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JUNE 2022

Eating Wild

Texans are turning
to foraging
for fun and food





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June 2022



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Pushed along by the pandemic and prices, foraging for wild edibles is a growing trend.

By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

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*By Carlos Sanchez
Illustration by John Jay Cabuay*

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Flowers from elderberry trees can be eaten right off the branch.

Photo by Enciero | stock.adobe.com

ABOVE

Zapata County author María Alma González Pérez.

Illustration by John Jay Cabuay

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Enter online now to win the three bilingual alphabet books written by María Alma González Pérez, featured on Page 12.

First in a String



LEGENDARY FIDDLER Alexander “Eck” Robertson, left, who was raised on a farm in the Panhandle, made musical history 100 years ago this month.

Robertson and Henry C. Gilliland recorded four fiddle duets June 30, 1922, at the Victor Talking Machine Co. in New York City. The tracks are regarded as the first commercial recordings of country music.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE MY SINGING IS SO BAD ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our April prompt: **I remember when a dollar could buy ...**

A large soda, large French fries order and a hamburger big as a hubcap.

JOE TREVIÑO JR.
BARTLETT EC
KILLEEN

A day at the State Fair of Texas.

BRENDA WEBB
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC
GUNTER

Three watermelons on the side of Highway 281 south of San Antonio.

DARREL MILLER
PEDERNALES EC
LAGO VISTA

To see more responses, read Currents online.

GAMBUSIA IS GONE

A tiny Texas fish is among 23 species that federal wildlife officials want to declare extinct.

The San Marcos gambusia, an inch-long fish found only in the San Marcos River in Hays County, was last collected in the wild in 1983. The Fish and Wildlife Service has recommended that it join 21 other animals and one plant in being removed from the endangered species list and declared extinct.



Co-ops Rule

Electric cooperatives dominated the 2021 J.D. Power rankings for customer satisfaction, with 14 co-ops—including Texas’ Magic Valley EC and CoServ—finishing among the top 20 U.S. residential power providers in the annual survey of electric customers.



Gov. Jordan

AMONG BARBARA JORDAN’S many accomplishments was becoming Texas governor for a day 50 years ago this month.

Months before her election to the U.S. House, her colleagues in the Texas Senate unanimously elected Jordan president pro tem. Gov. Preston Smith and Lt. Gov. Ben Barnes both made plans to be out of state June 10, 1972, enabling Jordan to step in as acting governor, making her the first Black woman in the U.S. to preside over a legislative body.

June 17

National Eat Your Vegetables Day

We know gardens across Co-op Country produce bounties of amazing crops. But this month we spotlight folks who look beyond cultivated patches for wild edibles. See *The Grazing Craze* on Page 8.



TRACI DABERKO

The Inside Track

“Many West Texas towns like Hamlin have no tracks left, and we could sure use some commerce that stops here today.”

JEFF CLATERBAUGH
BIG COUNTRY EC
HAMLIN

Enduring Cookware

I inherited my grandmother’s cast iron, which she inherited from her mother [*Cast-Iron Comeback*, March 2022]. It makes the best cornbread and fried eggs. To imagine how many meals were cooked in these pans just blows my mind.

David Krabbe
Hamilton County EC
Kempner

I have to say, besides the original chocolate Texas sheet cake, this is the best, most decadent cake I have EVER had [*Texas Praline Sheet Cake*, March 2022]. I’ve literally been thinking about it all week.

NICOLE PARKER
VIA FACEBOOK

Using the cast-iron skillet my mother got for a wedding gift in 1943.

Larry Artz
Via Facebook



RUSSELL A. GRAVES

Blessed Comfort

I want to participate in the Blessing Box Project when I retire [*Hope in a Box*, March 2022]. Such a hard time for a woman.

Jacky Manchester
Grayson-Collin EC
Van Alstyne

Well Put

I love that section in the magazine [*Finish This Sentence*]. It awakens the thought process in a lot of people.

Inocencia S. Martinez
Magic Valley EC
Mercedes

Threads of Truth

When I was 10, we visited cousins in Ingram [*Just Add Adventure*, March 2022].

We went to a river to play, and it had a smooth concrete small dam with water pouring over it. I had a blast sliding down it time after time until I realized that the seat of my favorite pair of shorts was in shreds.

Roberta McLaughlin
Heart of Texas EC
Lorena

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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

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

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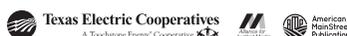
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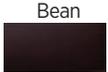
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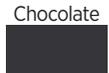
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The Grazing Craze

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

I've yanked henbit and chickweed for years from my native-plant gardens, nearly eradicating the weeds that pop up every winter.

If only I'd known that the European species make tasty additions to salads. So I decided in December to let them stay put. Then I'd have some fresh leaves and flowers to toss with spinach, tomatoes and dressing.

Many of the native plants are edible too, like turk's cap, dayflower, wood sorrel and spiderwort. Hold on—eat my natives? The concept boggles my mind. As a Texas master naturalist, I'm familiar with most of the ones that grow in my region. On the other hand, since childhood I've been conditioned to eat foods only bought at grocery stores or intentionally grown in gardens, not picked from a lawn or some wild place.

Then I recall our ancestors foraged to survive. Their hard-

Pushed along by the pandemic and prices, foraging for wild edibles is a growing trend

scrabble lifestyles make me determined to loosen up. And I am. In March I picked blossoms from our eastern redbud tree and added them to salads. This summer I've been nibbling on turk's cap berries and pink evening primrose leaves. As I learn more about wild edibles, the plants that grow around my yard have taken on a different meaning.

I'm not alone in my new outlook. For a number of reasons, more and more people are hunting for edible plants.

"It used to be just adventurer eaters, foodies and cooks who mainly foraged," says Mark Vorderbruggen, author of an *Idiot's Guides* book on foraging. "Then the pandemic came, and people got scared about getting food if the markets closed. It made them go outside in search of alternative food sources. Now with inflation, food has become more expensive. People want to know where they can get free nutrition."



Cut With Care

So what makes a wild plant edible? In a nutshell, it's nonpoisonous, palatable and digestible. Many have health benefits too. "In vitamins, minerals and protein, wild food can match and even surpass the nutritional content of our common foods," writes Delena Tull in *Edible and Useful Plants of Texas and the Southwest*. "Dandelion greens are more nutritious than spinach."

Foragers must always ask for permission before scouring private property. On public lands, it's illegal to take plant materials. Steer clear of toxic areas, like highway roadsides and places frequented by pets.

And some final words of caution: Before eating any wild plant, be absolutely certain of its identity. Read books on the subject, learn some basic botany, take foraging classes and go out with an experienced forager to gain an understanding of what you should and shouldn't eat.

Then start with easy plants, like turk's cap and pecans. As you gain knowledge, add species that you can readily identify. Also, eat wild edibles in moderation and be mindful of possible reactions. For example, if you're allergic to cashews and mangoes, avoid their cousins: evergreen and flameleaf sumacs.

