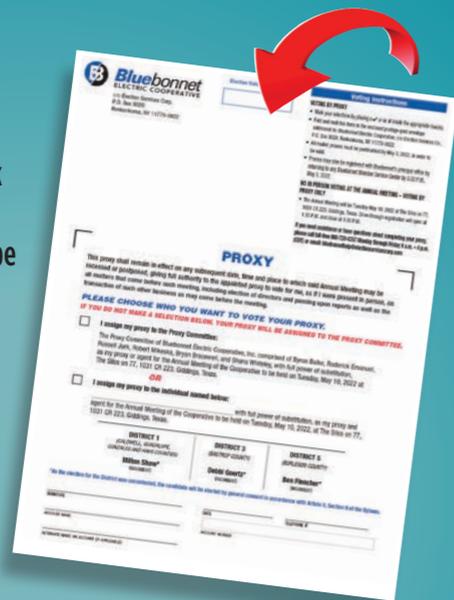


VOTE BY PROXY!

Make sure your voice is heard!

Mail your proxy voting form or hand it to a representative at any of our five member service center drive-through lanes. Everyone who returns a completed proxy will be entered in a drawing for door prizes.

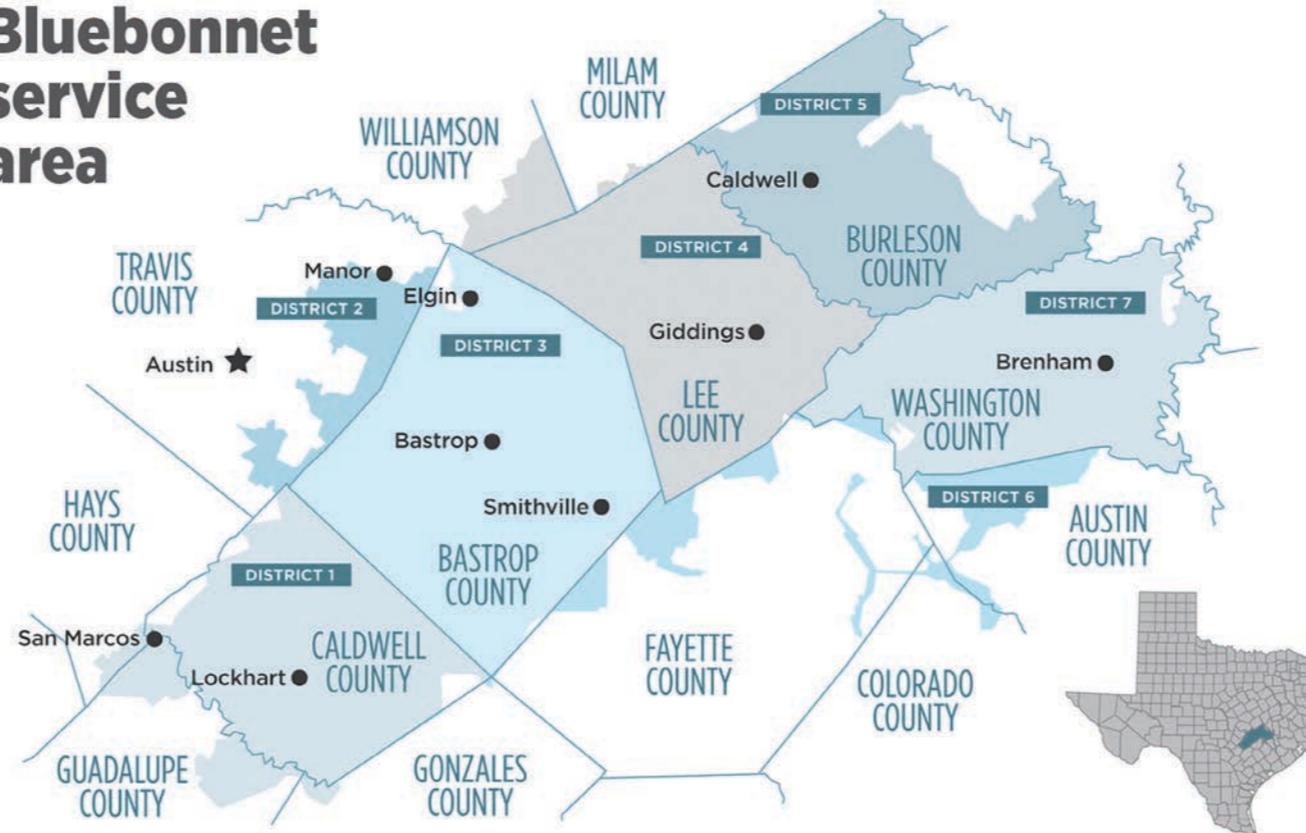
Proxy forms were mailed to all members in March. To vote by proxy, fill out the form and mail it back using the self-addressed postage-prepaid envelope provided. If you cannot find your form, call 800-842-7708, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday or email memberservices@bluebonnet.coop to have one mailed to you.



