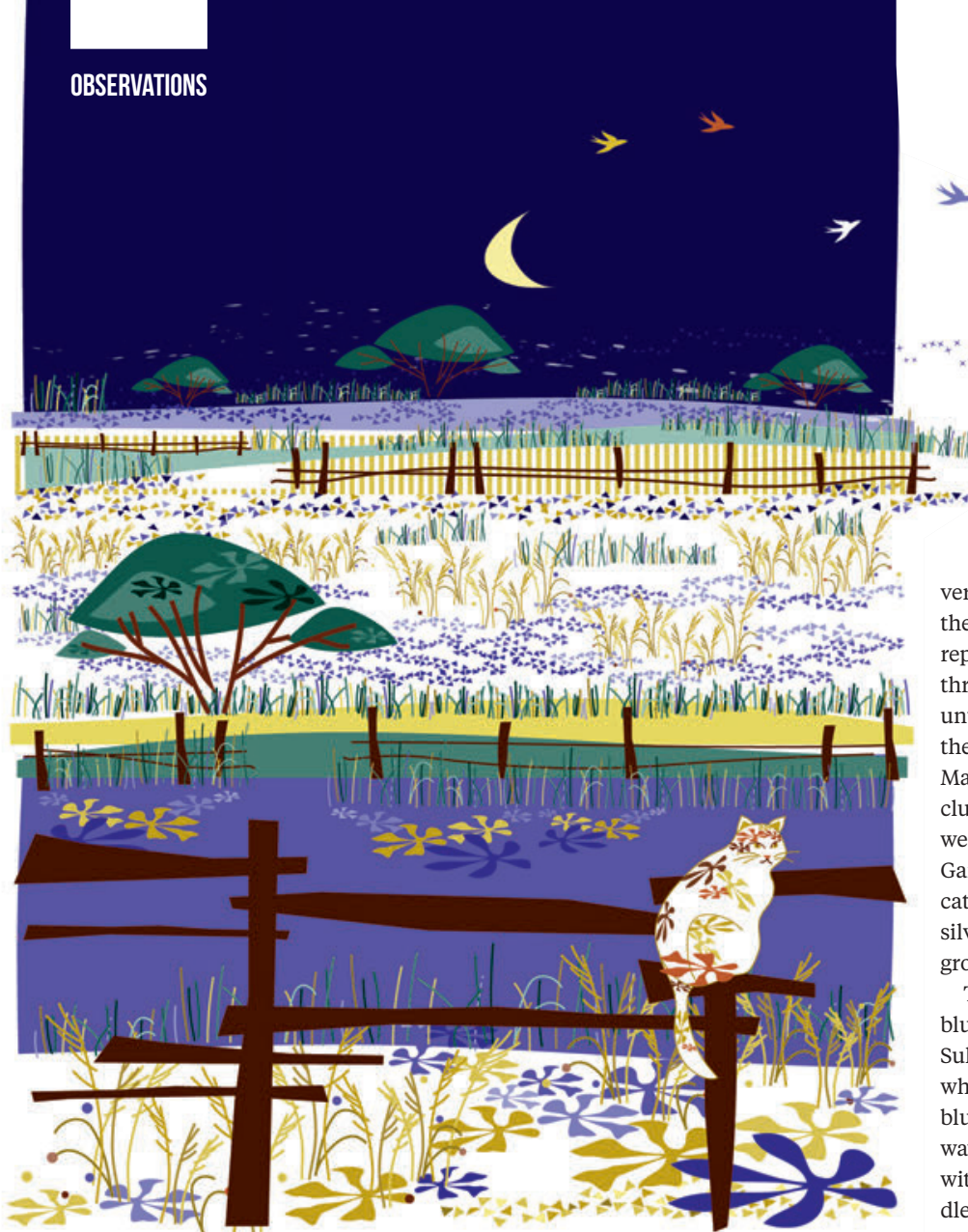
DUE SEP 10 Forests

DUE OCT 10 Saddles

DUE NOV 10 Diners

Enter online and review submission rules at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests.

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



Meadow Oasis

Serene evenings at a vacant lot given over to nature leave the author grounded and grateful

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS
ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREA COBB

JAMES CARRIES the lawn chairs. I follow behind with Prima, a sweet calico who claimed us not long after we buried our last elderly cat. Behind a low cedar-post fence, we unfold our chairs and plop down. Prima chooses a lap and nestles into a comfortable position.

Overhead, cedar waxwings fly across the open sky followed by some black-bellied whistling-ducks and a lone white-winged dove. With our feet propped up on the fence, we breathe in the evening air and gaze at what we call the Meadow, our adjoining vacant lot turned nature preserve.

Our evening “sits” in the Meadow go back more than a decade. Through the years, we’ve observed change, loss and rejuvenation. One spring, prairie

verbena laid a purple carpet across the property. That show has yet to be repeated. Another year, stiff green-threads bloomed in golden profusion—until coreopsis leaf beetles decimated their foliage. And we still talk about the Malta starthistle that grew in thick clumps along the street—then I learned we were hosting a nasty invasive. Garbage bags later, we finally eradicated the species. Gray vervain, fleabane, silverleaf nightshade and other natives grow there now.

This evening, we admire the abundant bluebonnets that grace our corner lot. Sulphurs, honeybees and an occasional white-lined sphinx moth flit among the blue flower heads. From our chairs, we wave at a couple walking their dog. Chat with a father who has brought his toddler son to see the wildflowers. Holler greetings at a nearby neighbor who tells us how much she loves her view of the Meadow.

It could be just another evening in our neighborhood. Only it’s not. Because a global pandemic keeps us apart. We must social distance and share air hugs.

Prima yawns and jumps down to nibble grass. James tracks a miniscule jet across the darkening sky. I lean over to watch a wolf spider scuttle through the grass. Virus or no virus, our sits in the Meadow keep us grounded and grateful. Our time there reminds us that we, too, as human beings, will always experience change, loss and rejuvenation. Like our vacant lot turned nature preserve, we will adapt and move on. That’s the cycle of life. ■

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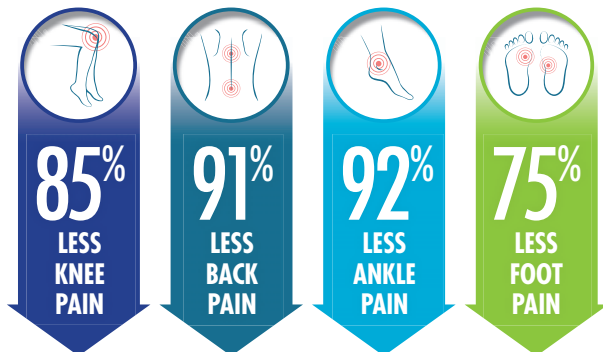
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