"Nature is a mishmash of greens and browns," says foraging expert Courtney Taylor of Weston, north of Dallas. "To most people, plants all look the same. It takes time, patience and consistency to learn the nuances between them. Wood clover and clover, which are both edible, look similar but have subtle differences."

Taylor, a Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative member, teaches basic foraging classes and compiled a 60-page e-book on North Texas edibles. In every class, she stresses foraging etiquette.

"Leave an environment better than you found it," she says. "Only harvest what you're going to use. Only take a leaf or two from a small plant. If you take all the leaves, that plant won't go to flower. As a forager you want that plant to be there next year. I believe that conscientious foragers can actually increase an environment's health and wild food populations."

Depending on the month, Taylor harvests mulberries, persimmons, dewberries, pecans, black walnuts, hackberries and beautyberries among many others—often foraging in her rural neighborhood and along country roads. "The tastiest greens to me are lamb's-quarters and chickweed," she says. "I also eat a lot of dandelion leaves for their health benefits. I like to make smoothies with them."

Educating others about useful plants is a top priority for Vorderbruggen, who produces videos, podcasts and presentations on the subject. "Most people assume all

Foraging Do's & Don'ts

Know what you're picking before you eat it.

Stay off private land unless you have permission.

Don't take plant materials from public lands; it's illegal.

Steer clear of toxic areas, like highway roadsides and places frequented by pets.

Pick up any litter you find.



WATCH YOUR STEP

Look out for poison ivy when you get the itch to forage.

OPPOSITE Wild mulberries can be found all over Texas. Take a foraging class to learn to identify edible plants. LEFT Courtney Taylor is a 20-year foraging expert, especially on North Texas edibles.



COURTESY COURTNEY TAYLOR

plants are poisonous,” says the Houston resident, who holds a master’s in medicinal chemistry and a doctorate in physical organic chemistry. “Even people who want to forage and have read the books still have a fear of misidentifying something and dying as a result. My goal is to help them to trust themselves and eat a plant that they’ve properly identified.”

Rooted to the Spot

In far North Texas, Kimberly Clark, a member of Fannin County EC, learned to forage by watching YouTube videos and joining foraging groups on Facebook. “Now my two kids like to forage with me on our acreage and in our area,” she says. “We harvest elderberry, cattails, water violets, peppergrass and sorrel. My son’s favorite is wild carrot, also known as Queen Anne’s lace.” (Caution: Queen Anne’s lace looks similar to two extremely toxic plants: poison hemlock and water hemlock.)

Come midsummer, Tom Mitchell Jr. of Cleburne steers a golf cart around his neighborhood, looking for clusters of ripe flameleaf sumac berries. “They make a great mock lemonade,” says Mitchell, a commercial pilot and United Cooperative Services member. “I put the berries in a pot of water and let them sit overnight. Then I strain the pink liquid and add some honey. The lemony flavor comes from the berries’ malic acid. I also dry sumac berries, then grind them up to use as a spice.”

Last year, forager Racheal Balliu—a Pedernales EC member and registered nurse who lives near Canyon Lake—took some “yard butter” to a party. At first her friends hesitated to sample the creamy condiment, mixed with chickweed, peppergrass, henbit and wild onions. “I’ve found that people are sometimes nervous to try foraged foods,” Balliu says. “But after trying my butter, they loved it. They also love the pesto that I make with chickweed, basil, parmesan and pecans.”

Her interest in wild foods has since morphed into a business called Forest Girl Wild American Tea. Her green and roasted yaupon teas are available online and sometimes at farmers markets. “Yaupon holly is the only natural caffeine in North America,” she explains. “I hand-pick



COURTESY MARK VORDERBRUGGEN

yaupon leaves on family land, wash and air-dry them, and then package the leaves as both tea bags and loose leaf.”

In the Rio Grande Valley, wild edibles aren’t as easy to find. That’s because more than 90% of native habitats have been cleared through the years for agriculture and urbanization. “The nature we see here is more sterilized,” says Jackelin Treviño of McAllen. “Buffalo grass and oaks are lovely, but they’re not forageable. I see that gradually changing as cities plant more native plants.

“Foragers here are basically limited to private property with permission and conserved areas, where foraging is discouraged,” she continues. “When I’m able to forage, my favorite wild edible in the Valley are berries from brasilwood. They look like blueberries, are shiny like grapes and taste like blackberries.”

Out west in El Paso, the Chihuahuan Desert would seemingly offer even fewer finds. But outdoorsman James Harris

Sheryl's Top 5 Wild Edibles for Beginners



CHICKWEED

DANDELION

knows better. For nearly a decade, he's researched the vegetation and wildlife that inhabit the arid region that he's called home all his life. Now he shares his knowledge about wild foods and other survival skills through videos.

"Out here, one of our most plentiful wild edibles are honey mesquite pods and beans," he says. "They're very versatile. You can use them to make small cakes, teas, jellies, jams and energy bars. They also make a good coffee substitute, even though they don't have caffeine."

Prickly pear cacti are also very common, Harris says, and their pads and fruit are edible. "They're a pain to gather because of the thorns, so I always carry tweezers," he says. "Another edible is the banana yucca, which I call the 'super-market of the desert.' The young flower stalks can be cut and cooked like asparagus. The white flowers are edible. You can also cook the green fruits."

From yuccas to chickweed, I noted a common interest in my conversations with foragers from across the state: They all love getting outside and exploring wild places. As Harris explains, "Being outdoors grounds you closer to the earth. You have a higher appreciation for the seasons and the plants when you interact with nature."

I couldn't agree more. ■

Texas' Most Toxic Plants

Castor bean

Jimsonweed
(angel trumpet,
moonflower,
thornapple)

Nuttall's death camas

Poison hemlock

Poison ivy

Texas mountain
laurel (mescal bean)

Water hemlock



CHECK BEFORE YOU PICK

Toxic hemlocks look similar to the edible Queen Anne's lace, above.



OPPOSITE Mark Vorderbruggen, left, leads a foraging class at Spoke Hollow Outfitters near Wimberley in the Hill Country. RIGHT James Harris uses the fruit of prickly pear cactus, called tunas, to make refreshing juice.

COURTESY JAMES HARRIS



HENBIT



PINK EVENING PRIMROSE

TURK'S CAP





Speaking to Children

Meet the South Texas educator who isn't slowing down in her mission to instill a love of language in bilingual readers

To understand what drives María Alma González Pérez, one must understand her love of language. Because her mother had only a grade school education, González Pérez mostly spoke Spanish—the only language she knew until enrolling in school—with clarity and precision.

“She did not want us mispronouncing words,” González Pérez says. “She would say that the proper use of the language was something that defined you as an educated person.”

Upon that principle, González Pérez earned a doctorate in education, then became a professor, college administrator, children's book author and, most recently, an entrepreneur—all while advocating for the importance of language. González Pérez, 70, is now a decade into her latest career—a publisher on a quest to bring more Hispanic culture into children's books.