Completed proxy forms must be postmarked by May 3, 2022, or given to a representative at a Member Service Center drive-through lane before 5 p.m. May 3.

Get more information at bluebonnet.coop/annualmeeting or call 800-842-7708.

Bluebonnet service area



INCUMBENT DIRECTORS TO BE RE-ELECTED TO BOARD

Milton Shaw District 1 (Incumbent)



Shaw has served on the Bluebonnet Board of Directors since 2010. He has earned the Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership certifications and Director Gold credential through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Shaw is chairman of Bluebonnet's Legal & Governance Committee and is a member of the Member & Employee Services Committee. He grew up in Luling and traveled America during a 30-year career with Shell Oil Co. He and his family moved to six states while he managed marketing of Shell's real estate assets and oversaw multimillion-dollar budgets. Shaw has decades of experience in community relations and customer service. After graduating from what is now Texas State University in San Marcos in 1962, Shaw managed a store for Western Auto and later was a manager in the Sears department store chain's management development program. He retired from Shell in 1998 and returned to Luling with his wife and high school sweetheart, Judy. They run a few head of cattle on 46 acres in Caldwell County. Shaw is active in his community, including service over the years in the Luling Chamber of Commerce, Community Action, Inc., Kiwanis Club, Caldwell County Development Board, Polonia Water Supply Corp. and McNeil Baptist Church. He and Judy have three sons: Milton Jr., who retired after working for Shell Oil Co. for more than 30 years; Mark, executive vice president, chief legal and regulatory officer for Southwest Airlines; and Michael, an attorney for the law firm of Kessler Collins in Dallas. The Shaws have seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Debbi Goertz District 3 (Incumbent)

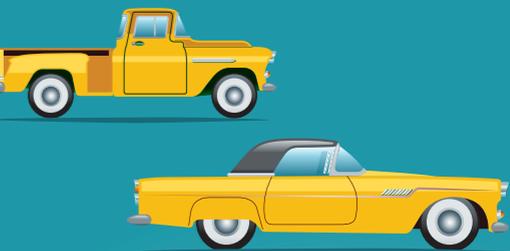


Goertz has served on the Bluebonnet Board of Directors since 2017. She has earned the Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership certifications through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. She is a member of the Energy Services and Legal & Governance committees. Goertz has been an attorney in Bastrop since 2004, representing clients in civil matters including trusts and estates law, and some Medicaid issues. She was born in Kilgore and grew up there and in Bryan. After graduating from Bryan High School, she received a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in merchandising from Texas Tech University in Lubbock. She worked at Bloomingdale's in Dallas as a department manager before opting for a career change. Goertz attended Baylor Law School in Waco and earned her law degree in 1993. After graduation, she moved to Bastrop and has been a Bluebonnet member since 1998. Goertz worked briefly in a Bastrop law firm before beginning a career with the Texas Department of Public Safety, first as a hearing examiner, then as Texas' administrator for school bus safety. She has worked with numerous Bastrop and Smithville nonprofit groups, including Samella Williams Angels Unaware Ministry, Children's Advocacy Center, Bastrop County Historical Society and Family Crisis Center, and was a Girl Scout leader for 10 years. Her daughter, Abby, graduated from the University of Texas at Austin.

