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STILL ROAMS

RECIPES: PIES  
THAT TANTALIZE

FUNNY SIGNS  
SURE TO TICKLE

# Texas Coop Power

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NOVEMBER 2021

## Sky- High Pie

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**BLUEBONNET  
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 18



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Sky-high pies embody the delights of meringue.

*By Paula Disbrowe  
Photos by Wyatt McSpadden*

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*By Rhonda Reinhart*

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ON THE COVER

A slice of Rebecca Rather's lemon meringue pie from Emma + Ollie in Fredericksburg.

*Photo by Wyatt McSpadden*

ABOVE

Bison at Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway.

*Photo by Earl Nottingham | TPWD*

# Future Foodies

**TONI TIPTON-MARTIN** is a food and nutrition journalist and author whose latest book, *Jubilee: Recipes From Two Centuries of African American Cooking*, features a recipe for Baked (Barbecued) Beans that we spotlighted in May. She adds to her long list of accolades this month when she receives the Julia Child Award, which honors those who have made a significant difference in the way Americans cook, eat and drink.

Tipton-Martin plans to use her award, a \$50,000 grant, to mentor the next generation of food writers.



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE A TEXAN WOULD NEVER ...

**TCP** Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to [letters@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:letters@TexasCoopPower.com) or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town. Below are some of the responses to our September prompt: **The sweetest sound in the world is ...**

The distant whistle of a passing train at night as I drift off to sleep.

RICK SULIK  
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC  
SHINER

Horses munching hay in the quiet evening.

ROBIN GRAY  
SAN BERNARD EC  
HOCKLEY

Silence. Nature is a close second.

ALLEN JONES  
VIA FACEBOOK

Ocean waves gently hitting the shore.

KATHY O'NEAL PRIKRYL  
VIA FACEBOOK

A baby's giggle.

MONA TUCKER  
RUSK COUNTY EC  
CARTHAGE

Rain falling on my tin roof porch.

SUE NASH  
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC  
ETOILE

To see more responses, read Currents online.

## FARMING GOES ELECTRIC

Monarch Tractor plans to begin shipping its first-of-its-kind fully electric, driver-optional tractor this fall.

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The Monarch will start at \$58,000.



*November 3*  
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# A Broadcasting Victory

**THE FIRST LIVE PLAY-BY-PLAY** broadcast of a college football game in Texas occurred 100 years ago in College Station, a scoreless tie between Texas A&M University and the University of Texas.

To pull it off November 24, 1921, radio station 5XB—later WTAW (Watch The Aggies Win)—ran lines from the Kyle Field press box to a transmitter at Bolton Hall and borrowed equipment from the Corps of Cadets Signal Corps.



## First Lady's Milestone

Laura Bush, former first lady of Texas and the U.S., turns 75 on November 4. Before marrying George W. Bush, she taught in public schools in Dallas, Houston and Austin and worked as a school librarian. Laura Bush was born in 1946 in Midland.



**TCP** *Contests and More*

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DAVE SHAEFER

**Aviation Fame**

The Lone Star Flight Museum at Ellington Airport in Houston hosts the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame, which includes Bessie Coleman as one of 70 or so who have made remarkable contributions to flight [Queen Bess Soared, June 2021].

Gary Watt  
Bluebonnet EC  
Washington, Texas



My granny had a small stock tank [Pools in the Pasture, August 2021]. She called it the goose tank. We had fun in it. Seined it for crawfish. Used them for fish bait.

MARY RUTH LARGENT  
VIA FACEBOOK



GORDON STUDDER

**Second to None**

“I was happy to read that Texas Tech opened a veterinary school. We need more country boys and girls who don’t mind getting manure on their jeans.”

MINNIE PESL  
BARTLETT EC  
ROCKDALE

**A Toxic Topic?**

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers’ words did bug me [Do Words Bug You?, June 2021].

In addition to ingestion, poisons can affect life by contact or radiation—think poison ivy or certain cancer treatments. Poison is best defined as a substance with inherent properties that tends to destroy or impair life. Toxins are a subgroup of poisons produced by an organism. Venom specifically is a toxin introduced into victims by injection.

Robert Humphrey  
Heart of Texas EC  
Waco

**Fleeing Thought**

I never realized that while the armies of Texians and Mexicans fought, many civilians found it necessary to abandon everything they owned and relocate in a hurry [The Runaway Scrape, April 2021]. This makes me wonder what I would do if that situation arose in my lifetime.

B. Jason Epps  
Trinity Valley EC  
Heartland

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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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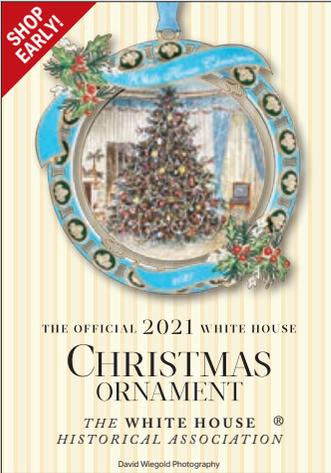
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# The Alchemy of Egg Whites

**I**T WAS MOSTLY ABOUT the reward of pie, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

For several years I joined my daughter, Flannery, and her Girl Scout troop on their annual trip to Camp Champions in Marble Falls. The outing, which usually landed in early May, was much anticipated by the girls, even though each year seemed to be cursed by dramatic Texas weather. There were frigid nights in drafty cabins and torrential thunderstorms, and one terrifying year, a tornado chased us out of town.

Mother Nature, plus a hysteria fueled by s'mores and the energy of several hundred girls, made our departure each Sunday morning feel like a small victory, akin to making it through an episode of *Survivor*.

The treat at the end of those epic weekends was breakfast at the Blue Bonnet Cafe, the beloved institution known for its pies and recognizable by its awesome neon signage. One year we gave Flannery's bestie, Clara, a ride to the restaurant. As we waited in line for a table, we all became mesmerized by the cooler displaying whopping wedges of fruit pies, cream pies and custard-based show stealers crowned with implausibly high clouds of meringue.

Clara, eyes wide and mother conveniently en route, asked if she might order pie for breakfast. Naturally, I acquiesced. When the massive wedge of lemon meringue pie was placed in front of her, her reaction—a mixture of disbelief, wonder and pure joy—made us all burst out laughing. Years later we all vividly remember Clara's meringue pie moment, which speaks to another attribute of pies: They can create cherished memories.



ABOVE Making meringue starts with separating egg whites from yolks. RIGHT Adela Rangel has been the pie chef at Koffee Kup Family Restaurant in Hico for 24 years.



↑  
*Sky-high pies  
embody  
the delights  
of meringue*



TOP Rebecca Rather, chef at Emma + Ollie in Fredericksburg, with a lemon meringue pie.  
ABOVE A slice of coconut meringue pie from Koffee Kup.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT Servers Ellie Fonseca at Blue Bonnet Cafe in Marble Falls and Emma Roach at Koffee Kup show off the towering meringues at their diners. Maura Dominguez has been mounding meringue at Blue Bonnet for 33 years.



**FOR MANY PEOPLE,** myself included, certain pies are steeped in memories or connected to memorable occasions. Coconut cream pie? The time I was lucky enough to interview Lyle Lovett over a couple slices in Old Town Spring. Late June means Stonewall peaches and galettes (rustic French tarts) several nights a week. Billowy meringue pies always make me think of my friend Rebecca Rather (more on her later).

“Pie, in general, makes people happy,” concurs Dave Plante, owner of Blue Bonnet Cafe. “If you come through our line between the hours of 10 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon, chances are you’re gonna see our huge mixers full of a fluffy white mixture bubbling up and out of the side,” Plante says. “It’s mesmerizing to watch.”

