

OUTLANDISH CHARACTERS
OF BYGONE RODEOS

WHEN THE QUEEN
CAME TO TEXAS

CHET LOOKS AT
BUDDY HOLLY'S LEGACY

Texas Coop Power

FOR BLUEBONNET EC MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2022

Esports Enters the Arena

Students play their way
to scholarships and careers
in video gaming

**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

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February 2022



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By Gene Fowler
Illustration by Douglas Jones

ON THE COVER

At 100,000 square feet, Esports Stadium Arlington is the largest dedicated gaming facility in North America.

Photo courtesy Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau

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FINISH THIS SENTENCE THE BABY OF THE FAMILY ALWAYS ...

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

Below are some of the responses to our December prompt: **The hardest job in the world has to be ...**

A single mom.

TISH CORTINAS
COSERV
MCKINNEY

That's easy. Utility lineman.

GINA SCHULTE HALLE
VIA FACEBOOK

Still being a rancher in Central Texas when you are 88 years old.

SCOTT SINGLETON
PEDERNALES EC
MARBLE FALLS

Taking care of your aging, ailing parents.

MARY DIAZ
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC
SHERMAN

The caretaker of a spouse with dementia.

SHARON MARTIN
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GRANBURY

To see more responses, read Currents online.

'Dillo Day

THE FOLKS IN BEE CAVE, just west of Austin, don't pay much attention to Punxsutawney Phil on Groundhog Day. Instead, they rely on an armadillo named Bee Cave Bob on February 2 to prognosticate the arrival of spring. Bob has served the role since 2012.



TWOSDAY

February flaunts a special Tuesday this year with a rare numerical alignment: 2/22/22. And twice that day, at 2:22, deuces are really wild.

(If you insist on using the 24-hour clock, the second instance of twos aligning that day will be 22:22.)

Best Dressed

The nation's electric co-ops have deployed enough wind and solar power capacity to serve nearly

2.7 million homes.



50 Years of Easy Joe

Mr. Coffee, the first automatic drip machine for home use, started making it a little easier to get going in the morning in 1972.



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RECOMMENDED READING
Chet Garner visited another West Texas spot with keepsakes from a musical legend, Roy Orbison, in *Wink's Spectacle* from September 2019.



RKO PICTURES | GETTY IMAGES

A Wonderful Flick

“It is nice that this old black-and-white movie, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, is still a treasure. I bet it will be for another 75 years.”

STEPHANIE RIGGIN
BLUEBONNET EC
LOCKHART

Looking Out for Bison

I was born in the Ozarks at Evening Shade, Arkansas, but I got here as quickly as I could. I married a native Texas girl 20 years ago.

I am a true Texas history buff and love your monthly stories. I had never heard of the Texas State Bison Herd [*Last of Their Kind*, November 2021]. Please keep the stories coming.

J.D. Perkins III
Bluebonnet EC
Red Rock

What one animal said to another [*Safe Passage*, November 2021]: “Oh, let’s don’t cross here. Let’s go down to the land bridge, which is 5 miles south of here. It’s much safer.”

JOHN PERRIN
VIA FACEBOOK

Snowbird Love

My husband and I are winter Texans. Your magazine teaches us about our winter home state and provides us with travel ideas while we are there.

Merlene S. DeZur
NEC Co-op Energy
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

True to Her Word

I live in the Maverick community [*Biography of a Word*, November 2021]. My house is near the old Maverick School, which I love to photograph. A roadside marker dedicated to Maverick is nearby. And, yes, I am a maverick.

Sherry York
Via Facebook

Reaching Readers

Carpe Diem, Mom [December 2021] so aptly expressed Babs Rodriguez’s feelings in a clear and fun way. It also demonstrated her love of her parents and family, which is always nice to hear.

Greg Sethness
Central Texas EC
Sunrise Beach



ANNA GODEANSKI

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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Sincerely, A. Macon, Williamsburg, VA

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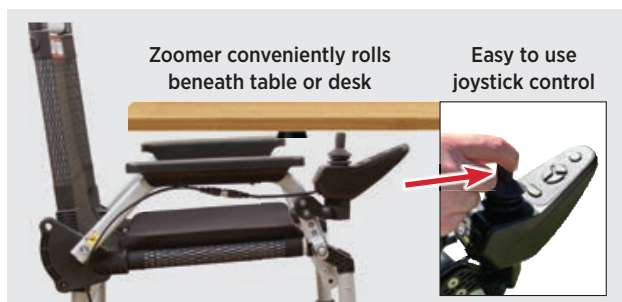
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A Whole New Ballgame

**The booming business
of esports finds eager
participants in rural schools**

BY CHRIS BURROWS

Ryan Conger thought his athletics career was over.

Rounding third base in a baseball game in 2017, the LeTourneau University sophomore hit an uneven spot in the field. He heard a pop in his knee and knew right away it was his ACL. He was gutted.

“I was like, man, if I don’t have baseball, I really don’t know what I’m going to do,” he said. “I make good grades, but it was only because I wanted to play baseball.”

Sidelined with what can be a career-ending injury, Conger channeled his competitive energy into a video game called NBA 2K. The native of Palmer, south of Dallas, worked his way up the basketball game’s rankings, playing against others from around the world, and was drafted in 2018 by a professional competitive gaming affiliate of the Dallas Mavericks NBA team.

In September, Conger and his team won their second straight championship on a virtual basketball court, marking Conger as one of the best NBA 2K players in the world and earning him a cut of a half-million-dollar prize. His competitive career wasn’t over; it just looks a whole lot different now.

Conger and his teammates occupy one of the many big and bright stages of competitive video gaming—known as esports—and their work and winnings are made possible by the booming new industry that attracts 26.6 million monthly viewers who watch gamers compete in a vast array of virtual venues. Beyond sports games, the online universe extends to strategy and battle arena games and even traditional board games, like chess.

Esports brought in more than \$1 billion in revenue for the first time in 2021 and has given rise to a whole host of career paths for professionals in marketing, information



technology, game design, broadcasting and many other fields—in addition to the game-playing pros on arena stages and online. Now educators at schools are preparing students to take advantage.

“Esports is not the five professionals sitting on the stage,” said Matt Tarpley, a member of the Texas Scholastic Esports Federation board. “There’s 10 times more people behind the scenes doing all sorts of other work.”

In 2018, Tarpley approached the principal at the high school in Merkel, west of Abilene, where he worked in IT. He pitched a gaming team that would be managed by an esports-centered marketing class.

“I said, ‘Man, I don’t necessarily understand this, but I do understand that our kids are going to be into it, so let’s try it,’” Principal James Stevens said. Tarpley taught the class and coached the team, and more than two-thirds of the school’s students expressed interest in the class.

“We used to get in trouble for playing video games, but now it’s really cool because we see that video games help us develop our problem-solving skills, our critical-thinking skills,” said Jansen Wilhite, who took over for Tarpley in 2021. “These are all great skills to have for when we enter the job force.”

Wilhite grew up with video games, playing Donkey Kong as a child and World of Warcraft with her husband as an adult. Her degree is in microbiology, but she teaches physics and now Merkel’s gaming course, where her students learn all about the types of video games, how they’re developed and how to foster positive gameplay environments.