The native of Zapata County, on the border in South Texas, won a prestigious International Latino Book Award in 2021 for her book *¡Todos al rodeo! A Vaquero Alphabet Book*. The children's picture book is the third in her series of what she calls “ABC books,” which tell a story through the letters of the alphabet. She uses the genre to infuse Hispanic culture into children's literature to foster bilingual literacy.

It's the kind of book she wishes she had as a young student.

“I was always trying to unravel this mystery called English,” González Pérez says. “It was a sink-or-swim approach to learning.” Her moment of awakening, she says, came in the eighth grade, when she first enrolled in a Spanish course and received a textbook for that class. “This is the book they should have given me in the first grade,” she says. “They did it backwards.”

González Pérez's vaquero book teaches children that the American cowboy and the cattle industry itself emerged from the arrival of Spaniards who introduced the horse to North America. Words like “rodeo” and “lasso,” the book points out, are Spanish in origin.

The book also draws from the author's own life; González Pérez, a member of Medina Electric Cooperative, comes from a land-grant family whose large property holdings were bestowed on early Texas settlers by the Spanish crown. She grew up on a 1,000-acre ranch that touched the banks of the Rio Grande, so she's familiar with the vaquero way of life. Her Texas roots reach back so many generations that she calls herself a Tejana instead of a Mexicana.

González Pérez frequently uses the Spanish word for courage—*coraje*—as she speaks. Her cultural awareness in a part of the state where Hispanic culture is the norm gave her the *coraje* to excel in school even though she had to learn English while she was learning other subjects. And her mother's insistence on excelling gave González Pérez a sense of self, she says. “I never felt that I needed to be anybody else other than who I was.”

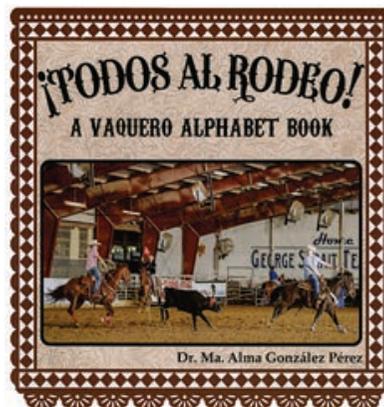
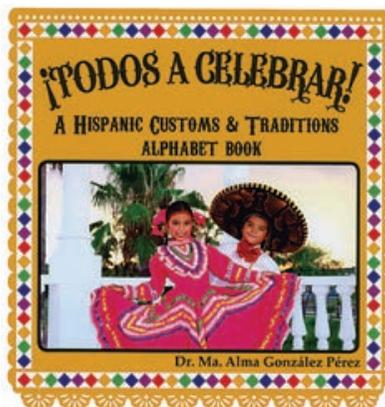
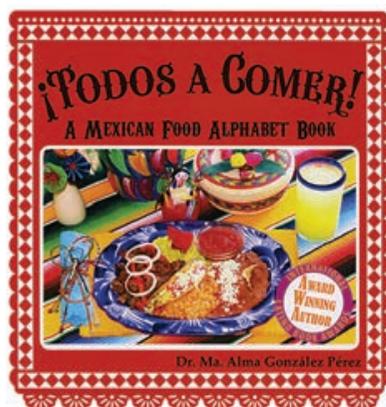
So with a sense of *coraje*, González Pérez left the cultural comfort of South Texas to master English by immersion. She attended Texas Woman's University in Denton in the 1970s, then “relatively devoid” of Hispanic people, she says.

After securing undergraduate and master's degrees, González Pérez returned to South Texas, where she taught, raised a family and eventually attended Texas A&M International University in Laredo for her doctorate. Her dissertation on the relationship between Spanish proficiency and academic achievement among high school graduates in South Texas fueled what would become a lifelong pursuit.

Literacy, her study showed her, extends beyond the pages of books into cultural understanding. It's the context on which idioms are built and understood, and it's the antitoxin of cultural misunderstanding and outright xenophobia.

González Pérez frequently uses the Spanish word for courage—*coraje*—as she speaks.

“I never felt that I needed to be anybody else other than who I was.”



Literature, she believes, immerses readers in the experiences of others—puts them in the shoes of protagonists. But as a professor at the University of Texas-Pan American (now UT Rio Grande Valley), González Pérez was frustrated by a lack of culturally relevant Hispanic literature available for her students. They were studying to become bilingual teachers using a curriculum based in English.

“I started gauging them, and that’s when I learned that they had not been exposed to any literature written by Hispanic authors,” González Pérez says. That sparked something in the professor.

Lino Garcia Jr., a retired UTRGV professor, sees the need for Hispanic stories from Hispanic authors.

“We should be doing that at the pre-K level,” he says. “Instead of talking about the Taj Mahal, we should be talking about Spanish missions, about the Camino Real—about things that Hispanic students can relate to. This gives them a sense of identity. This gives them a sense of worth.”

González Pérez’s first book was *¡Todos a Comer! A Mexican Food Alphabet Book*—the best-selling of her series for children. The second book, *¡Todos a Celebrar!*, spotlighted Hispanic customs and traditions.

Of course, writing culturally inclusive books is one thing; getting them distributed, González Pérez discovered, was a big, new challenge. So with the help of her three daughters, she launched Del Alma Publications (*del alma* means “of the soul”). An attorney, a business major, and an engineer and graphic designer, Anita Pérez, Maricia Rodriguez and Teresa Estrada, respectively, helped their mother get the

business going in 2008.

“I have a dream team in my daughters,” González Pérez says. “I told my daughters, ‘Let’s play with it for five years. If it flies, great. If it doesn’t, nothing was lost but a lot was learned.’ ”

It flew.

González Pérez’s initial goal was to target South Texas. But her first bulk order of more than 25 books came, instead, from Redondo Beach, California. Next came an order from Philadelphia for several hundred books. The demand was nationwide. Del Alma Publications has shipped thousands of books over the past 14 years—to individuals, schools, libraries, book donors and nationwide book distributors.

But she isn’t done yet.

“We’ve made great strides in meeting the biliteracy challenges of the Hispanic learner,” González Pérez says. “However, we still need to write many more books about stories that our children need to read.

“Not only to inform and educate but to help them develop a greater sense of cultural identity and pride.” ■

TCP Enter online to win González Pérez’s three bilingual alphabet books, above.