Ben Flencher District 5 (Incumbent)



Flencher, chairman of the Bluebonnet Board of Directors, has been on the electric co-op's Board since 1987. He is an ex-officio member of Bluebonnet's Board committees — Audit & Finance, Energy Services, Legal & Governance, Member & Employee Services. He grew up in a banking family in Somerville and began his lifelong banking career by rolling coins and filing checks as a young boy at the bank where his father worked. He was officially hired when he was in eighth grade and continued to work at the bank while in college. Today, he is chairman of the board of that same bank — Citizens State Bank— and served as president from 1981 to 2021. Under his leadership, the bank has grown to seven locations. Flencher graduated from Texas A&M University in 1974 with a degree in finance. He is a lifelong member of the First Lutheran Church in Somerville. He and his wife Betsy, have four sons: Aaron and Cory, who work in the banking industry; Ryan, who works in commercial real estate; and Josh, who owns a dirt contracting company. The Flenchers have seven grandchildren.



Join us!

The Annual Meeting will be Tuesday, May 10, 2022, at The Silos on 77, 1031 County Road 223 in Giddings.

Drive-through registration will open at 1:30 p.m. and close at 3:30 p.m.



Every member who votes by proxy or who registers at the drive-through Annual Meeting will be entered in drawings to win one of dozens of door prizes!*

**Bluebonnet employees, members of the Board of Directors and spouses are ineligible to win.*

2022 ANNUAL MEETING & BOARD ELECTION Q&A

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's Annual Meeting will be Tuesday, May 10, 2022, at The Silos on 77, 1031 County Road 223 in Giddings. Drive-through registration will open at 1:30 p.m. and close at 3:30 p.m. Members may vote by proxy in advance of the meeting. Look for details about the meeting in the coming weeks with your bill, in Bluebonnet's pages in the April and May issues of Texas Co-op Power magazine, on our social media and on our website, bluebonnet.coop.

How many Board of Director seats are up for election?

Three of the seats on Bluebonnet's Board of Directors are up for election this year. The seats represent District 1 for Caldwell, Guadalupe, Gonzales and Hays counties; District 3 for Bastrop County; and District 5 for Burleson County. Because the candidates for the Board seats are unopposed, they will be elected by general consent in accordance with Bluebonnet's bylaws.

Bluebonnet's service area is divided into seven districts. If the election were contested, could I vote for candidates in all districts or just the district in which I live?

During contested Board elections, co-op members can vote for directors in all districts. The districts in the co-op's service area were drawn along Bluebonnet's service area boundary and county lines. The seven districts are represented by one to three directors based on, among other things, the number of meters in each district. There are no contested elections in 2022.

What are my voting options?

Items may be added to the Annual Meeting agenda that would require a vote by members. Those items would have to be added no later than 10 days before the Annual Meeting. Your proxy could be used in that vote, which is why your proxy selection is important.

What is proxy voting, and how does it work?

Proxy voting allows a member to designate another to vote in his or her place. On the proxy, members can assign their vote to either Bluebonnet's Proxy Committee or to another member. Proxies are counted to ensure at

least 1 percent of Bluebonnet's membership is represented at the Annual Meeting to constitute a quorum.

Who serves on Bluebonnet's Proxy Committee?

The Proxy Committee is composed of all Bluebonnet Board members whose terms are not currently up for election. This year's Proxy Committee members are Byron Balke, Bryan Bracewell, Roderick Emanuel, Russell Jurk, Robert Mikeska and Shana Whiteley.

How do I vote by proxy?

Complete the proxy form and return it by mail or drop it off at any of Bluebonnet's member service centers in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart or Manor. If you misplace the proxy form, pick one up at a member service center drive-through or call 800-842-7708 and ask a representative to mail one to you. Proxies must either be hand-delivered to a member service center by 5 p.m. May 3, 2022, or mailed to:

**Bluebonnet Elections Processing
c/o Election Services Co.
P.O. Box 9020
Ronkonkoma, NY 11779-9822**

Mailed proxies must be postmarked by May 3, 2022.

Can this proxy be used again at future Annual Meetings?

Your proxy is valid only for the meeting specified on the proxy form.

Who administers the election?

Election Services Co., which is a third-party, independent vendor that specializes in administering corporate elections nationwide. It has the skills, experience and equipment to efficiently and accurately tally proxies and votes while adhering to the Federal Trade Commission's Red Flag requirements that protect members' confidential account information.

What if I have more questions?

Please call 800-842-7708 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, or email memberservices@bluebonnet.coop.



Bluebonnet's

drive-through

ANNUAL

MEETING

MAY 10, 2022

The Silos on 77
1031 County Road 223
Giddings, Texas

1:30-3:30 P.M.