“I never anticipated a career in video games, but here we are,” Wilhite said. “It’s really cool for me to get to use both halves of myself at work.”

ABOVE Ryan Conger competes in the 2021 NBA 2K league playoffs four years after an ACL tear ended his college baseball career. Conger said he planned to use his winnings to help his father open a food truck.



Wilhite also runs Merkel’s after-school esports team, which competes in online chess and other video games against teams across Texas. Like the team at Sabine High School, in Upshur Rural Electric Cooperative’s territory in Northeast Texas, where technology director Randy Cox was surprised by the buy-in he received from the superintendent.

“When you tell someone you want to start a program where we do competitive video games, I expected to get a little bit of a laugh, but he was very supportive,” Cox said. “It’s one more thing that students can get involved in with our school.”

Merkel, Sabine and more than 400 other high schools across Texas now field esports teams, and even some middle schools are beginning to form clubs—part of a pipeline forming to feed some 250 colleges across the country that offer nearly \$15 million in scholarships to esports competitors and to feed the array of fields that support all of it.

Dallas public schools boast 60 esports clubs, but rural districts like Merkel and Sabine are making sure their students don’t get left behind. They’re working cooperatively to learn what’s working and what isn’t, how to get buy-in from administrators, where to get resources for

computers and equipment, and how to form leagues while the University Interscholastic League ponders official esports inclusion. Not every school has gamers on staff, fast internet or money for high-powered computers.

“Our rural schools in our area have always said, ‘Hey, we understand that we can’t do this by ourselves, but if we come together, we can get things done,’” said Shawn Schlueter, a

Esports brought in more than \$1 billion in revenue for the first time in 2021.

Now educators at schools are preparing students to take advantage.

technology consultant who works with educators in 13 counties. “We’re starting to see that where administrators and even interested teachers are calling us and saying, ‘You know, I see that [esports] could be valuable. How do I get going with it?’”

That value extends beyond the classroom. Esports can have profound benefits for students who aren’t interested in traditional sports, extending to them the positive effects of team building, communication and community support that have long been available to athletes.

“I always say that esports programs are primed for the kids who slip through the cracks of schools,” Schlueter said. “Even in a rural school where everybody has to do something, there are groups of

OPPOSITE PAGE The Mavs Gaming Hub in Dallas, site of last year's NBA 2K playoffs. THIS PAGE, FROM TOP The Merkel High School esports marketing class hosts a tournament. University of North Texas students celebrate at a national tournament. Texas Wesleyan University students compete.



In Texas, dozens of smaller and lower-profile colleges like McMurry are cashing in by enticing competitors with scholarship money. The University of North Texas and the University of Texas at Dallas field some of the most competitive esports programs in the nation, part of a burgeoning esports hotbed in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, where the \$10 million Esports Stadium Arlington—the largest such venue in North America—has space for 2,500 spectators.

But there are opportunities everywhere for esports professionals like Kyle Murto.

He was preparing for a college soccer career when a string of injuries put him in the hospital, where he cracked open his laptop and climbed the ranks. Pro teams didn't come calling, but Blinn College did. Now Murto helps coach the Brenham-based school's esports team, which competes against Division I giants—and wins.

"Smaller schools don't have that name recognition, so we have to go out and make a name for ourselves before the universities really get into the game," Murto said.

At McMurry, Tarpley is focused on education and personal growth, not wins and losses. He holds workshops for content creation, personal branding and livestreaming and finds graphic design, statistics, broadcasting and other work for students to master.

"Everybody wants to be in this space," he said. "It's going to be everywhere eventually. It's just a matter of time."

Tarpley's team meets regularly with a mental health coach—esports' version of an athletic trainer—and he strives to make sure women are included in an activity that's been dominated by men. He's not forming the next Ryan Conger but the next Jansen Wilhite—multiskilled gamers and leaders who can cultivate programs like Merkel's.

"I had several local schools call me, several local principals that know me. They're like, 'Hey, we hear y'all are doing esports. Can you tell me about it?'" Stevens said. "Of course, my first thing is, to be really successful you have to have a Matt Tarpley." ■

kids that do nothing, and this helps engage those kids."

Principal Stevens has seen it firsthand at Merkel.

"It's attracted a lot of the kids who showed up at 8 and left at 4," he said. "I've seen better participation, better grades, better attendance out of all those students, and it gave them something to be proud of involved with the school."

Some of those students followed Tarpley to McMurry University in Abilene, where he now coaches the esports program.

"They're on track to get a degree all because of esports," Stevens said.

TCP Go online to watch the University of North Texas take down LSU in a national playoff game.



"HACKBERRY SLIM"
"FOGHORN"



"BUCK" ★ "MR RODEO"



STRETCHING THE BLANKET

Outlandish characters
and hard-to-believe
yarns defined the early
days of Texas rodeo

RODEO COWBOY Hackberry Slim Johnson came clean in 1956 when he described the 1906 train-jumping accident near Dalhart that cost him half a leg. “I’ve told so many damned lies about losing that leg,” he told an interviewer. But soon after this brief walk on the straight and narrow path of truth, Johnson reverted to his usual yarn about losing the appendage in a “wreck with a wild horse.”

Even though lies might be too harsh a term for the tall tales whipped up by early rodeo cowboys, Johnson was simply following the Texas tradition of stretching the blanket. Even when characters like him, Buck Steiner, Milt Hinkle and Foghorn Clancy told the truth, the stories still sounded like whoppers.

In its beginnings in the late 19th century, mirroring the recently shuttered American frontier, rodeo presented a vast stage for self-invention. “For decades, rodeo was busy defining itself,” says W.K. Stratton, author of *Chasing the Rodeo* and other books. “The sport was based on the Mexican charreada tradition, which subsequently inspired ‘cowboy contests’ on ranches and in small cattle towns in the West. The advent of Wild West shows and their showbiz elements influenced rodeo as well.

“There was no national sanctioning organization, no set rule-book, so rodeos varied from town to town. People expected to be entertained, and cantankerous old-timers were always a big draw. While elements of showbiz remain, today rodeo is made up of sanctioned athletic contests with standardized events and judging.”

But in its wild and woolly days of old, characters ran the show.

MR. RODEO

MILT HINKLE, aka Mr. Rodeo, first glimpsed daylight in 1881 on the patch of Texas Panhandle that became the town of Bovina, which grew from a camp that was part of the XIT Ranch. In 1904, he claimed, Hinkle became the second man to accomplish the act of bulldogging, first performed by the Black cowboy Bill Pickett and known today as steer wrestling. In another boast, Hinkle bragged that he was the first to apply the term “rodeo” to a roundup event.

In 1919 a *Saturday Evening Post* correspondent wrote about having seen Hinkle suffer a hip injury at a rodeo in Bovina. Three months later, having escaped from the hospital, Hinkle was spotted in Cheyenne, Wyoming, by the same reporter, who described him as “a howling, squawking maniac,” hobbling on crutches as he got ready to bulldog.