Good afternoon,

As a local business, we understand the importance of conserving energy and saving money, particularly in a world of **more frequent ice storms** and wildfires. The past couple years of winter storms have impacted us all. The challenge of keeping our homes warm and secure is always on our minds. And then there is the pain of **skyrocketing fuel prices...**

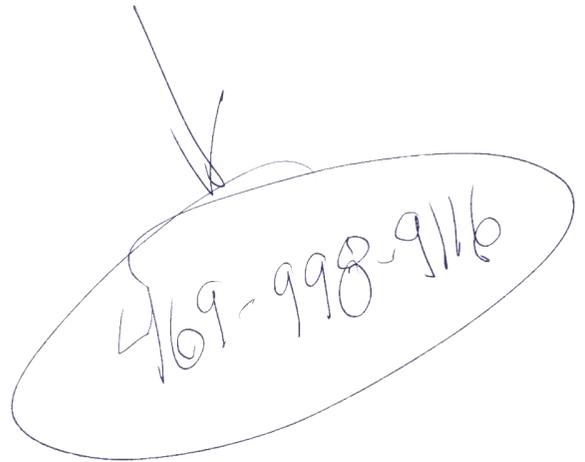
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Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

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 – Lubbock, 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 unplug the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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Honoring the 100th anniversary of the last year they were minted, the U.S. Mint struck five different versions of the Morgan in 2021, paying tribute to each of the mints that struck the coin. The coins here honor the historic New Orleans Mint, a U.S. Mint branch from 1838–1861 and again from 1879–1909. These coins, featuring an "O" privy mark, a small differentiating mark, were struck in Philadelphia since the New Orleans Mint no longer exists. These beautiful

coins are different than the originals because they're struck in 99.9% fine silver instead of 90% silver/10% copper, and they were struck using modern technology, serving to enhance the details of the iconic design.

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Start With a Home Energy Audit To Save

WANT TO MAKE HOME EFFICIENCY UPGRADES but don't know where to start? A home energy audit could help you identify solutions that could save you 5%–30% on your energy bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

A home energy audit can pinpoint where your home is losing energy and what you can do to save money. An auditor will also help find health and safety issues in your home.

Certified home energy auditors should go through the following steps in a home energy audit, according to the DOE.

1. Analyze the past year's bills to determine base energy consumption.
2. Interview you, the homeowner, to learn about problems and how the home operates.
3. Explain the audit process.
4. Conduct an inspection of the home's exterior.
5. Do a health and safety inspection.
6. Conduct an inspection of the home's interior.
7. Assess electrical system safety concerns.
8. Inspect combustion appliances.
9. Perform a blower door test and/or thermographic scan to detect sources of energy loss.
10. Analyze findings and create a comprehensive home energy report to show which upgrades are best for your home and your potential energy savings.

The DOE offers some common recommendations after a home energy audit:

Conduct whole-home air sealing to reduce air leakage and drafts.

Add insulation to your home's attic, foundation or walls to prevent heat loss.

Seal and insulate ducts in unconditioned spaces.

Remove or repair any parts of the home with internal moisture or mold to improve air quality and reduce deterioration.

Improve the efficiency of heating, cooling and hot water equipment.

Install home ventilation, smart thermostats, LEDs, smart power strips, Energy Star-certified appliances and other efficient technologies that improve home performance.

If having an auditor come to your home isn't for you, there are some great online options that can give you valuable insight into improving your home's energy efficiency. Check out energy.gov, energystar.gov and togetherwesave.com.

The right combination of improvements to your home will depend on the age and quality of current equipment, the local climate, and your home energy goals. ■

Use Caution With DIY Electrical Work

WITH FOLKS SPENDING MORE time at home, more and more homeowners have been inspired to tackle do-it-yourself projects.

Before you dive in, you should know that thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured and killed as a result of electrical fires, accidents or electrocution in their own homes every year, according to Electrical Safety Foundation International.

Data from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission show that there are nearly 400 electrocutions in the U.S. each year. About 15% of electrocutions are related to consumer products. Wiring hazards accounted for about 14% of those deaths.

Additionally, an estimated 360,900 residential building fires are reported to U.S. fire departments each year, and they caused an estimated 2,495 deaths, 13,250 injuries and \$7 billion in property losses. The leading cause of the largest fires was electrical malfunction.

Homeowners taking on DIY projects are especially at risk when they do not have the training or experience needed to safely perform home electrical work. Working with electricity requires planning and extreme care to prevent injury, death and dangers down the road.

ESFI and your electric cooperative recommend hiring a qualified, licensed electrician to perform any electrical work in your home. **However, if you do decide to do it yourself, consider the following safety tips:**

- ▶ Make an effort to learn about your home's electrical system so that you can safely navigate and maintain it.
- ▶ Never attempt a project that is beyond your skill level. Knowing when to call a professional may help prevent electrical fires, injuries and fatalities.
- ▶ Always turn off the power to the circuit that you plan to work on by switching off the circuit breaker in the main service panel.
- ▶ Be sure to unplug any lamp or appliance before working on it.
- ▶ Test wires before you touch them to make sure that the power has been turned off.
- ▶ Never touch plumbing or gas pipes when performing a do-it-yourself electrical project. ■



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When it's safe, crews start by repairing power lines and equipment that will restore power to the greatest number of people in the shortest time possible.

This process begins with repairs to the larger main distribution lines that service a great number of homes and businesses. After that, crews work on tap lines, which deliver power to transformers. Finally, individual service lines that run between transformers and homes are repaired.

We can't control the weather, but we can prepare for it. Your co-op keeps a supply of extra utility poles, transformers and other equipment on hand so we can quickly get to work in the event of an outage. When widespread outages occur, multiple crews will be out in the field working to repair damage at multiple locations. We also coordinate with nearby co-ops to bring in additional crews when necessary. ■

Utility Poles Are Not Bulletin Boards



Help us keep our
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Electric cooperative workers find all kinds of no-nos on utility poles, such as yard sale signs, basketball hoops, deer stands, satellite dishes, lights and birdhouses.

These obstructions are dangerous for employees. Unwelcome clutter on utility poles can compromise lineworkers' safety equipment, leaving them vulnerable to electrocution.

Anyone posting items on utility poles also is at risk of exposure to thousands of volts of electricity pulsing overhead. Always stay at least 10 feet away from utility lines.

Think before you post that sign!

Your electric cooperative encourages you to always practice safety.

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Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven't been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who's developed one of the world's most popular products created a completely new breakthrough . . . a personal electric vehicle. It's called the **Zinger**, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

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–Kent C., California

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Foote's Texas

Playwright Horton Foote of Wharton brought familiar small-town life to the silver screen

BY RHONDA REINHART

WHEN HORTON FOOTE'S first play, *Wharton Dance*, premiered in 1940, it not only named the young playwright's hometown in the title—Foote used the real names of people he knew in Wharton.

"I didn't have sense enough to know that you shouldn't name real people in the play and have them do things that maybe their mother and father wouldn't approve of," he said in a 2006 interview with a Dallas radio station. "But I was trying to be truthful. I was told that was a great thing you should do as a writer. It taught me a great lesson because I meant no one any harm. I don't use real names anymore, and I don't use the name of my town anymore."

In a career that went on to span seven decades across the stage and screen, Foote conceded to fictional names, but the people and places that formed him remained at the center of his stories. In dozens of plays and screenplays, his sophisticated but simply told tales about the everyday drama of ordinary people earned him a Pulitzer Prize, two Academy Awards, the National Medal of Arts and myriad other accolades. They also put a spotlight on small-town Texas, where Foote set many of his most acclaimed works—including *The Trip to Bountiful*, about an older woman's quest to return to her childhood home one last time, and *Tender Mercies*, about a middle-aged, down-on-his-luck country singer.