The fascination with sky-high meringue is evident in the surprise of customers at Hico’s Koffee Kup Family Restaurant, where the motto is “Pie fixes everything.”

“When they see the meringue in the pie case, their jaw drops open,” says manager and co-owner Irene Leach, whose first job at the Koffee Kup in 1987 was baking pies. Now, Adela Rangel starts baking five flavors, plus two sugar-free options, at 6:30 each morning, as she has for 24 years.

Blue Bonnet’s Plante tells me that customers often inquire how they pile the meringue so high—a trick he attributes to seasoned bakers who have been whipping egg whites and sugar for years.

**SO WHAT IS MERINGUE**, actually? In its simplest form, it's a mixture of stiffly beaten egg whites and granulated sugar. To achieve a perfectly smooth texture, the sugar is typically added slowly—a tablespoon at a time.

For further insight I called a noted meringue whisperer—Rebecca Rather, chef at Emma + Ollie in Fredericksburg and the creative mind behind her wildly popular “big-hair meringue tarts” (featuring spiky meringue tops reminiscent of retro hairstyles). “Once I went to a Weight Watchers meeting, and some of the women there yelled at me and said I was responsible for their extra pounds,” she recalls with a laugh. “You know I love meringue but only when it's done right; it needs to be stiff and strong and hold up. I don't like it when it's sloppy, watery and nasty.”

Rather perfected her meringue game years ago when she was the pastry chef at Tony's in Houston. “I used to decorate huge ice cream bombs with meringue, and I had to do it in the freezer,” she recalls. For all her desserts, including the banana pudding served at Emma + Ollie, she still relies on the meringue recipe in her first book, *The Pastry Queen*.

For Rather's method, the sugar is whisked with egg whites over a pan of simmering water until it dissolves and then whipped with an electric mixer until it's stiff and shiny. The key, she tells me, is to beat the whites slowly in the beginning, until they're light and foamy, and then beat them at high speed until stiff peaks form.

I knew Cathy Barrow, author of *Pie Squared* (a cookbook devoted to rectangular “slab pies”), would have opinions on the subject. “I think we all need more meringue in our life,” she tells me. “It tastes so much like campfire marshmallows and makes the kitchen smell great as it toasts under the broiler. If you have a blowtorch, bronzing meringue is a badass move as a party trick.”

Preparing meringue is also a smart way to make the most of leftover ingredients. “If you make ice cream or flan or many cakes or enriched doughs, you'll end up with egg whites, and they keep a long time,” Barrow says. She keeps hers in a covered jar in the fridge. “Sometimes I make Pavlovas and then turn those into fruit fools,” she adds. (Named after the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova, the dessert consists of a crisp meringue base topped with whipped cream and fresh fruit.) “But whenever I can,” Barrow continues, “I cover the surface or pipe or plop a pretty meringue edge on a pie. Don't limit this action to lemon or lime pies. A meringue topping on a bumbleberry pie is amazing.”

Pie recipes handed down from one generation to the next are particularly transporting. “My grandma's chocolate meringue pie is my favorite thing to eat in the entire world,” says Lisa Fain, author of *The Homesick Texan* cookbooks and food blog. “Whether it makes an appearance after a good day or a bad one, it never fails to lift my spirits. It's always a declaration of love.”

This particular pie, Fain adds, is more than the sum of its parts. “It's a simple recipe, and her meringues are more of an accent rather than a statement since they're never all that tall. The combination of fluffy topping, rich custard and salty crust may appear humble, but it's the finest dessert that I know.” ■



## Rebecca Rather's Meringue

Rather uses a kitchen torch to brown her meringue-topped pies and tarts, but the process can also be done quickly under a broiler.

**10 extra-large egg whites,**  
**at room temperature**  
**3 cups sugar**

1. Place a large, perfectly clean metal bowl over a pot of simmering water. Pour in the egg whites and sugar. (If there is a trace of fat in the bowl, the eggs won't reach their proper volume.)
2. Heat the egg whites and sugar while whisking constantly until the sugar melts and there are no visible grains in the meringue. Take a little meringue mixture and rub it between your fingers to make sure all the sugar grains have melted.
3. Remove the bowl from the pot and whip it with a mixer fitted with a whisk attachment on low speed for 5 minutes; increase the speed to high and beat 5 minutes longer, until the meringue is stiff and shiny.

**MAKES MERINGUE FOR 1 PIE**

Reprinted with permission from *The Pastry Queen* (Ten Speed Press, 2004).

**TCP WEB EXTRA** Learn more about meringue online, including Paula Disbrowe's tips for success.

BY RHONDA REINHART

# LAST OF THEIR KIND

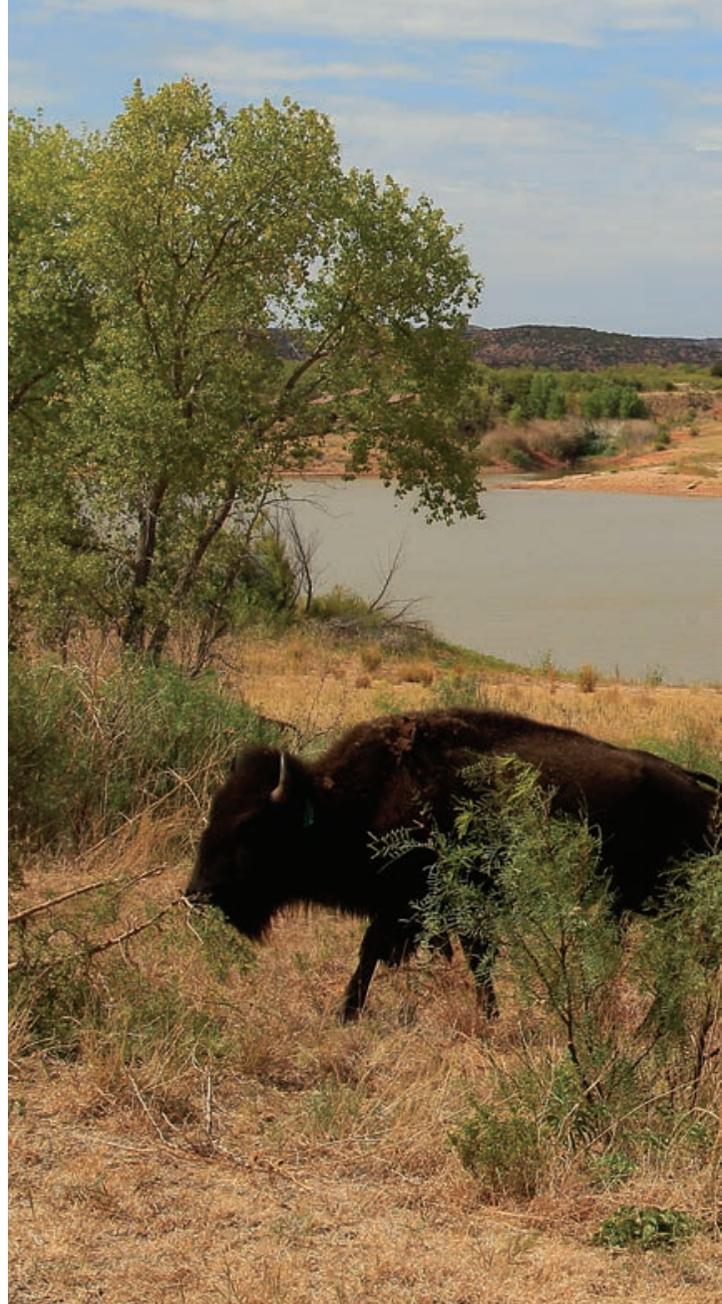
**The Texas State Bison Herd, a legacy of Charles Goodnight, helps a species crawl back from the brink of extinction**

After long days listening to shots ring out across the Texas Panhandle plains, Mary Ann Goodnight would lie awake, tormented by the cries of orphaned bison calves. It was the late 1870s, and professional hide hunters were obliterating the country's bison population.