The Laredo Times credited Hinkle with the world record for bulldogging from an automobile traveling at 68 mph in 1931. That same year, he agreed to stand in for an “aerial bulldogger” in Nuevo Laredo during the annual Washington’s Birthday Celebration. As Mr. Rodeo prepared to leap onto the running bull, however, *el toro* turned and charged the aircraft, wrecking it. The border paper reported that Hinkle was not seriously injured.

Decades later, however, Hinkle repeatedly told scribes that he landed successfully on the bull, breaking its neck, and that he himself suffered a crippling hip displacement. Mr. Rodeo had become a promoter, and before his death at 91, he relived the wild old days, lugging his scrapbooks around to reporters and writing for *True West* and *Frontier Times Magazine*.

FOGHORN

ONE YEAR YOUNGER than Hinkle, famed rodeo announcer Frederick Melton “Foghorn” Clancy tried his hand at bronc riding in an 1898 cowboy tournament in San Angelo. The contest was won by the great Samuel Thomas “Booger Red” Privett, the Erath County native whose legend says he was never thrown, no matter how “outlaw” a horse he drew. And while Foghorn didn’t fare so well in the saddle, the experience opened another career door.

Clancy was working as a hand on the Hittson Ranch in Palo Pinto County when the Spanish-American War broke out. He quit to join the Army but was turned down for being underweight, so he began selling newspapers in the health resort town of Mineral Wells, bellowing headlines to drive sales. Local press observed that he “sounded like a foghorn at sea,” which provided a nickname and a second job as town crier. “I would ride horseback through the little resort,” he wrote in his 1952 autobiography, *My 50 Years in Rodeo*, “singing out about the attractions at the summer opera house or pavilion.”

Clancy’s stentorian reputation had preceded him in San Angelo, and after his unceremonious buck-off, the folks hosting the ropin’ and ridin’ contest offered him a job as announcer. This was a time before public address systems, but Foghorn lived up to his name, announcing rodeos from one-horse Western towns to Madison Square Garden.

Shortly after he died in 1957, the *Hereford Brand* reported on a quest by Fort Worth’s Pioneer Days celebration, held at the historic stockyards, to find the loudest Texan. Clancy would have been a shoo-in, and organizers recalled how, in “the old days of the rodeo, the mighty voice of the late Foghorn Clancy rattled the windows.”

“I would ride horseback through the little resort singing out about the attractions at the summer opera house or pavilion.”

“When I die, I want to go in style. With my boots on. Dancing, maybe, or maybe while riding a buffalo.”

Dancing, maybe, or maybe while riding a buffalo.”

In 1979, shortly after appearing in the Willie Nelson film *Honeysuckle Rose*, the 91-year-old white-whiskered cowboy danced to Nelson’s band playing *Milk Cow Blues*, then sat back down and slipped into the sunset. ■

BUCK

BORN IN BASTROP in 1899, T.C. “Buck” Steiner lived to see two centuries turn. But long before he died in 2001, the crusty cowpoke had packed several life-times into one.

He started early, leaving grade school to pursue the cowboy life. After driving cattle through the streets of Austin, he left home at age 12 to perform in rodeos and Wild West shows, sharing bills with the likes of Annie Oakley and Tom Mix. Steiner demonstrated proficiency at roping, wrestling and riding spirited stock, but he developed a specialty of riding bulls facing backward. As he recalled in endless press features, riding backward was far more lucrative than riding forward.

Around age 16 he worked for a time at the San Antonio Stockyards. Then at some point, according to the biography of Buck in the Handbook of Texas, a law enforcement career was cut short when he shot at a carload of politicians while working traffic management during a parade. While trailing cattle from Mexico to San Antonio, Steiner reportedly downed a few drinks with Pancho Villa. Later, it’s said, he bent elbows with Al Capone.

Back home in Austin, where a German immigrant ancestor had owned the town’s first harness and saddlery shop, Steiner bought and sold land, operated his own touring rodeos, rented his stock to other rodeos, and opened Capitol Saddlery in 1930. News reports say that he had as many as 96 saddle makers working for him and supplied Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck and Company. In a 1950s rodeo tour of Cuba with Gene Autry, Autry and Steiner got caught up amid Fidel Castro’s revolution. An emergency call to Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson saved their bacon.

The Steiners have been called the royal family of rodeo. Son Tommy Steiner ran the rodeo business until closing it in 1984, and grandson Bobby Steiner won the bull riding world championship in 1973. Buck’s great-grandson, Sid Steiner, won the steer wrestling world championship in 2002.

HACKBERRY SLIM

TOWARD THE END of his long life, Hugh “Hackberry Slim” Johnson II carried his scrapbooks around to newspaper offices in towns where he’d rodeoed in days gone by. Time and again the “only one-legged bronc buster, bulldogger, steer rider and calf roper” in rodeo told the story of his first prosthetic leg, made from a hackberry tree. He talked about working on the XIT and rodeoing with Hoot Gibson and Will Rogers, about the time he drove a bull through a Georgetown furniture store and about winning all-around cowboy in Harlingen in 1933.

He often talked about bison. Hackberry bought his first bison, named Chihuahua, in 1923 and was still producing his “buffalo rodeos” in his 80s. “When I die, I want to go in style,” he often said. “With my boots on.

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great minds

IN THE pines

MD Anderson's Science Park near Buescher State Park has closed after more than 40 years of remarkable research. The scientists who worked there recall groundbreaking ideas that took root in the serene setting.

By Sharon Jayson

Deep in the loblolly pine forest near Smithville, tucked away from public view for more than four decades, a trail of knowledge was blazed that may someday lead to a cure for cancer.

Some of the best and brightest minds in science and medicine gathered to work in a research center on 69 acres adjacent to Buescher State Park in Bastrop County. Their inconspicuous facilities left very conspicuous advances in medicine.

The roster of researchers who toiled in the Lost Pines area include the homegrown Texan who won a Nobel Prize for discovering a way to stimulate the human immune system to attack cancer cells (immunotherapy) and the Texas-educated molecular biologist whose research team proved that smoking causes lung cancer.

The idea factory in the forest was known simply as Science Park to those who worked there, as well as to the locals who were proud of their neighbor. Although few outsiders knew of this hidden gem, its

research into the origins of cancer and cancer prevention made it an international star.

Now, the site that's been part of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center is no longer in use. Work there ceased at the end of 2021. The land is for sale by the University of Texas System, but the property's deed stipulates that the next owner must continue to use it as a research facility.

Texas lawmakers established Science Park in 1971. After that, the University of Texas System Cancer Center in Houston (now MD Anderson), acquired 717 acres of forested land that surround Science Park's facilities.

The research center's first laboratory was an old Pullman railroad car. Science Park opened to researchers in 1977 after additional labs and a conference center were built.

For those who worked there both recently and decades ago, the setting was idyllic, with lunchtime hikes, eating outside at picnic tables and watching deer and roadrunners.



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“Being in a park with deer and roadrunners and baby foxes running by, we were immersed in the nature of the place.”