To find inspiration for his stories, Foote didn't have to travel far outside Wharton, about 60 miles southwest of Houston on the Colorado River, but his journey to becoming a writer took him much farther.

Foote left Wharton at 16 with hopes of becoming an actor. He attended acting school in Dallas and after a year moved to California to study at the Pasadena Playhouse before heading to the epicenter of theater, New York City. There he met choreographer Agnes de Mille, who encouraged Foote to try his hand at writing.

In his second memoir, *Beginnings*, published in 2001, Foote recalls the conversation that would prove to be a turning point in his career: "When Agnes suggested I write a play, I asked, 'What shall I write about?' ... 'Write about what you know,' she said."

After *Wharton Dance* came a three-act play titled *Texas Town*, which Foote wrote in his parents' house in 1941 during a five-week visit home from New York. Like many of his plays that followed,

Texas Town paints a vivid portrait of a small community, this one populated by youngsters and old-timers who gather and gossip at the local drugstore.

While Wharton and its people held a special place in Foote's heart, he was enamored of many of Texas' small towns. In *Farewell*, he writes: "One of the pleasures of making films of mine that were set in Texas was riding around with the director and art director, looking for towns that might help establish a sense of late-19th-century and early-20th-century Texas, towns like Waxahachie, Palmer and Ennis."

One of his favorite locales was the northeast Texas town of Venus, which was used for two of his films: *On Valentine's Day* and *1918*.

Even though Texas was a common setting for Foote's plays, and he came to be known as "the Chekhov of the small town," his subjects transcended time and place. Themes such as love and loss, disappointment and regret, and hope and new beginnings filled his works.

"Horton was the great American voice," Robert Duvall told *The New York Times*. The actor, who made his screen debut in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (for which Foote won an Oscar for best adapted screenplay) and later starred in *Tender Mercies*, added: "His work was native to his own region, but it was also universal."

Just as Foote carried Wharton with him, the town carries the playwright's memory today. At the Wharton County Historical Museum, visitors can view Foote memorabilia. And the Plaza Theatre, which presented Foote's play *A Coffin in Egypt* in April, calls its performers the Footelinters.

"Horton Foote has been a very influential member of our community," says Sarah Wilkins, board member at the Plaza Theatre, which got its start as a theater guild Foote helped found in 1932.

Wilkins can attest to his influence of the townspeople of Foote's time. "His children were playmates of my parents," the Wharton native says, "and he ... was a friend to both sets of my grandparents."

Though Foote was in Connecticut at the time of his passing, he was buried in his beloved Wharton. His gravesite lies just blocks from the house where he grew up, the house he returned to throughout his nine decades and the house that stands as a reminder of countless stories well told. ■



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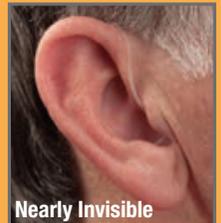
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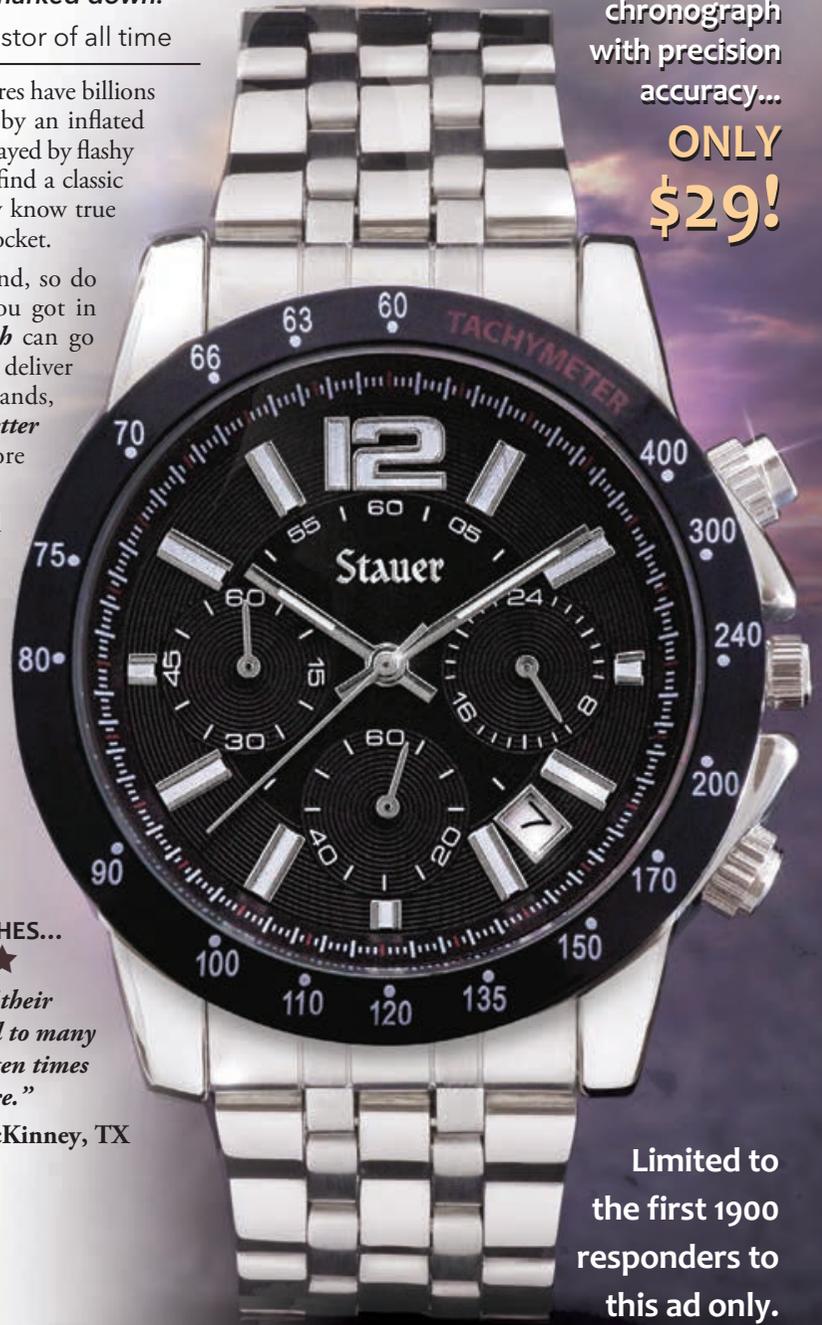
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Doctor's Orders

UT medical school faculty left Galveston to provide aid during World War I

BY MARTHA DEERING • ILLUSTRATION BY DANA SMITH

WHEN DR. ETHEL LYON HEARD returned to Texas after serving overseas with the Red Cross during World War I, she was holding tightly to the hand of a 3-year-old orphan from France named Jean Thibaut. After the child's house was nearly destroyed by a mortar in 1918, he was discovered in a back room the following day and brought to the hospital where Lyon Heard worked.