Known as the “great slaughter,” hunting from 1874 to 1878 left the iconic animals nearly extinct, with estimates from 1888 suggesting that fewer than 1,000 bison remained in North America—down from the 30 million–60 million that once roamed the continent.

But it was the wails of those abandoned calves bawling for their mothers night after night—heartbreaking sounds that Goodnight described in diary entries from the time—that spurred her to act in 1878. The wife of cattleman Charles Goodnight, the famed Texas Panhandle rancher, pleaded with her husband to rescue what he could of the surviving bison.

The couple had settled in Palo Duro Canyon in 1876, and within two years, hunters had nearly wiped out the animals. That's when Mary Ann Goodnight persuaded her husband to capture some of the orphaned calves and start a herd on their JA Ranch. The Goodnight bison herd prospered and grew to more than 200 animals by the 1920s. After the Goodnights' deaths (Mary Ann in 1926, Charles in 1929), the bison continued to roam the vast and rugged landscape of the JA Ranch. Though Charles Goodnight sold his interest



in the JA operation in the late 1880s and started a new ranch on nearby land, the bison ultimately migrated back to their original home.

Left on its own, the herd dwindled, and by 1994, only about 50 animals remained. When the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department learned about the declining herd in the mid-1990s from an unlikely source—Wolfgang Frey, a German wildlife conservationist with a particular interest in American bison—the agency conducted DNA testing on the bovines, revealing genetic markers not found in any other bison. Because Goodnight never brought in any bison from other areas and kept detailed records to prove it, all the animals in his herd were native Texas Panhandle bison. These animals, direct descendants of the herd started by Goodnight, were the last surviving examples of southern Plains bison.

Convinced that the historic herd was worth saving, the owners of the JA Ranch donated the bison to TPWD, and in 1997 they were relocated to Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway in Briscoe County, about 100 miles southeast of



Amarillo, on land that is part of the bison's native home range.

After two decades of TPWD management, what has become known as the Texas State Bison Herd has grown to almost 300 animals, thanks to selective breeding, annual health checks, vegetation studies and progressive habitat management practices. The donation of three bison bulls in 2003 by media tycoon and rancher Ted Turner helped broaden the herd's genetic diversity.

The bison's road to recovery was a long one. "When the park got them, there were 32," says Donald Beard, park superintendent at Caprock Canyons. "And then when I took over, there were probably around 60 or so, and that was in 2009. Then we released them into the park in 2011, and that's when they really started to flourish."

Before the 2011 release, the bison were enclosed in a 300-acre section of the park, far from view of Caprock Canyons' 100,000 yearly visitors. In September 2011 the bison were moved into more than 700 acres of restored native grass prairie but still were fenced off from the park's campsites and day-use areas.

Part of the Texas State Bison Herd at Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway.

**N**ow the bison roam 80% of the park. "The park total is almost 15,000 acres, and they have almost 12,000 acres of it to roam," Beard says. "There is one section, which is on the opposite side of a county road, that they don't have access to, but other than that, they've got free run of this park. That means through the campsites, through the trails, on Lake Theo—everywhere. This is their historic range."

Today's visitors to Caprock Canyons State Park, which is served by Lighthouse Electric Cooperative, might be greeted at park headquarters by dozens of the massive, shaggy creatures. From a distance, they appear like black specks on the wide-open prairie, but when they approach the parking lot to graze and explore, an up-close view emphasizes their sheer magnificence: the broad hump between their shoulder blades; their thick, dark brown fur;

**Driving through the park, it's clear who's the boss. If the bison feel like lounging on the roadway, well, so be it.**



and their awe-inspiring size. The bison is the largest mammal native to North America, and the bulls at Caprock Canyons can reach up to 2,000 pounds, with cows averaging 750–900 pounds. And even though some refer to the animals as buffalo because of their similar appearance, the only true buffaloes reside in Africa and Asia.

Driving through the park, it's clear who's the boss. If the bison feel like lounging on the roadway, well, so be it—traffic stops and drivers watch and wait. Hikers might also encounter them on the trails that weave through the park's striking red rock canyons, and campers might wake up to a crew of bison ambling outside their tents. Visitors to the park enjoyed a special treat in spring 2021, when about 80 bison calves joined the herd. "It's pretty neat when you get a bunch of calves out, running around and playing," Beard says. "It's a really good time to be here, come April or May."

Now that the herd is growing at a rate the park can sustain (to keep from degrading the grounds' natural resources, the current herd of about 300 is close to the park's max), Beard and his team are working on phase two of Caprock Canyons' bison conservation program. "To me, that second phase is satellite herds," he says. "So we would have another herd of 200 here, another herd of 300 there, but a herd of just Goodnight animals. And they would all be managed as one big herd—a metapopulation basically."

Though there's a herd of bison at San Angelo State Park in West Texas, those animals aren't related to Goodnight's. In fact, Beard notes, anytime an animal leaves the grounds of Caprock Canyons, it's no longer considered part of the Texas State Bison Herd.

Beard—who sits on several boards for bison conservation, including the Bison Specialist Group, a species survival commission of the International Union for Conservation of

The state herd of about 300 descends from bison raised by Charles Goodnight in the 1800s.

Nature—is in talks with the InterTribal Buffalo Council to start herds on tribal lands with Goodnight animals. He's also looking at how partnerships could work with the Nature Conservancy, other nongovernmental organizations and even private ranchers. "There's a big-picture vision in place," he says. "The plan hasn't been completely put together yet, but the vision is there."

**S**o what has the plight of the Goodnight herd taught wildlife conservation experts? The way Beard sees it, it's been a lesson in survival. Around the same time Goodnight was forming his bison herd, four other conservation-minded individuals across the American West and in parts of Canada were doing the same. The five foundation herds helped save bison from extinction by providing the foundation stock for today's herds. Though Goodnight's herd was small, it was one of the best known of the five foundation herds.

"[The Goodnight herd] has taught us that we can come back with a relatively small number of animals to a healthy, viable population," Beard says. "To be a success story in conservation, the IUCN and some of the other conservation organizations have said that you need a couple of thousand head of bison, which means that if we were to walk away and not touch this herd ever again, they would survive. We're not there yet, but we're well on our way." ■

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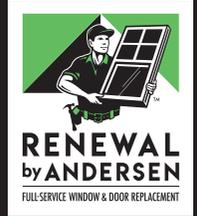


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# Thank you

## FOR YOUR SERVICE

**On this Veterans Day  
we recognize  
19 Bluebonnet employees  
who chose to serve our nation.**



Meet the many Bluebonnet employees who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, **pages 19-24.**

**Stories by Melissa Segrest  
Photos by Sarah Beal**

**THE FIRST TIME**, they signed up for their country. The second time, they signed up for their community. Both times, they signed up for something bigger than themselves.

Nineteen employees of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative are U.S. military veterans. They were in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. They went when and where our country needed them – from 1966 to 2018, from Vietnam to Virginia, California to Afghanistan. They gave up family time, the comforts of home and the lifestyle most of us take for granted.

Now, their duty station is a 24/7 workplace that provides another essential service: providing safe, reliable electricity to more than more than 114,000 meters in 14 Central Texas counties.

Both jobs honor duty and responsibility. They work to protect many people they may never meet. Each employee is one on a team of many, and the team is the way the job gets done.

That's double duty to serve the masses. But duty, it seems, is their destiny.

— Denise Gamino



Taylor Rutledge holds the American flag that flew in the back of his medevac unit's Black Hawk helicopter in Afghanistan. Below, Rutledge was a crew chief for 9 months starting in 2014. He flew about 30 missions for the Army.