— Sharon Dent, Science Park’s director from 2010 until it closed in 2021



Sharon Dent was among some 50 employees who gathered for an outdoor farewell to Science Park on June 29, 2021, which included a group walk on the path looping around the site. They signed an enlarged aerial campus photo that now hangs near Dent’s office at an MD Anderson research facility in Houston. Photo by Adolfo Chavez III, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

All Science Park photos courtesy MD Anderson Cancer Center



Researchers could eat lunch at tables on the patio of Laboratory 4, which was built in 2009. It was one of the last facilities constructed at Science Park.

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That daily interaction with nature fostered creativity and provided the right backdrop for pioneering breakthroughs.

One of the first scientists to arrive was Jim Allison, a recipient of the 2018 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. Allison studied T cells, known as the soldiers of the immune system because they fight cancer, bacteria, viruses and other abnormal cells. His work defined the basic structure of immune cells, which led to his discovery that an individual's own immune system could attack tumor cells. He left Science Park in 1984 for the University of California, Berkeley, but returned to MD Anderson in Houston in 2012.

He has received numerous other awards and honors over the years, and today holds multiple titles, including chairman of the Department of Immunology at MD Anderson.

"I have nothing but fond memories of the great team and incredible atmosphere at Science Park," Allison said in a written statement to Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative for this story. "After beginning my research on T cells there, then returning to MD Anderson three decades later, it was another full-circle moment to welcome researchers from Science Park to Houston this summer (of 2021) and to share some nostalgia for a very special place."

Molecular biologist Moon-shong Tang overlapped with Allison for a few years at Science Park, having been recruited to the rural center in 1982 from his post as a research associate at Washington University in St. Louis.

"The location is just ideal," said Tang, who spent 17 years at Science Park. "It was a really, really good environment. We were all



Jim Allison was one of the first scientists to arrive at the research facility in the woods. He began his study of the structure of immune cells there. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2018 while working at MD Anderson in Houston, and today is the chair of the cancer center's Department of Immunology.

pretty young and we became a really tight community and very good friends. We'd have dinner in Bastrop or Smithville, and after dinner, have discussions about science."

"The people there just loved science. There was a lot of talent, and it was very novel research," he said.

Tang left Science Park in 1999 to join New York University at the NYU Grossman

Continued on page 22



"I have nothing but fond memories of the great team and incredible atmosphere at Science Park."

— Jim Allison, recipient of a 2018 Nobel Prize, reflecting on his time at the facility

"We were all pretty young and we became a really tight community and very good friends. We'd have dinner in Bastrop or Smithville, and after dinner, have discussions about science."

— Molecular biologist Moon-shong Tang, who spent 17 years at Science Park beginning in 1982





Sign of the times: A photo from 1977 at the Science Park entrance. At that time, only four buildings had been completed.



By the late 1970s, Science Park had grown to include the 10,000-square-foot J.J. 'Jake' Pickle Conference Center, in the foreground of this aerial photo. The center had a 300-seat auditorium for research seminars and conferences.



The first laboratory at Science Park was a hand-me-down Pullman rail car, left. In the mid-1970s, above, dignitaries study plans for the facilities. From left, Bastrop County Judge Jack Griesenbeck, Smithville Mayor Albert Crawford, U.S. Congressman Jake Pickle and Dr. R. Lee Clark, president of what was then called the UT System Cancer Center (which later became MD Anderson Cancer Center.)

Continued from page 20

School of Medicine. His work provided proof that smoking causes cancer by linking a powerful carcinogen found in cigarette smoke to mutations in a gene associated with more than half of all cancers and 70 percent of lung cancers.

“All the work that laid the foundation for my work, I did in Smithville,” Tang said. “I feel I owe them a lot. It is a quite unique place to do science and I miss it very much to this day.”

Officially the campus name was the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center Science Park. In 1998, the name “The Virginia Harris Cockrell Cancer Research Center” was added to the official name of the facility. It was shuttered because MD Anderson chose to consolidate its cancer research in Houston as part of an expansion project and because it would cost up to \$100 million to repair and upgrade the center’s aging buildings.

The UT System is offering the property with approximately 150,000 square feet of buildings, laboratories and other improvements for sale. No list price has been stated.

Bastrop County officials fought unsuccessfully to keep the research center open. The 2019 announcement of Science Park’s impending closure was “a devastating blow for many people in the county,” said Adena Lewis, Bastrop County’s director of tourism and economic development.

“People had given their careers to be out there. Being a part of something that was so important to science was really great,” she said. “We felt like by supporting them, we were supporting their work.”

Though the pastoral setting of Science Park has been replaced by the urbane and massive Houston complex, the research continues.

Sharon Dent was the director of the Science Park from 2010 until its closure. She moved from the wooded campus to Houston last summer and is now the chair of, and a professor at, MD Anderson’s department of epigenetics and molecular carcinogenesis.

Science Park was designed “to understand how the environment influences cancer development and cancer risk,” with a focus on DNA repair, she said.

“Back in the 1970s, it wasn’t really understood how a lot of those things like chemicals or sunlight influence whether a person got cancer,” she said. “A big part of that is understanding how cells and organisms normally work and how they defend themselves against such dangers. They damage our genetic blueprint.”

“Some (Science Park) research was aimed at determining which chemicals cause cancer,” she said. “Some was more biochemical in identifying molecules that can repair DNA damage. Other research actually



The idyllic, forested setting of Science Park proved ideal for many researchers there. “It is a quite unique place to do science and I miss it very much to this day,” said Moonshong Tang, a molecular biologist who arrived at the rural research center in 1982.



“Being a part of something that was so important to science was really great. We felt like by supporting them, we were supporting their work.”

— Adena Lewis, Bastrop County’s director of tourism and economic development

identified what kind of UV light in sunlight gives rise to tumors.”

Dent says the research portfolio now is much broader, including her own interest in defining how our genome is “folded.”

“If we took DNA out of our cells, you might be surprised to know it would stretch out to more than two meters in length,” she said. “That two meters has to be folded so much that it can fit into a microscopic nucleus inside the cell. You’ve got a very complicated blueprint,” she added, likening it to the multi-page, often mind-boggling instructions for assembling furniture from IKEA.

“Imagine what happens if you start reading the wrong part of the instruction at the wrong time. Cancer is reading the wrong part of the blueprint so that the cell is no longer behaving the way it should. It’s building the wrong structures and changing its identity and reacting to the environment differently. My group is trying to understand what controls that folding to make sure we’re reading the right instructions at the right time.”

Being next to Buescher State Park was “a very idyllic situation” for researchers, she said. “Being in a park with deer and roadrunners and baby foxes running by, we were immersed in the nature of the place.” However, she said the isolation could “make it little bit difficult to recruit new students and new postdocs.”

Among the recruits Dent found in New York City was Kevin McBride, an MD

Anderson associate professor who spent 10 years at Science Park before it closed. McBride had been at The Rockefeller University, a premier biomedical research university in Manhattan, where he lived with his wife and two young children in what he described as a “high-rise shoebox.”

“Most biomedical research universities are in urban environments,” said McBride, who lived in Bastrop and is now at MD Anderson in Houston. Smithville and the Science Park provided “a unique setting that gave it a unique culture. It felt like a very supportive community. It was close-knit. You knew everyone on the campus personally, from the guards to the people who worked in the facilities, and you knew what each other was working on. Because of that, they were very invested in the mission.”