Before the war, Lyon Heard taught classes in hygiene and child care at the University of Texas' medical school in Galveston. Making space in her life for a child orphaned by war was just one of the countless acts of service and moments of bravery undertaken by UT faculty when the U.S. joined the war effort.

"These men and women sacrificed their lives and future professions by en-

listing in the war effort in Europe," says Dwayne Jones, director of the Galveston Historical Foundation. "The effects of the war redirected each life and altered the direction of health care forever."

Known today as the University of Texas Medical Branch, the school started in October 1891 with 13 instructors, 23 students and one building.

The mettle of the school was tested right away when the devastating 1900 Galveston hurricane struck. Much of the city was destroyed, but Galveston doctors led recovery efforts.

When the U.S. formally entered World War I in 1917, new and catastrophic forms of combat—trench warfare and chemical and biological weapons—required increased medical care for troops. The situation worsened when the Spanish

flu pandemic swept across the battle-grounds of Europe, killing thousands in just a few days. The American Expeditionary Forces sent out an urgent call for physicians, medical faculty and medical students to assist in the war effort.

The Council of National Defense urged medical students to stay in school and faculty to continue their critical teaching duties. But that didn't stop some of UT's medical personnel, who joined personnel from other leading U.S. universities in enlisting.

Lyon Heard's husband, Dr. Allen George Heard, adjunct professor of pediatrics, joined the medical corps and was assigned to British forces in England. Wounded twice, he received two citations for "conspicuous bravery" in action on the battlefields of France.

Dr. Herbert Lee McNeil, an assistant professor of clinical pathology, was assigned to oversee a hospital with 4,000 patients, later serving on the front lines. Dr. Estill Lee Rice was business manager of the school's medical magazine as a student. He served aboard the USS Nicholson, where he led a rescue mission to treat sailors injured in a German U-boat attack. Dr. Jess Autry Flautt was an instructor in obstetrics and gynecology before enlisting in the Navy Medical Corps on the day after the U.S. declared war. He rescued men from a ship loaded with explosives.

In November 2019, UTMB unveiled a Texas Historical Commission marker to honor the extraordinary contributions of eight members of the school's faculty and 11 students who served during the war effort. Some of the physicians sacrificed their hard-earned professional positions, and in some cases their lives, to serve.

Dr. Ben Raimer, UTMB's president, hopes the marker inspires today's physicians. "The physicians honored on the new historical marker represent service before self, which is what we continue to instill in our students today." ■

HEADS: COURTESY GALVESTON HISTORICAL FOUNDATION. CLASS: COURTESY MOODY MEDICAL LIBRARY

Weeknight Dinners

Busy day? No need to sweat it with these stress-free dishes

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Quick and easy dinners are the backbone of our meals. One of my favorites is a stir-fry—you can throw almost anything you have on hand in, and less than 30 minutes later you have a full meal. This beef and green bean stir-fry is a go-to in my family, especially when we have lots of green beans from the garden or tucked away in the freezer. If you like it spicy, add your favorite hot sauce to the dish.

Beef and Green Bean Stir-Fry

1 pound ground beef
1 pound green beans, trimmed
3 tablespoons soy sauce
2–3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
1–2 teaspoons honey
Crushed red chile flakes (optional)
Cooked rice, to serve

1. In a large sauté pan over medium-high heat, cook the ground beef until browned, breaking into pieces as it cooks. Drain excess grease if desired.
2. Stir in the green beans and cook for about 5 minutes, until beans are bright green and crisp-tender.
3. Whisk together soy sauce, garlic, ginger and honey, then pour into sauté pan. Cook another 2–3 minutes, until heated through, stirring to coat. Finish with chile flakes if desired and serve with rice.

SERVES 4

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Stuffed Shells With Chicken.





Spaghetti Carbonara

LINDA HARDWICK
HOUSTON COUNTY EC

Carbonara is the ultimate comfort food and easier than you might think. This version brings in heat with crushed red chile flakes, so add according to your tastes.

- 1 pound spaghetti or other pasta**
- 4–6 slices bacon, chopped**
- 5–6 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 teaspoon crushed red chile flakes, or to taste**
- ½ cup dry white wine**
- 2 eggs**
- ¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- Salt and pepper**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley (optional)**

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to boil and add pasta, cooking according to package instructions. Reserve ½ cup pasta water and drain pasta, setting aside to keep warm.
2. While the pasta cooks, in a large frying pan over medium heat cook bacon until crisp. Remove bacon and set aside.
3. To the same pan, add garlic and red chile flakes and sauté for 1 minute, then add white wine, scraping up any stuck bits on the bottom of the pan.
4. Whisk together eggs and Parmesan, then add pasta, egg mixture, bacon and reserved pasta water to the frying pan, tossing with tongs to mix together and create a creamy sauce. Add salt and pepper to taste, and serve with parsley.

SERVES 6

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



\$500 WINNER

Eggplant Pizettes

KAY LEUSCHNER
NUECES EC



Quick, easy and filling, this is a twist on standard eggplant Parmesan. Serve it as is for a lighter meal or add to a dish of pasta with extra sauce.

SERVES 4

- ½ cup breadcrumbs**
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano**
- ½ teaspoon dried basil**
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder**
- ¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- ¼ cup mayonnaise**
- 1 eggplant, cut into ½-inch slices**
- 1 jar (26 ounces) spaghetti sauce**
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella or other cheese**

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In a shallow bowl, combine breadcrumbs, spices, garlic powder and Parmesan.
2. Spread a thin layer of mayonnaise on both sides of eggplant slices. Dip each slice into breadcrumb mixture, pressing gently to adhere the coating to both sides.
3. Arrange eggplant on an ungreased rimmed baking sheet and bake 15 minutes or until tender.
4. Remove from oven and reduce temperature to 375 degrees. Spread each eggplant slice with a dollop of spaghetti sauce and top with mozzarella. Return pan to the oven for 10–15 minutes or until cheese is melted.

\$500 Recipe Contest

HOLIDAY SIDES DUE JUNE 10

We know there's pride in the sides at your holiday feast. Submit your recipes on our website by June 10 for a chance to win \$500.





Zuppa di Ceci

SIMONA CUDE
BANDERA EC

This easy dish—the name means chickpea soup—gets a burst of vibrant flavor from lemon juice and capers. Cude recommends mashing some of the chickpeas before serving for a creamier soup.

2 tablespoons olive oil
½ onion, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced

1 medium golden potato, diced
1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
Pinch crushed red chile flakes
3 cups vegetable broth
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 cups croutons, divided use
2 tablespoons drained capers (optional)
Chopped fresh parsley (optional)

1. In a large soup pot over low heat, heat oil. Add onion and garlic and cook 2 minutes. Add potato and cook another 2 minutes.
2. Stir in chickpeas, chile flakes, broth, salt and pepper. Raise heat to medium-high and bring to a boil, then reduce to low and cook 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice. Taste and adjust seasonings if desired.
4. Add ½ cup croutons to each of 4 bowls and ladle soup over the top. Top with capers and parsley, if using.