## Taylor Rutledge

**U.S. ARMY, SERGEANT**

**2012-2015**

**K-16 Army airfield, Seoul, South Korea;  
Fort Bragg, N.C.; Jalalabad, Afghanistan**

- Bluebonnet employee for 3 years
- Journeyman line worker
- Lives in Bastrop

**A WINDING, REMARKABLE** path brought 28-year-old journeyman line worker Taylor Rutledge to Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative.

He grew up in Hooks, a small town 15 miles west of Texarkana. At 19, he quit his job on a cattle ranch and headed for an Army recruiter's office. "I told him I wanted to be some kind of mechanic," he said. His twin brother was already in Air Force basic training and his parents agreed with his decision.

He went to Fort Jackson, S.C., for basic training, then to Fort Eustis, Va., for advanced training for helicopter mechanics. "They told me I could either do Chinooks, the big helicopters, or Black Hawks. I didn't know about either one, so I said, 'Give me Black Hawk.'"

He got what he asked for and was off to K-16 Army airfield in Seoul, South Korea, to do aircraft maintenance in an air assault company and train with Korean troops. "The city was huge. It was a culture shock," he said. Buddies finally tempted him off base, where he learned to use the subway and enjoy the food. "It was spicy, but I liked it."

He was in Seoul for a year.

Fast forward: He fell in love with a family friend's daughter, Samantha Diles, over Facebook chats from Korea, met her at the airport after landing from overseas, put in six months at Fort Bragg, N.C., before coming home to New Boston, Texas, in December 2013. They married and moved to North Carolina.

He knew something was coming. "We flew from Fort Bragg to El Paso and did high altitude training in the mountains of New Mexico, to adjust to low oxygen levels," he said. A few months later, in July 2014, Rutledge was deployed to Afghanistan as a member of an airborne medical evacuation unit. He was 21.

**Continued on page 24**

## Matthew McGarr

**U.S. NAVY, PETTY OFFICER  
SECOND CLASS**

**1988-1994**

**London, England; Norfolk, Va.**

- Bluebonnet employee for 14 years
- Control center operator
- Lives in College Station



Matthew McGarr works in Bluebonnet's Control Center. He worked with complex technology during his time in the Navy, too. His cap bears the insignia of the USS George Washington nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, on which he served.

**SINCE ENLISTING IN** the Navy at 18, Matthew McGarr has been working with computers and technology. "I was a computer geek with a clearance," he said. "In some ways, it's similar to what I'm doing now as a control center operator at Bluebonnet."

McGarr grew up in the Texas Panhandle and wasn't ready for college after high school. But the military made sense: His grandfather was in the Army in World War II, and his father flew Army helicopters in Vietnam.

He reported for boot camp in San Diego in 1988, and, after an additional round of training, he was stationed in London for three years.

It wasn't the typical military experience. McGarr worked in the heart of the city but was not allowed to wear his uniform, because "the queen had tired of seeing uniforms in

World War Two," he was told. Conservative banker attire helped him blend in, "except, when you opened your mouth everybody knew you weren't from there," he said.

McGarr was allowed to soak up London sites, sports and food in off hours. He traveled around Europe and even tried to teach some Brits how to play softball, with limited success.

After London he went to Norfolk, Va. for the remainder of active duty on the USS George Washington aircraft carrier, helping install technology and outfit the ship to operate.

The massive carrier housed 6,000 military members, essentially a floating town. McGarr's berth was just below the flight deck, so he learned to sleep through takeoffs and landings.

He completed active duty in 1994 and

earned a bachelor's degree in information and operations management from Texas A&M University. He came to Bluebonnet in 2007 to work in the 24-hour control center, mastering a steady flow of new technologies that monitor Bluebonnet's electric system, power outages and line workers.

The military taught McGarr how to work with people who are under pressure and guide them through difficult situations, he said.

He has a short list of Navy takeaways: Take care of things early, before they become problems. What goes around, comes around. And, most important, "You are just a small part of everything. There's something bigger than you in life," McGarr said. "And you have to work as a team. Not everything can be done by you."



## Keith Knobloch

**U.S. ARMY, SPECIALIST**

**1982-1986**

**Fort Carson, Colo.; Coleman Barracks,  
Mannheim, Germany**

- Bluebonnet employee retired after 33 years, power quality and metering technician; currently part-time, same position
- Lives in Elgin



## Jeffrey Bolding

**U.S. MARINE CORPS, LANCE  
CORPORAL**

**2005-2008**

**Camp Pendleton, Calif.**

- Bluebonnet employee for 12 years
- Journeyman line worker
- Lives in Bastrop



## Jorge Varillas

**U.S. MARINE CORPS,  
SERGEANT  
1990-2000  
Camp Pendleton, Calif.**

- Bluebonnet employee for 26 years
- Engineering project coordinator
- Lives in Lockhart

**BEFORE GOOGLE** and YouTube made it easy to research the U.S. military, there was the legendary reputation of the Marines: tough, brave and unwavering from their mission. Jorge Varillas looked up to them and enlisted a few years after high school.

“I thought if I don’t try it now, I might regret it. I didn’t want to wonder what it might have been like 10, 20 years later,” he said.

Varillas left his home in Nixon, Texas, and went through three months of boot camp at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, then another three months of specialized training at the School of Infantry there.

“I didn’t realize it was going to be such a mental challenge,” he said. “I thought it would be mostly physical.” The Marines demanded discipline, practice and precision. “The faster we got, the harder the drill instructors would get on us,” he said. “If one person would mess up, everybody would pay for it.”

Physical challenges were nonstop — miles and miles of running with a 60-pound backpack and a weapon. “The longest trek was mountain warfare training in Northern California,” Varillas said. It involved rappelling and crossing rivers using carabiners on ropes. “Then a blizzard hit. There was three feet of snow. Training was canceled and we hiked 20 miles back to camp.”

After California, Varillas returned to Texas and joined the Marine reserves at



Jorge Varillas with his ceremonial dress blues jacket from his 10 years in the U.S. Marines, left. He has worked at Bluebonnet 26 years and today is a project coordinator.

Camp Mabry in Austin. He trained for deployment to the Persian Gulf War in Iraq, which ended just before he was to leave. “I wanted to go,” he said.

Most of his military training was in California until 2000. He briefly joined a joint military-Drug Enforcement Administration task force to patrol the Sequoia National Forest in search of marijuana farms.

Varillas started out as a beginner at Bluebonnet, too. He began with a brush crew to clear vegetation in 1995 while still a Marine reservist, then moved on to be a Bluebonnet line worker. After several years, he designed plans for lines and equipment for locations getting new electric service. Now he is a project coordinator in engineering and has been at Bluebonnet for 26 years.

The next generation of the Varillas family — one of his four children — has enlisted. His oldest, 20-year-old daughter Aracely, joined the Air Force in April this year, and is stationed in Germany. “There’s a sense of pride in serving, I told her,” he said.

Dior Smith in April, 2016, in South Korea, where he was deployed with the Army.



**Dior Smith**  
**U.S. ARMY, SPECIALIST**  
**2015-2018**  
**Fort Lee, Va.; Fort Jackson, S.C.;**  
**Camp Humphreys, South Korea; Fort**  
**Bliss, El Paso**

- Bluebonnet employee for 8 months
- Line worker apprentice 1
- Lives in Bastrop



**Ray Meyer, Jr.**  
**U.S. MARINE CORPS, SERGEANT**  
**2003-2007**  
**Camp Lejeune, N.C.; Guatemala;**  
**Iraq**

- Bluebonnet employee for 16 years
- Control center operator
- Lives in Lexington



## Brandon Johnson

**U.S. ARMY, SPECIALIST**

1991-1994

Fort Polk, La.; Fort Hood, Texas;  
Fort Benning, Ga.