Detailed information about the founding of Science Park can be found in a 2009 book, *The Science Park: Dream to Reality, The First 20 Years*, by Earl F. Walborg, Jr., a biochemist who worked at the bucolic research center. He detailed how state and national political leaders, as well as UT officials and local community leaders joined forces to create the research park. His book also credits Smithville residents for their fierce lobbying to get Science Park.

The people of Smithville were unhappy about preferences toward development and promotion of Bastrop State Park over nearby Buescher State Park, just outside their city.

“The sense of ownership that the citi-



Benches and picnic tables on the 69-acre research facility gave scientists and researchers room to develop innovations that paved the way for groundbreaking cancer research. At left, the Ralph and Lillian Meadows Molecular Biology Research Facility, built in 1992, was the third laboratory building at Science Park.

zens of Smithville felt for Buescher State Park played a major role in the proposal to site a UT Research Park at that location,” Walborg wrote. “During the early settlement of Smithville a number of its residents owned land in the nearby Lost Pines Forest as a source of timber and firewood. Since the land was worthless for grazing livestock or cultivation, privately owned tracts were largely unfenced. During the Great Depression, two tracts of land were transferred to the State of Texas to found Buescher State Park.

“In 1933 a prominent Smithville family, the Bueschers . . . deeded 318 acres to the State; and in 1936 the City of Smithville added a contiguous 1,412-acre tract it had purchased from various families. Thus, the State of Texas was indebted to the Smithville community for the very existence of Buescher State Park; and this fact empowered the Smithville community as it lobbied the State to develop the Park in a manner that would enhance the local economy.”

Of the 193 people working at Science Park when its relocation to Houston was announced in 2019, 123 remained on the payroll by August 2021, either moving to Houston or accepting positions elsewhere within MD Anderson. The remaining 70 either retired, found new employers, completed postdoctoral training, had jobs that didn’t transfer or were realigned, according to a statement from Yolán Campbell, MD Anderson associate vice president.

In addition, 1,500 pieces of research equipment moved to Houston. “Items at the end of their lifespan did not move and may be negotiated as part of the property sale,” Karen Mooney, MD Anderson associate vice president, said in a statement. “Any remaining decommissioned state property not transferred to the future owner will be sold at auction.”

For years (except in 2020 due to COVID-19), Science Park offered programs for area high school students as well as university undergraduates from across the

country. David Johnson was involved with the summer programs since he arrived at Science Park in 1994. He directed the program for the past decade, including in 2021, when only university students participated. Johnson, who lives in Bastrop, was one of the two Science Park employees who retired rather than move.

“It had this atmosphere where you could really focus on science and really clear your head,” he said.

The communities that considered the research park a good neighbor now hope for another exceptional experience when the next occupant moves in.



Smithville Mayor Joanna Morgan

“To have a major cancer research facility in Smithville was a point of pride for the community,” said Smithville Mayor Joanna Morgan. “We’d like to feel comfortable that the sale is being pursued aggressively to get it occupied as soon as possible.”

In the meantime, the wildlife that populates Buescher State Park and its neighbor Science Park are the sole inhabitants, waiting in the dappled shade of pines and post oaks to inspire the next researchers seeking answers to some of humanity’s most vexing problems. ■

Six employees, who started as Bluebonnet's first line worker interns in 2018, have received U.S. Department of Labor certification. Today, they are journeymen line workers. They are, from left, Dylan Dussetschleger, Zackary Handrick, Brooks Kasper, James Flores, Tra Muston and Ty Duesterheft. Photos by Sarah Beal



Bluebonnet's first line worker interns receive journeyman certification

By Alyssa Dussetschleger

Brooks Kasper was 19 when he became a line worker intern at Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative. He did not know many details about the job, the rigorous training he would receive or the welcoming culture of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative.

"I was excited to get started, but didn't realize what was ahead in my career," said Kasper, who is now 23.

Kasper was one of the first line-worker interns at Bluebonnet. For some in that group, it was their first full-time job. "They looked young, some looked a little scared and nervous, but I could tell they were excited to be there, eager to learn and that they were going to do well," said Aaron Seeliger, Bluebonnet's assistant superintendent of operations for the co-op's Maxwell and Red Rock service centers.

The line-worker internship program at Bluebonnet began in 2018. The program focuses on hiring local candidates and introducing them to electric line work and Bluebonnet's focus on safety and service to its members.

Kasper and the other interns spent their first six months in the classroom at a Bluebonnet facility, learning about safety, which is of utmost importance at Bluebonnet. Interns also received technical instruction on line work, earned climbing certifications and obtained commercial driver licenses. Then they began training in the field alongside journeyman line workers. Now six of them have

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become U.S. Department of Labor-certified journeyman line workers and Bluebonnet's first graduates of the internship program.

Their names and hometowns are: Ty Duesterheft from Maxwell, Dylan Dussetschleger from Lexington, James Flores from Elgin, Zackary Handrick from Somer-

ville, Brooks Kasper from Giddings and Tra Muston from Rockdale.

They received their certification in October 2021 after more than four years, which included 672 hours of technical instruction and 8,000 hours of on-the-job training. They will work with crews out of Bluebonnet service centers in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Maxwell and Red Rock.

The youngest intern graduate, Dylan Dussetschleger, grew up in Lexington and started the program at 18. Now 22, he works across the 3,800-square-mile Bluebonnet service area, performing maintenance on power lines and poles, restoring power and repairing equipment. "I never knew when I started I'd find a career I loved. The intern program has

Continued on next page

APPRENTICE LINE WORKER GRADUATES



Trevor Eckert
of Brenham



John Horton
of Ledbetter



Frank Garza
of Kyle



Joshua Tristan
of Kyle



Matt Waltzer
of Bastrop

Continued from previous page

changed my life," he said.

The most recent class of interns began their training in July 2021. "The new intern class will gain more knowledge and have more experience to put them farther ahead," Duesterheft said. "New interns are placed in the field and begin observing line worker crews their first week."

Handrick, who works out of the cooperative's Brenham Service Center, looks forward to teaching new interns. His advice for them is to take it slowly. "You're not going to learn everything after your first day on the job," he said.

In addition to the intern graduates, five other employees completed Bluebonnet's apprentice line worker program and received Department of Labor journeyman certification in 2021. They are Trevor Eckert of Brenham, John Horton of Ledbetter, Frank Garza of Kyle, Joshua Tristan of Kyle and Matt Waltzer of Bastrop. They work with crews out of Bluebonnet service centers in Brenham, Bastrop, Giddings and Maxwell.

Apprentices go through approximately four years of coursework and on-the-job training to earn their certification. Some come to Bluebonnet with previous line work experience, while others are new to the trade.

Bluebonnet began offering an apprentice program in 2004. There are now 28 apprentices (including 11 who began in the intern program) and 52 journeyman line workers on staff.

Two other Bluebonnet employees also received certifications for specialized work. Justin Siegler of Giddings completed the Electric Meter Tester Certification program through the Northwest Lineman's College and received his Department of Labor certification last year. The four-year electric meter tester certification consists of 30 proficiency exams and 8,000 hours of on-the-job training.