Turn this page, then flip to the back for more details



LOOK INSIDE FOR MORE DETAILS!

TEXAS CITY DISASTER'S
SCARS ENDURE

TWO-FISTED WEST TEXAS
LAW AND ORDER

WEEDS GET THE
LAST LAUGH

Texas Coop Power

FOR BLUEBONNET EC MEMBERS

APRIL 2022

Wheel Deal

Food Truck Championship
challengers draw big
crowds to a small town

**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 18



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With Mueller, you have access to a wide range of high-quality steel buildings, residential metal roofing, and components. From complex buildings to self-storage units, from living spaces to backyard buildings, Mueller manufactures our products to ensure years of reliability. We invite you to see our many options at muellerinc.com, then call or come by one of our 36 locations.



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April 2022



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08 Heroes Next Door

Seventy-five years after the Texas City disaster, those who rushed in haven't been forgotten.

By Bill Minutaglio

Best in Tow

Chefs bring big-time flavor to small-town Graham for the Food Truck Championship of Texas.

*By Amanda Ogle
Photos by Tom Hussey*

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ON THE COVER

Lyn Sharp awaits the next order in Danibelle's Lebanese Cuisine food truck.

ABOVE

The crew from Rack Attack Barbecue celebrates winning the grand champion belt.

Photos by Tom Hussey

Count on Lineworkers

ELECTRIC CO-OPS proudly celebrate their lineworkers, even proclaiming the second Monday in April—April 11 this year—as National Lineworker Appreciation Day.

Co-op members, too, are quick to look up to lineworkers.

When we asked readers to finish this sentence—“The hardest job in the world has to be ...”—Pablo Sanchez, a Magic Valley Electric Cooperative member, was the first to respond:

“Being a lineman during cold weather. Knowing someone is counting on Magic Valley to keep us warm.”



“Genius is 1% inspiration, 99% perspiration.”

—THOMAS EDISON

FINISH THIS SENTENCE I REMEMBER WHEN A DOLLAR COULD BUY ...

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 February prompt: **The baby of the family always ...**

Remembers things differently.

STEVE AND LISA BOSTON
VIA FACEBOOK

Gets his way and mom's attention.

SANDRA GONZALEZ
SAN PATRICIO EC
BAYSIDE

Had a stomachache when it was time to help with dishes and cleanup after dinner.

MARY ANN CLULEY
TRINITY VALLEY EC
FRANKSTON

Gets the hand-me-downs.

LORA GRAHAM
COLEMAN COUNTY EC
GOLDBUSK

Stays the baby even when he's 6 feet, 2 inches tall; 31 years old; and has his own baby.

SHERRI LENOIR
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC
GROESBECK

To see more responses, read Currents online.

TCP Contests and More

ENTER CONTESTS AT
TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM



\$500 RECIPE CONTEST
Pizza Night

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS
Motorsports

RECOMMENDED READING
Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 11.
Line of Duty from October 2016 tells about the challenges and rewards for these co-op first responders.



April 7

National Beer Day

Celebrating is easy: *Texas Feels a Draft* from January 2020 includes a map of 96 craft breweries in mostly rural and suburban Texas.

GUARD AGAINST SURGES

Your electric cooperative reminds you of two ways you can protect electronics in your home from power surges: using power strips that include surge protection and installing a whole-home surge protector.

Have You Heard?

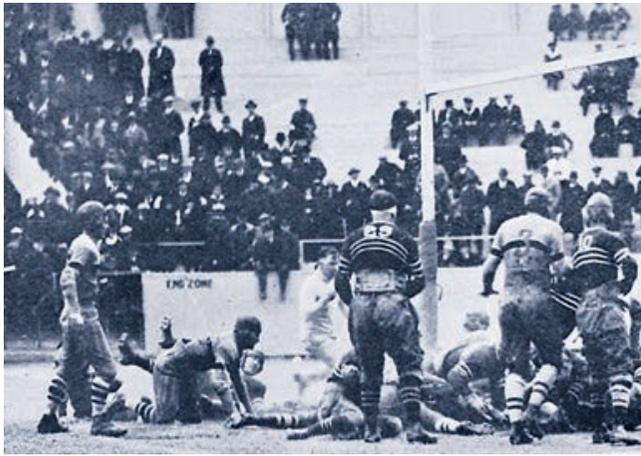
Before the Industrial Revolution, roughly 1760–1840, the principal sources of loud noise were thunder, church bells and cannon fire.