Army National Guard, Sergeant  
2014-present

- Bluebonnet employee for 15 years
- Safety and training supervisor
- Lives in Bastrop



Brandon Johnson with his U.S. Army rucksack and the beret that can be worn with both dress and operational camouflage uniforms. Johnson has worked at Bluebonnet for 15 years and continues to serve the nation as a member of the Army National Guard. At far left, he prepares for a jump from a Chinook helicopter at Fort Wolters in Mineral Wells, Texas, in 2020.

**BRANDON JOHNSON** was 17 when he and a buddy signed up for the Army. The next year, 1991, he started basic training and quickly learned that life at Fort Benning, Ga., was a far, hot cry from his frequently frozen hometown of Tolna in North Dakota.

He went on to advanced individual training at Fort Benning. “I got to do a lot of challenging stuff I never did before – and probably never will again,” he said. “Throw grenades. Shoot different caliber automatic weapons, anti-tank weapons. Learn how to set (remote-control) Claymore mines.”

Next was airborne school at Fort Benning, and Johnson found his military calling: jumping out of an airplane.

Learning to jump and land correctly are essential. Paratroopers hit the ground going about 18 feet per second. “Feet, knees, legs

together – twist and crumple your body to the ground, end up on your back with feet on the ground,” Johnson explained. Those who walk off the landing zone without help after five airplane jumps have completed their training.

He was a mortarman at Fort Polk, La. with his regular duty unit, even after it was transferred to Fort Hood, Texas, and became part of the 2nd Armored Division. Specialist Johnson’s active duty ended in 1994.

If a military life didn’t pan out, he wanted to become a line worker. After learning the job and working in Texas and Colorado, he joined Bluebonnet in 2005. Now he is Bluebonnet’s safety and training supervisor.

His love for the jump never waned, and in 2014 he joined a National Guard unit in Mineral Wells, about 60 miles west of

Fort Worth. He is a sergeant, going to drills several days out of most months. “I pack parachutes, various sizes of cargo chutes – we’ve dropped vehicles (from the air). And I still jump to stay current on requirements.

“It’s an adrenaline rush, that anticipation of going out the door. It’s more fun than coming down with the parachute open and seeing the view.”

His unit is activated after disasters, like when he prepared supplies to be dropped by parachute into hard hit areas after Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

Safety training and squad leadership are compatible, he said. “My style of teaching and communicating work in both roles,” he said.

## Michael Guajardo

**U.S. ARMY, STAFF SERGEANT**

2010-2011, 2013, 2016

Afghanistan; Qatar

- Bluebonnet employee for 4 years
- Journeyman line worker
- Lives in Cedar Creek



## Eric Cobb

**U.S. ARMY, SERGEANT**

2005-2013

Colorado Springs, Colo.; Iraq

- Bluebonnet employee for 2 years
- Line worker apprentice 3
- Lives in Kyle





John 'Johnny' Horton shows his U.S. Army military I.D. dog tags. He served for four years in the U.S. Army and has been a Bluebonnet employee for almost two years. At left, his official portrait during his enlistment in 1988.



**John Horton**  
**U.S. ARMY, SPECIALIST**  
**1988-1992**  
**Fort Hood, Texas**

- Bluebonnet employee for 1 year, 11 months
- Journeyman line worker
- Lives in Ledbetter

**JOHN HORTON** grew up in the small Texas town of Hamilton about 65 miles west of Waco and saw the Army as an opportunity to learn and grow. He began basic training in 1988, at 19, and was posted in South Carolina and Georgia before reaching his permanent station at Fort Hood in Texas.

He repaired radios used in Army helicopters — Hueys, Black Hawks, Apaches and Chinooks. Horton also worked on two-way radios used during weapons training.

At Fort Hood he was part of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, Air Combat, then the 13th Support Command Corps.

Although the Gulf War began in 1990,

Horton was not deployed. “I kind of wanted to go, kind of wasn’t sure,” he said. “But I was prepared.”

He recalled one day of loading equipment into trucks and traveling with a Fort Hood convoy to Houston, where their cargo would be shipped overseas. Much to his shock, one unfamiliar sergeant announced to him and his crew to finish up with their unloading, because “you’re going!” Despite the misdirected command to head for the Middle East, Horton and his crew returned to Fort Hood.

Horton admits he was “a bit of a mouthy kid” before the Army. But the discipline of the military helped him learn how to be an adult.

“I learned how to treat others with respect, and how to earn the respect of others. To be honest with yourself and others. To work hard, and do what you say you’re going to do,” he said. “You had to learn how to be a good hand.”

After 4½ years, Horton completed his Army stint in 1992. He worked at several

electric cooperatives in Texas for years before coming to Bluebonnet in 2019.

“I feel proud that I served in the military, even though mine was mostly a peacetime Army experience. I would still be proud to serve in the military,” he said. “Your brother’s standing next to you, going through the same thing you are, and you are there for them. You had to be accountable, every day.”

That’s a lot like being a line worker, which can also be a life-or-death experience. He urges younger people in the field to take their jobs as seriously as he does.

And though Horton hasn’t worked on a military radio in a while, he doesn’t dismiss the idea. “I still might be able to,” he said.

Ryan Smith, left, in an armored vehicle in Afghanistan in 2013. His unit made sure roads were safe for convoys that followed.



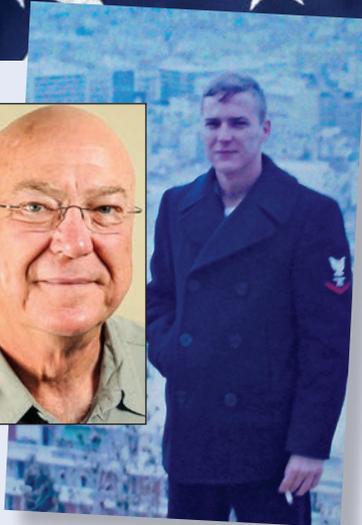
**Ryan Smith**  
**U.S. ARMY, SERGEANT**  
**2012-2017**  
**Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.;**  
**Afghanistan**

- Bluebonnet employee for 2 years
- Line worker apprentice 1
- Lives in Lockhart



**Thomas Ellis**  
**U.S. AIR FORCE, AIRMAN FIRST CLASS**  
**1984-1988**  
**Ramstein, Germany; Mildenhall, England**

- Bluebonnet employee for 18 years
- Manager of engineering
- Lives in Canyon Lake



**George Miller**  
**U.S. NAVY, PETTY OFFICER THIRD CLASS**  
 1966-1968  
 Naples, Italy; Mediterranean Sea

- Bluebonnet employee retired after 24 years, manager of material and equipment; currently part-time engineering inspector, 4 years
- Lives in Giddings

Miller, above, outside Athens, Greece, during his time in the Navy.



**Matt Waltzer**  
**U.S. MARINE CORPS, SERGEANT**  
 2012-2015  
 Norfolk, Va.; Camp Lejeune, N.C.

- Bluebonnet employee for 2 years
- Line worker apprentice 4
- Lives in Bastrop

Waltzer, above, in Senegal, Africa, where his unit was deployed to train that country's military.