Mason Mertz, a control center operator who lives in Bastrop, completed a 10-month program and proficiency exam to obtain his System Operator Certification from Northwest Lineman's College in 2021.

CERTIFICATION RECIPIENTS



Justin Siegler
of Giddings,
Electric Meter
Tester



Mason Mertz
of Bastrop,
System
Operator



Pictured, from left, are Cindy Dooley, Cedar Creek Schuetzen Verein vice president; Kate Ramzinski, LCRA regional affairs representative; Marlene Waak, Cedar Creek Schuetzen Verein member; Margaret D. "Meg" Voelter, LCRA board member; Conway Waak, Cedar Creek Schuetzen Verein vice president; Mark Johnson, Bluebonnet's Giddings-area community development representative; Byron Balke, Bluebonnet Board assistant secretary/treasurer; Stuart Markwardt, Cedar Creek Schuetzen Verein president; Kyle Merten, Bluebonnet's Brenham-area community representative; W.T. Marth, Cedar Creek Schuetzen Verein member; Glenn Treude, Cedar Creek Schuetzen Verein secretary; and Vicki LaRue, Cedar Creek Schuetzen Verein member.

Bluebonnet, LCRA award grant to help renovate Carmine Hall in Fayette County

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative and the Lower Colorado River Authority recently provided grants to Carmine Hall in Fayette County. The grant is part of LCRA's Community Development Partnership Program to give back to the communities it serves. Bluebonnet is one of LCRA's wholesale electric customers and a partner in the grant program. Cedar Creek Schuetzen

Verein, the non-profit social organization that operates Carmine Hall, received a \$6,000 grant to pay for three new restroom stalls, including one that is accessible for those with disabilities, new flooring and fixtures, a new vanity and inset sinks.

Applications for the next round of grants will be accepted in July. Learn more at lcr.a.org/cdpp.

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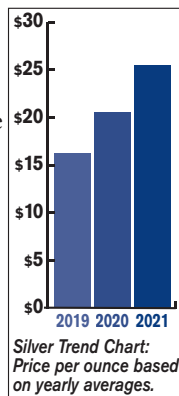
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Queen Elizabeth II walks with Gov. Ann Richards.

TCP Listen to W.F. Strong read this story on our website.



Her Majesty's Visit

Queen Elizabeth II's 1991 trip to Texas was a momentous occasion

BY W.F. STRONG AND LUPITA STRONG

DURING HER 70-YEAR reign, Queen Elizabeth II has witnessed many of the world's pivotal events, and one honorable mention where she became the event is her 1991 two-day visit to the Lone Star State.

Elizabeth was the first British monarch to visit Texas, and Texans gave her an impressive tip of the Stetson. She loved it. She asked her U.S. chief of protocol, "Why didn't I come here sooner?"

Texas has long had a special relationship with Great Britain, one of the first nations to recognize the Republic of Texas. Texans even flirted with the notion of becoming part of the British Empire in the 1840s, but the U.S. had other plans.

Five years before the queen was here, her majesty's son, Charles, the Prince of Wales, came to Texas to help celebrate

the Texas sesquicentennial. He cut into the 45-ton world's largest birthday cake with a 3-foot sword. I mean, it was Texas; what else was he supposed to use?

At the Capitol, the prince was given a giant gavel. He laughed and said that it was the biggest he had ever had and "extremely appropriate coming from Texas." While touring San Jacinto later that week—it was February but warm—he remarked, "If it's this hot in the winter, I'd like to see what it's like in the summer."

Texas has had 14 kings, but it was a queen who was most celebrated by Texans. In May 1991, Elizabeth visited Austin, San Antonio, Dallas and Houston with an itinerary that included visits to the River Walk, the Alamo, NASA and Antioch Missionary Baptist Church in

Houston. She even took a ride on the San Antonio River on a beautifully decorated barge.

When Elizabeth arrived at Dallas' Love Field, she was greeted with strains of *The Yellow Rose of Texas*. The words to *God Save the Queen*, the British national anthem, were recited before the playing of the song so that the mostly Texan audience wouldn't sing *My Country 'Tis of Thee* to the familiar tune.

While in Dallas, she knighted Cecil Howard Green, an honorary title for the British-born founder of Texas Instruments and co-founder of the University of Texas campus there.

Prince Philip, the duke of Edinburgh, accompanied Elizabeth on the visit, part of their 13-day trip to the United States. Sitting next to him at the dinner commemorating the 150th anniversary of Dallas' founding was Louise Caldwell, president of the Dallas Historical Society. She remarked, "It was very hard to find anything that he didn't know more about than me, including Texas history."

The queen recounted the story in which a man tells his son: "Never ask a man where he's from. If he's from Texas, he'll tell you. Otherwise no use embarrassing him by asking."

At the Capitol, Gov. Ann Richards hosted the queen, and 8,000 people gathered to catch a glimpse. The queen declared, "No state commands such fierce pride and loyalty. Lesser mortals are pitied for their misfortune in not being born Texans." And she, the most traveled monarch in the world, knows what she's talking about. ■

Pasta

This most flexible staple anchors a variety of dishes and flavors

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Pasta has been a staple in our home for as long as I can remember. And why not? It's economical, filling and can be made into so many different dishes. Whether you have hungry kids in the house or just need something hearty on a cold night, there are plenty of options. This Pesto-Baked Penne is perfect for transforming leftover chicken and pesto into something new. You can easily make this recipe vegetarian by swapping in mushrooms or roasted winter squash for the chicken.

Pesto-Baked Penne

16 ounces penne pasta
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 cup ricotta cheese
⅓ cup pesto
2 tablespoons heavy cream or half-and-half
¼ cup chopped oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes
2 cups diced chicken
½ cup shredded mozzarella

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and coat a 9-by-13-inch casserole dish with cooking spray. Cook penne just to al dente, according to package directions. Reserve ¼ cup pasta water, drain and transfer to a large bowl. Toss pasta with olive oil and set aside.
2. In another bowl, stir together ricotta, pesto and cream until blended. Add reserved pasta water to thin, if desired. Pour sauce over pasta and stir well to coat. Stir in the tomatoes and chicken, then transfer to prepared dish. Sprinkle mozzarella on evenly.
3. Cover with foil and bake 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake another 5–10 minutes, until cheese on top is melted, if preferred.

SERVES 8

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Roasted Butternut Squash Lasagna.





Gleason Family Goulash

SAMANTHA GLEASON
BANDERA EC

This recipe is a great option for a make-ahead meal, as the flavors are even better the next day. In a clever trick, Gleason adds baking soda to help reduce the acidity from the tomatoes.