SERVES 4

Batching for Busy Days

BY MEGAN MYERS

You can freeze cooked beans and grains, like rice and quinoa, for easy use later.

1. Cook as usual, doubling or tripling the recipe for larger batches.
2. Let cool completely. Cool grains quickly by spreading onto a large sheet pan.
3. Scoop into freezer-safe bags or containers in 1- or 2-cup increments. Remove as much air as possible, then seal, label and store in the freezer.
4. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator or more quickly in a bowl of warm water; or add to your favorite soups while frozen.

SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



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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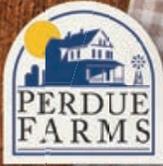


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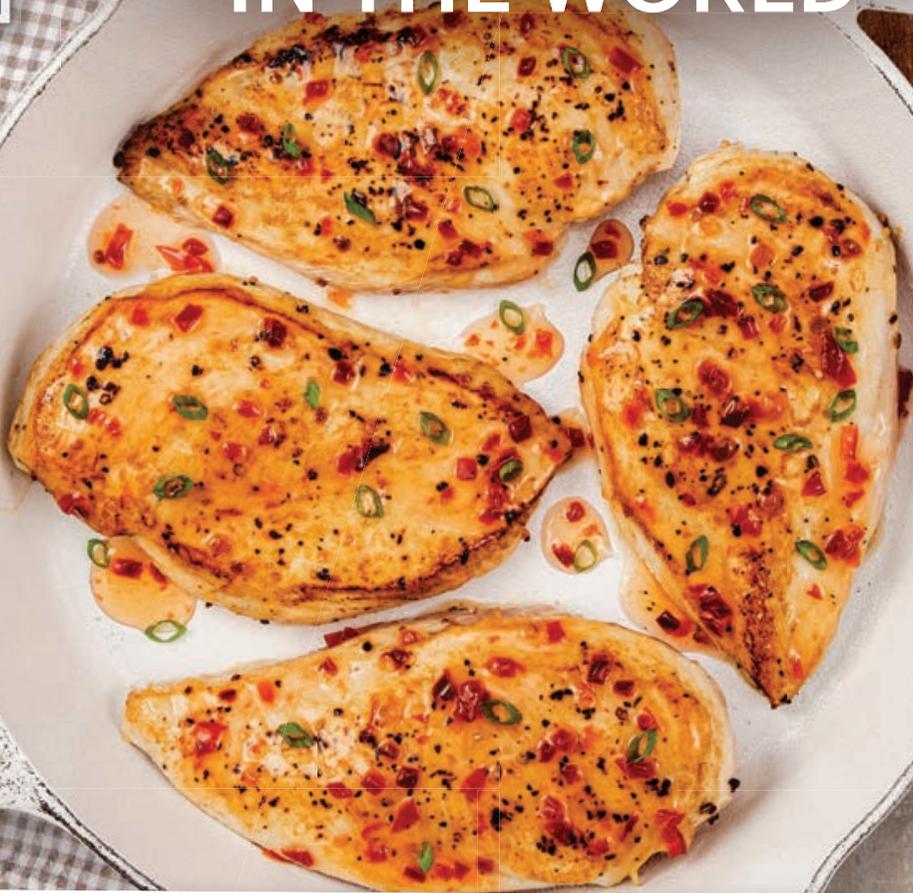
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Eruption Evidence

Drive into the Paisano Pass Volcano in far West Texas to view prehistory

BY CHET GARNER

IF I CLOSE my eyes to imagine a volcano, I see a Polynesian island with palm trees, beaches and an endless ocean. I definitely don't imagine the cactus-filled landscapes of West Texas.

Yet there I was, standing on the shoulder of U.S. Highway 90, halfway between Alpine and Marfa, staring at the Paisano Pass Volcano, which—fortunately for visitors—has been dormant for about 30 million years.

The drive west from Alpine to the ancient site was impressive. Red cliffs and strange rock spires on each side of the road made me feel like I was traveling back to the Cretaceous Period. Honestly, I wouldn't have been surprised if a T. rex had crossed the road in front of me. I crested a hill and dropped into a valley, where I pulled into a roadside park to read an educational panel about the lava-formed landscape.

All around me were colorful cliffs, knobby boulders and crag-covered mountains that were formed during the Oligocene Epoch, 23–33 million years ago. Dinosaurs were extinct then, but giant mammals walked the earth, including 18-foot-tall beasts that looked like a mix between horses and rhinos. It was during this era that the Paisano Pass Volcano exploded and then collapsed back onto itself, leaving a 3-mile-wide caldera that stretches as far as you can see from the small park.

Geologists come from all over the world to study this volcano because it exposed layers of rock normally hidden miles below the surface of the earth. The Big Bend is still tectonically active and has even experienced violent earthquakes as recently as 1998. While another volcanic eruption is unlikely, I never say never in Texas. And so I promptly got back in my truck and continued down the road. ■

ABOVE Chet studies a roadside panel depicting the history and geology of the Paisano Pass Volcano.

TCP Chet vs. the volcano: It's not a movie, but it is a video on our website. Watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

JUNE 09

Lufkin Beautiful: The Carole King Musical, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

Abilene [9–11] Children's Art and Literacy Festival, (325) 677-1161, abilenecalf.com

Lockhart [9–11] Chisholm Trail Roundup, (512) 398-2818, chisholmtrailroundup.com

Temple [9–11] Texas State Federation Square and Round Dance Festival, (254) 223-2484, squaredancetx.com

10

Levelland Sip & Swirl, (806) 894-9079, downtownlevelland.com

Fredericksburg [10–11] Craft Beer Festival, (830) 997-8515, fbgcrafterbeerfestival.com

Fredericksburg [10–11] Thomas Michael Riley Music Festival, (830) 997-3224, thomasmichaelriley.com

Blanco [10–12] Lavender Festival, (830) 833-5101, blancolavenderfest.com

Elgin [10–11, 19] Juneteenth Festival, (512) 963-2721, elgintx.com/194/juneteenth-festival

San Antonio [10–Aug. 6] Fiesta Noche del Rio, (210) 226-4651, fiestanochesa.com

11

East Bernard Czech Kolache-Klobase Festival, (979) 335-7907, kkfest.com

Fredericksburg Pride in the Pacific, (830) 997-8600, pacificwarmuseum.org

Jacksonville Tomato Fest, (903) 586-2217, jacksonvilletexas.com/tomato-fest

Kyle Market Days, (512) 262-3939, cityofkyle.com

Mesquite Rodeo Road Rally, (972) 284-9411, rodeoroadrally.com

Nacogdoches Texas Blueberry Festival, (936) 564-7351, texasblueberryfestival.com

Lufkin [14-15] Blue Man Group, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

Stonewall [16-18] Peach JAMboree, (830) 644-2735, stonewalltexas.com

Kyle Ash Pavilion Skate Night, (512) 262-3939, cityofkyle.com

Longview [17-19] Great Texas Balloon Race, (903) 753-3281, greattexasballoonrace.com

Comanche Rodeo Parade, (325) 356-3233, comanchechamber.org

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

Bowie [18-25] Jim Bowie Days Rodeo and Celebration, (940) 872-1114, jimbowiedays.org

MORE EVENTS >

TCP *Submit Your Event*

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

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Pick of the Month

**100th Annual Freestone
County Fair and Rodeo**
Fairfield, June 13-18
(903) 388-5003, fcfar.org

Check out the rodeo action, live-stock show, rides, food and other entertainment as Free-stone County's annual fair cele-brates the century mark. Fairfield is about 60 miles east of Waco.