**Harvey Schnell**  
**U.S. ARMY, SPECIALIST**  
 1971-1972  
 Vietnam

- Bluebonnet employee for 48 years
- Manager of inventory
- Lives in La Grange



**Jeff Williams**  
**U.S. NAVY, PETTY OFFICER THIRD CLASS**  
 1989-1993  
 Norfolk Naval Station, Va.

- Bluebonnet employee for 3 years
- Part-time maintenance inspector
- Lives in Lincoln



**Rodney Foreman**  
**U.S. ARMY, PRIVATE FIRST CLASS**  
 2013-2014  
 Schofield Barracks, Hawaii

- Bluebonnet employee for 1 year
- Line worker apprentice candidate
- Lives in Bastrop



**Stanley Lillian**  
**U.S. ARMY, SERGEANT**  
 1976-1980  
 Fort Hood, Texas; Grafenwoehr, Germany

- Bluebonnet employee retired after 37 years as a maintenance specialist in technical services, currently part-time field operations assistant, 3 years
- Lives in Lockhart

**Continued from page 19**

"I was fortunate. The medevac mission is pretty special," he said. His platoon went to Jalalabad in far eastern Afghanistan, a city flanked by mountains that dwarfed those of New Mexico.

His first mission was a nighttime 'hoist extraction.' A soldier had fallen down a cliff and had a concussion. "It's the hardest mission," Rutledge said, involving strapping an injured soldier to a "Sked" stretcher and hoisting him to a hovering helicopter. They were able to land the helicopter and return the soldier to base. "I wasn't scared but it was a little nerve-racking. But you train so much it just becomes second nature."

In Afghanistan, Rutledge saw injuries, mass casualties and combat deaths. Once, an enemy explosive on a motorcycle blew up a seven-truck Army convoy. "One truck, one of the biggest in the Army, had 14 people in it," he said. "When we got there we couldn't even tell what kind of truck it was. It was a big ball of fire and metal. Two people were trapped inside. Everybody lived, but there were a lot of injuries."

After his nine-month stint in a war zone, Rutledge felt a sense of accomplishment. "All of the training was for that. It was put to use," he said. "Being an aircraft mechanic, you don't expect to do CPR or start an IV in a helicopter. It's a good feeling to know you did well in a horrible situation."

He finished active duty and joined his wife and daughter near Fort Worth. "I wanted to do something different, learn something new," he said. Rutledge attended line worker college in Denton and was hired by Bluebonnet in April 2018. He has been at the cooperative for 3½ years. He and his wife have two children, 5-year old daughter Laney and little Tate, born Sept. 16, 2021.

"I wanted to find a career that was bigger than just myself, more than just going to work and going home," he said. "Line work was an opportunity for me to do that and make a good living." Now he works out of Bastrop, making service calls and restoring power.

Line work can be stressful, but just like in the military, there is a lot of training at Bluebonnet. Rutledge isn't easily ruffled by schedule changes and outages.

The Army tries to create leaders, and Rutledge still carries that mission. "I won't ask my crew to do anything I wouldn't do," he said. "I wouldn't ask them to walk through knee-deep water during a nighttime storm to restore power alone. No, we'll go walk out there together." ■

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## SAFETY

# Ready to deck the halls without a fall?

## 5 tips to help keep your holiday safe

**MORE THAN 5,800** injuries from falls related to holiday decorating happen every year in the U.S., and 43 percent of those are caused by falls from ladders, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Of those who fell, nearly half were hospitalized.

That's not going to make for a very jolly holiday. Keep those lights twinkling and stay safe with these five tips:

**1.** Review your surroundings and make sure to avoid potentially dangerous conditions that can hinder your ability to correctly use a ladder. When inside, set up the ladder away from doors or other hazards that could lead to a fall.

**2.** Have a ground crew (one or two people) to steady your ladder and pass the decorations up to you. They will be an invaluable part of your safety and help keep you supplied with untangled light strings, fasteners and encouragement.

**3.** Remember to keep decorations and your ladder a safe distance, 10 feet at minimum, from your overhead electric service.

**4.** Don't overreach. If you cannot get to a point with your body completely centered between the sides of the ladder, your feet firmly planted, get down and relocate the ladder. On a single or extension ladder, never stand above the third rung from the top.

**5.** Don't overextend the ladder. If your ladder is too short, rent or borrow a longer one. A ladder extended beyond its working limits is dangerous. (See item No. 4 about how and where to safely stand).

Other common holiday injuries include severe burns, cuts, choking, fires and back injuries, according to the CDC. Take care to make your home for the holidays happy and safe.



The holidays bring lots of joys, but following a few safety rules can help keep them safe.

## HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Bluebonnet offices will be closed Nov. 11 in observance of Veterans Day and Nov. 25-26 for the Thanksgiving holiday. If you have an outage, you can report it by texting OUT to 85700 (to register, text BBOUTAGE to that number), online at bluebonnet.coop, via our mobile app or by calling 800-949-4414. You can pay bills any time online, on our mobile app or call 800-842-7708 (press option 2 when prompted).





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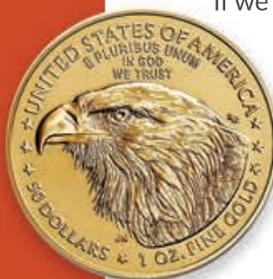
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# Biography of a Word

The label derived from the life of Samuel Maverick has Texas origins

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY TRACI DABERKO

**THIS IS A BIOGRAPHY** of a word that was essentially born in Texas, where it grew up to achieve worldwide fame, ultimately transforming itself from modest noun into grand metaphor.

The word is maverick, and it got its start in San Antonio more than 150 years ago. Today, a maverick blazes a trail, goes against the crowd and is an independent thinker. But originally, any unbranded cow was a maverick, and the first herd of unbranded cattle was owned by Samuel Maverick. Ironically, Maverick's failure (some said refusal) to brand his cattle branded his name in perpetuity.

Maverick was more interested in acquiring land than ranching it, and he ranked with Richard King and Charles Goodnight as a Texas land baron.

Maverick, born in South Carolina, first

demonstrated his nonconformist nature shortly after he arrived in San Antonio in 1835. Even though most Texans were not buying land because they feared they would not be able to hold it during uncertain times, Maverick bought huge tracts around San Antonio and farther east, along the Brazos River.

He joined the Alamo militia and would have died at the Alamo had he not been selected to sign the Texas Declaration of Independence. He was a maverick on March 2, 1836, when he risked his life, along with 59 others, by signing what Antonio López de Santa Anna declared a treasonous document. Maverick later served as mayor of San Antonio, gaining further notoriety as a leading citizen of a rebellious city.

Six years after Texas won its inde-

## TCP WEB EXTRA

Listen to W.F. Strong read this story.

pendence, Santa Anna dispatched Gen. Adrián Woll to retake control of San Antonio and to imprison all those who took up arms against Mexico. Maverick organized 53 men on the roof of a building he owned, to resist the invasion. After they killed 14 and wounded 27, they were surrounded by 900 Mexican troops and forced to surrender.

Woll did not carry out orders to execute the prisoners—instead marching them 1,000 brutal miles to Perote Prison, near Puebla, Mexico. The men were chained together in dark cells and subjected to forced labor. As the group representative, Maverick asked for better conditions and was put into solitary confinement just for asking.

After a few months, Santa Anna offered Maverick his freedom in exchange for signing a document saying that Texas had been illegally seized and should be returned to Mexico. Instead of signing, Maverick wrote, "I cannot bring myself to think that it would be to the interest of Texas to reunite with Mexico. This being my settled opinion I cannot sacrifice the interest of my country even to obtain my liberty, for I regard it as a lie and a crime which I cannot commit. I must, therefore, make up my mind to wear my chains, galling as they are."

While Maverick was in the dungeon, San Antonians elected him to the Republic of Texas House of Representatives. When he was released, Maverick refused to leave without as many of his friends from San Antonio as possible. He waited a few days for most of them to be freed, and they all traveled to San Antonio together.