- 2 cups uncooked pasta (rotini, elbow or bow tie)**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic**
- 1 pound ground beef or turkey**
- 1 pound yellow squash or zucchini, diced**
- ½ sweet onion, chopped**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- 1 teaspoon dried sweet basil**
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning**
- ¾ teaspoon garlic powder**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**
- 2 cans (14.5 ounces each) fire-roasted diced tomatoes, undrained**
- ¾ cup ketchup**
- 1 tablespoon sun-dried tomato paste**
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce**
- ½ cup water or beef broth**
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce**
- ½ teaspoon baking soda**
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**

1. Cook pasta in lightly salted water according to package directions. Drain and set aside.

2. Meanwhile, in a large saucepan or deep-sided skillet over medium heat, add olive oil and garlic and cook 2 minutes, stirring to prevent burning. Add ground beef and cook 5 minutes, then add squash and onion. Continue to cook until beef is browned, stirring as needed.

\$500 WINNER

Seafood Manicotti Alfredo

ANECIA HERO
COSERV



This seafood manicotti feels fancy but is easy enough to put together on a weeknight. It's important to not overcook the pasta and handle it gently so it doesn't tear, so consider cooking a few extra shells just in case.

SERVES 4



PASTA

- 8 manicotti shells**
- 8 ounces cooked shrimp, tails removed, diced**
- 4 ounces cooked crabmeat, flaked**
- 1 egg, lightly beaten**
- 1 cup ricotta cheese**
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese**
- ¼ cup shredded mozzarella cheese**
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice**
- 1 teaspoon Creole seasoning**
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder**

SAUCE

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter**
- 1 cup heavy cream**
- 1¼ cups shredded Parmesan cheese**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**

1. **PASTA** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat a 2-quart baking dish with cooking spray and set aside. Cook pasta in lightly salted boiling water for 7 minutes. Drain and transfer to a lightly greased baking sheet to cool.

2. In a large bowl, combine shrimp, crab, egg, ricotta, Parmesan, mozzarella, lemon juice, Creole seasoning and garlic powder. Stir until uniformly combined, then transfer to a piping bag or large zip-close bag. Cut off the bag tip and carefully pipe filling into cooked shells; fill one end of the shell, then the other. Transfer shells to prepared baking dish.

3. **SAUCE** In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, melt butter. Add heavy cream and Parmesan and cook, whisking often, until cheese is melted and sauce is thickened and smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

4. Pour half of the sauce over the pasta, reserving the remaining sauce for serving. Cover dish with foil and bake 20 minutes. Serve with additional warmed sauce on top.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

STONE FRUITS DUE FEBRUARY 10

How do you turn peaches, plums, cherries and apricots into the stars of your kitchen? Submit your recipes online by February 10 for a chance to win \$500.



CONTINUED >

RECIPES CONTINUED

3. Stir in oregano, basil, Italian seasoning, garlic powder, salt and pepper, then stir in diced tomatoes with their juices, ketchup and tomato paste.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together tomato sauce, water, Worcestershire sauce and baking soda. Slowly add the mixture to the pan, stirring until foaming stops. Cover and simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Add cooked pasta and balsamic vinegar and stir well. Cover again and simmer another 10–15 minutes.

SERVES 8

Meaty Mexican Mac and Cheese

CHUCK BURGESS
HEART OF TEXAS EC

Perfect for those who love their mac and cheese fully loaded, Burgess' "3MC" gets its kick from a medley of favorite taco flavors. Make it as mild or as spicy as you like, with hot sauce and tortilla chips served on the side.



- 2 tablespoons vegetable or olive oil
- 1½ pounds lean ground beef
- 1 pound ground pork sausage
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 can (10 ounces) Ro-Tel tomatoes, mild (or to taste)
- ½ cup salsa, mild (or to taste)
- 1 can (4 ounces) diced green chiles, mild (or to taste)
- 1 pound uncooked macaroni pasta
- 1 pound Queso Blanco Velveeta
- 10 ounces queso fresco, crumbled

- 1 cup Mexican crema or heavy cream
- Pepper jack cheese, shredded

1. In a large pot with a lid over medium-high heat, heat oil, then add meats and onion. Cover and cook until meat is browned, stirring occasionally. Add salt, chili powder, tomatoes, salsa and chiles. Stir well and cook 10–15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Meanwhile, cook pasta to al dente according to package directions. Drain and return to original cooking pot; set aside.
3. In a microwave-safe bowl, add Velveeta, queso fresco and cream and microwave 3 minutes. Stir well and continue to cook in the microwave in 30-second increments, stirring after each time, until melted and smooth. (Or combine ingredients in a saucepan and melt over medium heat.)
4. Stir cheese sauce into macaroni to coat, then pour pasta into the meat mixture. Heat on low 5 minutes or until heated through, stirring to blend well. Serve with pepper jack cheese on top.

SERVES 8–10

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

A Glimpse of Buddy Holly

Lubbock museum honors native son's enduring musical legacy

BY CHET GARNER

I REMEMBER THE first time I heard Buddy Holly. My older brother bought the soundtrack from the film *Stand by Me*, and for weeks the song *Everyday* was stuck in my head. Soon I discovered *Peggy Sue*, *Rave On* and other classic hits. My feet have been tapping ever since.

It wasn't until decades later that I learned Holly was born and raised in Lubbock and that the world's best Buddy Holly museum sits in the heart of the Hub City.

The first thing I noticed as I turned off Crickets Avenue was a larger-than-life set of Holly's signature black-rimmed glasses. Holly once considered wearing contact lenses to help his rock star image, but contacts hurt his eyes and he needed glasses to see the crowd. That's a good thing, as the glasses became as much a part of his timeless look as the electric guitar in his hands. This is just one of many facts I learned inside Lubbock's Buddy Holly Center.

The museum is full of artifacts and a complete timeline of how a kid from Lubbock forged a new rock 'n' roll sound that changed the world. One display shows mementos from Holly's high school days, including his baseball mitt and Converse high-tops. Another display holds items from Buddy's rise to fame, including a tweed sports coat he wore on tour and a pair of super-hip suede shoes.

It's hard to believe that Holly's career lasted only a few years, cut short by a plane crash in Iowa. His black-rimmed glasses recovered from the wreckage now sit silently in a case at the end of the museum's timeline.

The center gives every generation a connection to the man and his music. As the title of one of his hit songs says, his legacy will *Not Fade Away*. ■

ABOVE Chet visits the Buddy Holly Center in Lubbock.