JUNE EVENTS CONTINUED

22 **Levelland [22-25] Golden
Spread Classic Steer
and Heifer Show,**
(806) 759-1102,
goldenspreadclassic.com

23 **Mexia [23-25] Rodeo,**
(254) 562-5569,
mexiachamber.com

25 **Arlington Tommy DeCarlo
With Rudy Cardenas,**
(817) 543-4308,
levittpavilionarlington.org

Brenham Crystal Gayle,
(979) 337-7240,
thebarnhillcenter.com

**Comanche Red Dirt
Dinner and Dancing,**
(325) 325-3233,
comanchechamber.org

Ennis Freedom Fest,
(972) 878-4748,
visitennis.org

**Belton [25, July 1-4]
4th of July Celebration,**
(254) 939-3551,
beltonchamber.com

JULY

01 **Canadian [1-4] Fourth
of July Celebration,**
(806) 323-6234,
canadiantx.com

02 **Boerne Music in the
Cave: American Stories
by Marbrisha Trio,**
(830) 537-4212,
cavewithoutaname.com

**Fredericksburg [2-3,
16-17] Pari-Mutuel Horse
Racing,** (830) 997-2359,
gillespiefair.com

**Granbury [2-4] Hometown
4th of July,** (817) 573-1622,
visitgranbury.com

**The Colony Liberty by
the Lake,** (972) 625-1106,
visitthecolonytx.com/events

03 **Addison Kaboom Town,**
(972) 450-2800,
addisonkaboomtown.com

**Grand Prairie [3-4]
Lone Stars & Stripes
Fireworks Celebration,**
(972) 263-7223,
lonestarpark.com

04 **Cameron 4th of July
Fireworks,** (254) 697-4979,
cameron-tx.com

**Fredericksburg 4th of July
Parade and Fireworks,**
(830) 997-6523,
visitfredericksburgtx.com

Lubbock 4th on Broadway,
(806) 749-2929,
broadwayfestivals.com

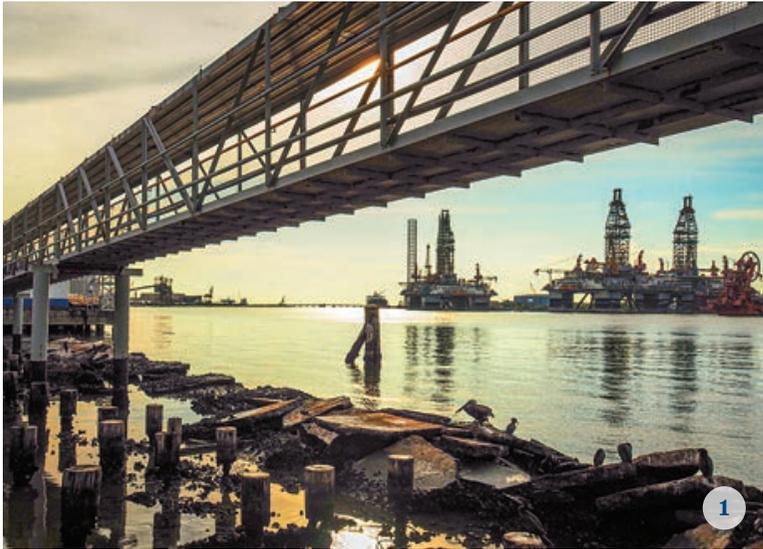
**McKinney Red, White and
Boom,** (972) 547-7480,
mckinneytxas.org

**Tomball July 4th Fire-
works and Street Fest,**
(281) 351-5484,
tomballtx.gov

Industrial

Docks, factories, train yards and mills are all reminders of local industry that dot the Texas landscape—or used to. Rediscover remnants of the past and celebrate innovations that move us into the future.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 LISA CORKER
FAYETTE EC
 "Beautiful sunset at the Galveston shipyard."

2 REAGAN FERGUSON
CENTRAL TEXAS EC
 An abandoned Fort Worth incinerator.

3 STEPHANIE EHLERT
GREENBELT EC
 Pastureland in Jericho on what used to be part of Route 66.

4 DANNY PICKENS
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC
 "This abandoned factory in Longview seems as though everyone just walked away and left it to decay."



Upcoming Contests

- DUE JUN 10** Hometown Pride
- DUE JUL 10** Aerials
- DUE AUG 10** Winter Wildlife



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



Pop's Light Touch

A keepsake reminds a daughter of her father's illuminating ways

BY BABS RODRIGUEZ
ILLUSTRATION BY
NAVINA CHHABRIA

MY FATHER was always telling someone to turn out a light.

Except when he was telling one of his five children to turn one on.

"Time for bed, turn out your light."

"Turn out the light you left on in the bathroom."

"Turn on your desk light, you'll ruin your eyes."

A military man who ran a tight ship at home, Pop had a sixth sense when it came to knowing who had left an unoccupied room without flipping a switch or who was reading in the dark.

I think about him whenever I set up the furnishings in a new household because he taught me the power of light to set a mood. He had strong opinions about which combination of lamps would generate the best conversation

or encourage lingering over dinner or—with a measured flipping of switches—not so subtly end an evening.

For my 13th birthday, I was allowed to host my very first boy-girl fiesta, made yet more festive by the number of string lights he hung in the backyard trees. However, that gesture may have been less about mood setting and more about oversight. That was definitely how he used the porch lights, flashing them on and off during my high school years and sending clear messages to any one of us daughters hovering outside with a date for what he considered too long.

Maybe his time on the air base or studying the lighted dials in a bomber's cockpit made him keenly attuned to messaging via lighting, but he never bought a lamp or a fixture without some research. Except for one.

Once, at an antiques show, he impulsively purchased a tiny brass lamp. He called it a fairy lamp, although it looked nothing like the glass Victorian-era candle lamps of that name. It was charming, with signs of the maker's hand in the unpolished brass base and a thin metal shade that looked like a pointed gnome's cap.

When he bought it, I was sad that the lamp's wiring was so dangerously undone that there was no doubt it was a fire hazard. And while he forbade me from ever actually using it, I kept that lamp in my room, imagining the places it might have illuminated in years past.

Pop had it rewired for me when I left for college, and it's traveled with me around the world. It is the most meaningful gift I ever received, but in case the metaphor eluded my young self, he included a card: "If you get homesick, Daughter, know I've always left a light on for you."

I think of him every time I switch it on, but only after I've turned out all the lights I'm not using. ■



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