When Maverick left prison, he took the chains that had bound him as a reminder of the incalculable value of freedom. ■

# Pies

A perfect showcase for favorite fruits and other fillings

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Although pie is often associated with certain times of the year, I'll take pie over cake any day. With so many flavor possibilities, the only problem is choosing one! This pie is one of my favorites to make, no matter the season. You can substitute blueberries or blackberries or use thawed frozen fruit if fresh isn't available. Be sure to dry the berries as much as possible to preserve the texture of the custard and keep the fruit juices from seeping too much.

## Raspberries and Cream Pie

### PIE

- 1 unbaked 9-inch pie crust**
- 2½ cups raspberries, washed and patted dry**
- 1 cup sugar**
- ⅓ cup flour**
- 2 eggs**
- ½ cup sour cream**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

### TOPPING

- ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons flour**
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar**
- 2 tablespoons sugar**
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, melted**

- 1. PIE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Roll out pie crust and arrange in a 9-inch pie dish. Arrange raspberries evenly in crust.
- In a small bowl, mix together sugar and flour. In a medium bowl, whisk together eggs, sour cream and vanilla until blended, then stir in sugar-flour mixture and whisk until smooth. Pour over raspberries.
- 4. TOPPING** In a small bowl, mix together flour, sugars, cinnamon and nutmeg, then add butter and mix with a fork until the topping is blended and crumbly. Scatter topping evenly over custard.
- Bake about 50 minutes, until top is golden. Let cool before serving.

**SERVES 8**

**TCP WEB EXTRA** Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at [stetted.com](http://stetted.com), where she features a recipe for Maple Pecan Pie.





## Chocolate Chip Cookie Pie

DIANE LYERLY  
PEDERNALES EC

This decadent pie tastes just like a warm, gooey cookie. It's been a Lyerly family favorite for nearly 40 years, and it's easy to understand why. If you use a premade frozen pie shell, this pie can be ready in under an hour.

- 1 unbaked 9-inch pie crust**
- 6 tablespoons butter (¾ stick), softened**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 2 eggs**
- ½ cup flour**
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips**
- ¾ cup chopped pecans**
- ½ cup shredded coconut**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Roll out pie crust and arrange in a 9-inch pie dish. Set aside or chill while you prepare the filling.
- 2.** In a medium bowl, cream butter, sugar and vanilla. Beat in eggs until smooth, then stir in flour and mix until no dry bits remain. Stir in chocolate chips, pecans and coconut and pour mixture into prepared pie crust.
- 3.** Bake 35–40 minutes, until top is lightly browned and set. Let cool before serving.

SERVES 8

MORE RECIPES >

\$500 WINNER

## Grandmama's Apple-Cranberry Pie

MARGARET UMSTATT  
PEDERNALES EC



A perfect balance of tart and sweet, this pie has been a part of Umstatt's family holiday since she was a child. A food processor can make quick work of chopping the cranberries.

SERVES 8



PIE

- 1 unbaked 9-inch pie crust**
- ¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar**
- ¼ cup sugar**
- ⅓ cup (¼ stick) butter, cubed**
- ½ cup flour**
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon**
- 4 cups peeled and diced Granny Smith apples (3–4 apples)**
- 2 cups chopped fresh or frozen and thawed cranberries**

TOPPING

- ½ cup flour**
- ¼ cup loosely packed brown sugar**
- ¼ cup (½ stick) cold butter, cubed**

- 1. PIE** Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Roll out pie crust and arrange in a 9-inch pie dish. Set aside or chill while you prepare the filling.
- 2.** In a large saucepan over medium-low heat, combine the sugars and butter, stirring to melt. Add flour, cinnamon, apples and cranberries and stir to coat fruit. Cook, stirring often to prevent burning, until mixture is somewhat syrupy, about 10 minutes. Pour filling into prepared pie crust.
- 3. TOPPING** Combine flour and brown sugar in a small bowl. Cut in the butter with a pastry cutter or two knives until the mixture forms coarse crumbs. Sprinkle evenly over the pie filling.
- 4.** Place a rimmed baking sheet on the lower oven rack to catch juices. Bake pie on the middle rack for 15 minutes. Lower temperature to 350 degrees and bake another 50 minutes. Let cool before serving.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**BRUNCH** DUE NOVEMBER 10

Do you go sweet or savory—or both? Enter your best brunch recipe at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/contests) by November 10 for a chance to win \$500.



## Savory Butternut Squash Pie

LISA LAMB  
PEDERNALES EC

Pie doesn't have to be just for dessert. Lamb's take on the classic pumpkin pie makes for a light main course. It's equally at home on the table for dinner or a holiday brunch.

### CRUST

- ¾ cup whole-wheat flour
- ½ cup oat, spelt or all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt

- 3 tablespoons cold butter
- 6 tablespoons cold water, plus more as needed

### FILLING

- 2 eggs
- 2 cups butternut squash purée
- 1 cup milk
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped sage, savory or fennel
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

1. CRUST Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. In a medium bowl, mix together flours and salt. Cut in butter until coarse crumbs are formed. Stir in water 1 tablespoon at a time, until a cohesive dough is formed. (The amount will vary depending on humidity levels and flours used.) Move dough onto a floured surface, form into a ball and fold a few times to fully incorporate ingredients. Roll out and place into a 9-inch pie dish. Set aside or chill while you prepare filling.

3. FILLING In a large bowl, whisk together all the filling ingredients until well blended. Pour into prepared pie crust.

4. Bake 15 minutes, then reduce temperature to 350 degrees and bake an additional 45 minutes. Let cool before serving.

SERVES 8

**TCP WEB EXTRA** There's always enough pie to go around when you use TexasCoopPower.com. Visit the Food page, search "pie" and discover hundreds of recipes previously featured in *Texas Co-op Power*.

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## A West Texas Gem

Downtown San Angelo features glimpses of frontier living

BY CHET GARNER

IT'S ONE OF THE largest towns in America not on an interstate. It's the wool and mohair capital of the world. And it's one of the few places where the main street still offers a glimpse of genuine frontier days.

On a searing summer afternoon, I found myself strolling down Concho Avenue in the heart of San Angelo's historic district. Named after the Concho River that flows through town a block south, this street is lined with boutique businesses and restaurants in century-old buildings.

I needed a sweet treat to get my mind off the heat, so I popped into Eggemeyer's General Store for a block of homemade fudge. The term "general" truly describes this place, as it seemed packed with everything, including children's souvenirs and kitchen tools, in displays stretching across multiple cavernous rooms.

I wandered a little farther and found myself contemplating a new pair of custom boots from the iconic M.L. Leddy's, then enjoying scenes of local history captured in colorful murals downtown. Inside Legend Jewelers, I marveled at the iridescent beauty of Concho pearls harvested from the river.

Outside the jewelry shop, I noticed a narrow stairway leading up to Miss Hattie's Bordello Museum. I had seen Miss Hattie's Restaurant and Cathouse Lounge down the street and decided to investigate.

Mark Priest, owner of both the jewelry shop and the museum, led me upstairs, where I encountered a setting that transported me to the 19th century—when this infamous business was managed by Miss Hattie. The parlor was furnished in red and purple velvets, and the long hallway passed through rows of small bedrooms. It was a glimpse into a small part of a big town's storied frontier past. ■

ABOVE Chet visits Miss Hattie's Bordello Museum.