TCP Check out the Buddy Holly Center through Chet's eyes on our website. You'll want to see all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

FEBRUARY

10

Lufkin My Funny Valentine, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

Port Aransas Chocolate Crawl, (361) 749-5919, portaransas.org

Round Rock [10-13] Texas Basket Weavers Association Annual Conference, (512) 925-3596, texasbasketweavers.com

11

Fredericksburg [11-12] Luckenbach Hug-In & Valentine Ball, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

Port Lavaca [11-12] South Texas Square and Round Dance Association February Frenzy, (361) 575-2665, stsrda.org

Fredericksburg [11-13, 18-20, 25-27] Clue: The Musical, (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

12

Jefferson Queen Mab Ball, (903) 742-1405, mardigrasupriver.com

New Braunfels Love the Run You're With 5K, (830) 626-8786, athleteguild.com

Dallas [12, 19, 26] The Dinner Detective Murder Mystery Dinner Show, 1-866-496-0535, thedinnerdetective.com

15

Gladewater [15-March 15] Helen Lee Estate Daffodil Gardens, (903) 845-5180

17

West Tawakoni [17-19] Catmasters Classic on Lake Tawakoni, (325) 998-2191, thecatmasters.com

18

Brenham The Funniest Night of Your Life With Todd Oliver, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Brenham [18-19] Hearth and Home Quilt Show, (979) 661-4761, friendshipquiltguild.weebly.com

Kerrville [18-19] Hill Country Quilt Guild Winter Quilt Show, (281) 974-6220, hillcountryquiltguild.com

Ozona [18-19] Ozona Land Stewardship Blowout, (325) 392-3737

Fredericksburg [18-20] Trade Days, (210) 846-4094, fbgradedays.com

Galveston [18-20, 25-27, March 1] Mardi Gras! Galveston, (409) 763-8676, galveston.com

Victoria [18-20, 24-27] Ring of Fire, (361) 570-8587, theatrevictoria.org

19

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

Mesquite Daddy-Daughter Dance, (972) 204-4925, visitmesquitetx.com

Palacios African American Heritage Day, (310) 650-9352, citybytheseamuseum.org

West Columbia Market Day, (979) 345-4656, visitvarnerhogplantation.com

Nocona [19-26] Mardi Gras Nocona Style, (940) 825-3526, nocona.org

MORE EVENTS >

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Pick of the Month

Texas Independence Day Celebration

Huntsville, March 2
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March 2 is Texas Independence Day and Sam Houston's birthday. Huntsville, where the Texas statesman is buried, and Sam Houston State University hold annual celebrations for the occasions, including a graveside ceremony.

25

La Grange [25-26] Best Little Quilt Show in Texas, (979) 242-3514, coloradovalleyqqg.com

Lubbock [25-26] Friends of the Lubbock Library Last Friday BookStore, (806) 775-2852, lubbockfol.org

26

Granbury JazzFest, (650) 265-1193, granburyjazzfest.com

Henderson Mardi Gras Gumbo Cook-Off, (903) 392-0691, visithendersontx.com

Irving Irving Symphony Orchestra: Musical Treasures From the World, (972) 831-8818, irvingsymphony.org

27

Lufkin Croce Plays Croce, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

MARCH

FEBRUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

20

Fredericksburg Lone Star Brass, (830) 997-6523, fredericksburgmusicclub.com

23

Lufkin [23-24] Rob Schneider, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

24

Corsicana The Magic of Bill Blagg, (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: Heart of the Strings, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

Port Aransas [24-27] Whooping Crane Festival, (361) 749-5919, portaransas.org/whooping-crane-festival

04

Fredericksburg Texas A&M Singing Cadets, (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

Lubbock [4-5] Lubbock Area Square and Round Dance Federation Conclave Dance, (806) 786-8589, squaredancelubbocktx.com

05

Kerrville Looking Back with John Moore, (830) 896-8976, lookingbackjm22@gmail.com

06

Lufkin Bella Gaia, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

Orange Fiddler on the Roof, (409) 886-5535, lutchter.org

Public Art

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—Charles Schulz, creator of the *Peanuts* comic strip

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1 STEPHANIE EHLERT
GREENBELT EC
"I found this beauty driving through Brady."

2 GLENN TIMMONS
SOUTH PLAINS EC
Parking meter art east of Lubbock.

3 DEBRA CZERNY
BLUEBONNET EC
Tom Besson painted this mural in downtown Elgin.

4 CARMEN GALLO
PEDERNALES EC
A recycled bicycle at Yellow Bike Project in Austin.



Upcoming Contests

- DUE FEB 10 Industrial**
- DUE MAR 10 Morning Glory**
- DUE APR 10 Motorsports**



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



The Muse in Museum

Artistic inspiration abounds in the comfort of the Kimbell Café

BY BABS RODRIGUEZ
ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA LIEDO

WHEN I TRAVEL, I seek out museums. As a writer always in search of a quiet place where my laptop is welcome, museum cafés help me meet deadlines and recharge in ways coffeehouse clatter never could.

The atmosphere of a good museum café pulls me out of time and settles me in a world—my chair, stool or booth—literally surrounded by artistic inspiration. Masterpieces a glance away, these settling-in spots are elevated musing favorites for any number of reasons: They are sure to be more subdued than the average coffee shop; the people-watching is stellar; and there’s a hum in the atmosphere that inspires some of my best thinking.

Why it took me decades of courting the creativity muse in distant cafés only to discover I could have coffee with her

in my hometown of Fort Worth, I do not know. I do remember the moment it occurred to me that I had too long overlooked such a prime location for contemplation. Just before Christmas one year, I stopped at the Kimbell Art Museum for a gift shop run. I plodded up the broad limestone steps to the gallery level, overwhelmed by obligations, my head full of deadlines.

Drawn into the light that fills Louis I. Kahn’s vaulted masterpiece, I headed straight for the Kimbell Café. From my seat I could see Aristide Maillol’s *L’Air*, a bronze female figure, floating in a courtyard. European masterworks beckoned from across the corridor. Immediately I was transported. That’s the other bonus that comes from stopping into a hometown museum: There is a sense of excitement that I associate with travel. Without planes or trains, I can step out of the workaday world and feel I am on a journey—even when I’m less than a mile from home.

Seated beneath fragments of a sixth-century mosaic, cupping my warm coffee mug, I realized I was steps away from Michelangelo’s first known painting. And just like that, I lay my burdens down.

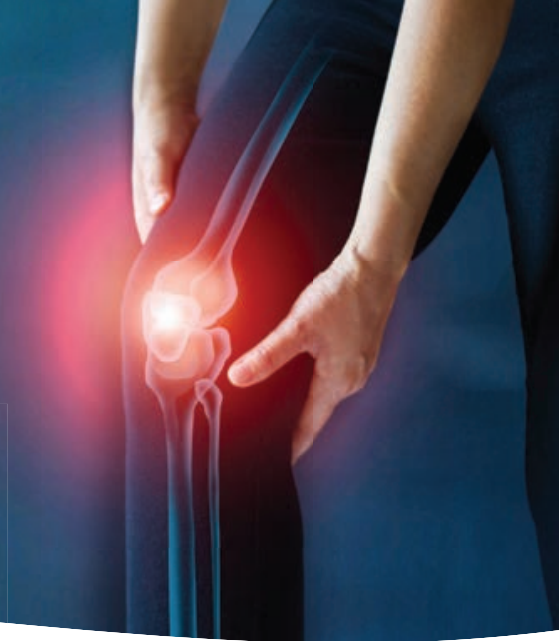
Now I return regularly to the Kimbell’s café for creative therapy. I can energize myself in 10 minutes or 20, view one painting or a dozen, before or after my coffee. Or I can simply sit quietly. No entrance fee and no passport required.

And while the soup-and-sandwich lunch options are dependably tasty, a post-pandemic offering of an afternoon tea service takes me to happy memories served up abroad. It also offers up my favorite sort of nibbling—scones with housemade jam, finger sandwiches, cookies—and because it’s served as “tea for two,” I’m sometimes inspired to share with a friend.

That is, of course, when I’m not meeting my muse. ■



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