**TCP WEB EXTRA** Stroll with Chet down the streets of this West Texas town and watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

## Know Before You Go

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

## NOVEMBER

09

**Concan Fall Festival on the Frio**, (830) 232-4310, [visitualdecounty.com](http://visitualdecounty.com)

10

**Grand Prairie A Conversation With Stacey Abrams**, (972) 854-5050, [texasrustcutheatre.com/events](http://texasrustcutheatre.com/events)

12

**Nacogdoches Swingin' Axes and Aces**, (936) 468-2801, [music.sfasu.edu](http://music.sfasu.edu)

**Fredericksburg [12–14] Die Künstler Fine Art Show and Sale**, (830) 995-5771, [dkfredericksburg.org](http://dkfredericksburg.org)

13

**Bastrop Red, White & Blue Veterans Appreciation Banquet**, (512) 629-6590, [rwbveterans.com](http://rwbveterans.com)

**Corpus Christi Holiday Cooking With Herbs Workshop**, (361) 852-2100, [stxbot.org](http://stxbot.org)

**Fort McKavett Cooking the Army Ration**, (325) 396-2358, [facebook.com/visitfortmckavett](http://facebook.com/visitfortmckavett)

**George West Dion Pride**, (361) 436-1098, [dobie-westtheatre.com](http://dobie-westtheatre.com)

**Henderson Syrup Festival**, 1-866-650-5529, [depotmuseum.com/syrupfestival.html](http://depotmuseum.com/syrupfestival.html)

**Kingsbury Wings & Wheels Fly-In**, (830) 639-4162, [pioneerflightmuseum.org](http://pioneerflightmuseum.org)

**Kyle Veterans Day Parade**, (512) 262-3939, [cityofkyle.com](http://cityofkyle.com)

**Bryan [13-14] Friends of the Library Book Sale,** (979) 209-5600, friendsbcs.org

**Mesquite [13, 18] Wreath-Making Class,** (972) 216-6468, visitmesquitetx.com/events

**Boerne [13, 27] Bluegrass Jam at the AgriCultural,** (210) 445-1080, theagricultural.org/bluegrass-jams

15

**Brazoria Henry Smith Day,** (979) 824-0455, brazoriahf.org

18

**Dallas Visionary Women,** (214) 827-0813, fowlercommunities.org

19

**Alpine [19-20] Artwalk,** (432) 294-1071, artwalkalpine.com

**Boerne [19-20] Master Artwork Show,** (830) 816-5606, masterartworkshow.com

**Katy [19-21] Home for the Holidays Gift Market,** (281) 788-4297, homefortheholidaysgiftmarket.com

**Ingram [19-20, 26-28, Dec. 3-5, 10-12] A Christmas Carol,** (830) 367-5121, hcac.com

20

**Corsicana Independent Order of Odd Fellows Trade Days,** (903) 872-7438, iooftx.org

MORE EVENTS >

### **TCP** *Submit Your Event*

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

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NOVEMBER EVENTS CONTINUED

20

**Crockett Christmas in Crockett on the Square,** (936) 544-2359,

**Freeport Christmas Market,** (979) 233-3526, freeport.tx.us

**Henderson A Very Merry Market,** (903) 521-3992, facebook.com/churchatlakecherokee

**Irving Mozart con Amore,** (972) 252-4800, lascolinassymphony.org

**Kerrville Holiday Lighted Parade,** (830) 257-7200, kerrvilletx.gov

21

**Fredericksburg Albert and Gage,** (830) 990-2886, fredericksburgmusicclub.com

**Lufkin Straight No Chaser,** (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org/performing-arts-series

22

**Grapevine Carol of Lights,** (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

26

**Bellville [26-27] Big Top Vintage Market,** (936) 900-1900, bigtopvintage.com

**Corpus Christi [26-27, Dec. 3-4, 10-11, 17-18] Holly Days at the Gardens,** (361) 852-2100, stxbot.org

**Abilene [26-28, Dec. 3-5, 10-12, 17-19, 20-23, 26] Winter Lightfest,** (325) 677-1841, unitedwayabilene.org/winterlightfest

**Frisco [26-Jan. 2] Christmas in the Square,** (469) 633-1721, visitfrisco.com

27

**Comfort Christmas in Comfort,** (830) 995-3131, comfort-texas.com

28

**Bandera Frontier Times Jamboree,** (830) 796-3864, frontiertimesmuseum.org

DECEMBER

02

**Cameron Christmas Parade,** (254) 697-4979, cameron-tx.com

**Columbus Ladies Night Out,** (979) 732-8385, facebook.com/ladiesnightoutcolumbustexas

**Grapevine Parade of Lights,** 1-800-457-7572, grapevinetexasusa.com

**Jacksonville Chamber Christmas Parade,** (903) 586-2217, jacksonvilletexas.com

**Kerrville Holiday Hopes,** (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

03

**Brenham Gary Morris Christmas,** (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

**Fredericksburg Light the Night Christmas Parade,** (830) 997-5000, fredericksburg-texas.com

**Grapevine Nash Farm Christmas Decorating,** 1-800-457-6338, grapevinetexasusa.com/nash-farm

04

**Fredericksburg Kinderfest,** (830) 990-8441, pioneermuseum.net

# Funny Signs

As the song goes, "Sign, sign, everywhere a sign." As we see here, Texans and humor are as close as two coats of paint. Before we pull up stakes and mosey on, let's take a moment to read the writing on the wall.

BY GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

**BRAD MOLGAARD**  
TRINITY VALLEY EC  
Spotted on FM 314 entering the town of Edom.

**LEORIA MOORE**  
PEDERNALES EC  
Pointing drivers to this town in northeast Texas.

**CASEY FANNIN**  
RUSK COUNTY EC  
"A funny sign I saw at Caddo Lake while on a boat tour."

**MARK KUNNEMANN**  
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC  
Rosie begs for treats or affection at the gate entering the goat pen.

## Upcoming Contests

**DUE NOV 10** The Texas Experience

**DUE DEC 10** All Wet

**DUE JAN 10** Feathered Friends

Enter online at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](http://TexasCoopPower.com/contests).

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



## Dad's Service Station

Giving credit where credit is due

BY DALE ROBERSON  
ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID MOORE

IN 1949, MY FATHER left the Odessa oil patch and moved our family to Breckenridge, between Fort Worth and Abilene, where he bought a service station. He started with two customers a day and became one of the busiest stations in town.

The previous owner apparently was known to spend more time drinking whiskey and picking guitars than selling gasoline. We decided the three bullet holes in the ceiling were an indication of his priorities and his station's environment.

We called the business Red's Service Station and Garage—not a filling station because in addition to selling gasoline, we offered under-the-hood service and to clean windshields, sweep floorboards with a whisk broom and check tire pressure. From the age of 12 until I went off to the University of Texas at Austin in

1959, I made spending money by greasing cars, changing oil and fixing flats the old way, with tire tools, a rubber hammer and hot patches.

Because my father followed politics closely and was a huge football fan who gambled on sports, we were frequently visited by a collection of dignitaries and colorful characters from the worlds of politics, sports and newspaper publishing as well as a few bookies.

Probably the most famous customer we had was a wildcatter named Jack Grimm.

Grimm came into the service station one morning, introduced himself and said to my father, "Red, I graduated from Oklahoma University with a degree in geology. I'm going to produce oil here, but I need some credit." He suggested that if Dad carried him on the books for gasoline, he would pay his bill when he made a well.

Grimm was good for his word. Many days he was our first customer, and he would fill his Ford with gas before heading out to the oil fields. He usually burned that tank in a day and was our first customer the next morning. He reportedly hit 25 dry holes before making a good one. He always paid his bill. Before long, he graduated from Fords to Lincolns and moved his business to Abilene.

After striking it rich, he financed searches for sasquatch, the Abominable Snowman, Loch Ness monster, Titanic and, most famously, Noah's Ark.

Grimm was not the only one my father gave credit to. As long as customers paid their bills now and then, Dad would carry them. The only thing that made him mad was when a customer skipped paying a bill and he saw them buying their gas with cash at another station.

In addition to a strong work ethic, I learned at Red's Service Station and Garage never to judge people. My father would give credit to anyone, rich or poor. ■

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