Emergency Tax Break

TEXAS MERCHANTS will participate in a sales tax holiday for emergency preparation supplies this month, allowing tax-free purchases of items that can alleviate hardships after natural disasters like hurricanes, flash floods and wildfires.

More than a dozen products, such as portable generators, hurricane shutters, batteries and fire extinguishers, can be purchased without incurring sales tax April 23–25. Details are available at comptroller.texas.gov.



CUSHING MEMORIAL LIBRARY | COURTESY TAMU PRESS

Not Fade Away

I grew up on an Iowa farm about 20 miles south of where Buddy Holly and the others met their end [*A Glimpse of Buddy Holly*, February 2022]. I was 11 then. We didn't learn of the crash until we got to school. All the girls were crying, dashing in and out of the restroom to wash their tears away, only to cry even more as others came through the doors and were told of the crash. Some were so upset they even went home.

Doug Siskow
Pedernales EC
New Braunfels

That's when they made barbed comments [*Joined by a Fence*, January 2022].

CHUCK BURGESS
VIA FACEBOOK

Aggie Standouts

“The lore of the 12th Man is always inspirational. Big kudos to the editors who made sure the story started on Page 12. How perfect.”

JULIA TRIGG CRAWFORD
LAMAR ELECTRIC
DIRECT

Royal Recollection

Our Stephenville neighbor June Shannon was personally invited by Queen Elizabeth II to visit her in Austin in 1991 [*Her Majesty's Visit*, February 2022]. What do you take the queen to welcome her to Texas? A pecan pie, of course. June baked a pie and enjoyed it with her majesty over tea. June, our Stephenville High School English teacher, was selected to read her poem *Happiness Is* at the queen's silver jubilee in London in 1977. There they became friends, sharing a love for country life.

Suzan Garner
CECA
Mullin

Telling Good Stories

We subscribe to several state and national, globally recognized magazines, many of which get quickly scanned and recycled. *Texas Co-op Power* is one that I read cover to cover and look forward to. Thank you, Texas Electric Cooperatives, for your support of journalism and for understanding the importance of a good story.

Abbie and Charles Cotrell
Bandera EC
Waring



COURTESY CHET GARNER

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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

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

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Finally . . . a better mobility solution than Scooters or Power Chairs.

The **Zoomer's** versatile design and 1-touch joystick operation brings mobility and independence to those who need it most.

If you have mobility issues, or know someone who does, then you've experienced the difficulties faced by millions of Americans. Simple tasks like getting from the bedroom to the kitchen can become a time-consuming and potentially dangerous ordeal. You may have tried to solve the problem with a power chair or a scooter but neither is ideal. Power chairs are bulky and look like a medical device. Scooters are either unstable or hard to maneuver. Now, there's a better alternative . . . the Zoomer.

***My Zoomer is a delight to ride!** It has increased my mobility in my apartment, my opportunities to enjoy the-out-of-doors, and enabled me to visit the homes of my children for longer periods of time. The various speeds of it match my need for safety, it is easy to turn, and I am most pleased with the freedom of movement it gives me.*

Sincerely, A. Macon, Williamsburg, VA

After just one trip around your home in the Zoomer, you'll marvel at how easy it is to navigate. It is designed to maneuver in tight spaces like doorways, between furniture, and around corners. It can go over thresholds and works great on any kind of floor or carpet. It's not bulky or cumbersome, so it can roll



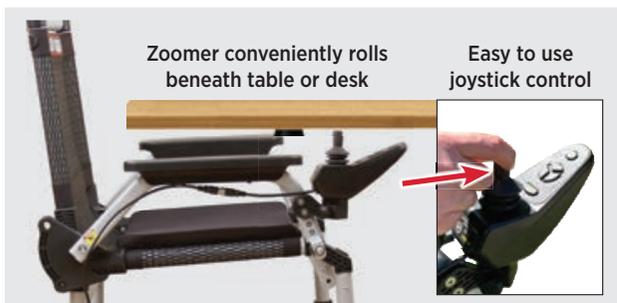
right up to a table or desk – there's no need to transfer



Folds to 12" in seconds

to a chair. Its sturdy yet lightweight aluminum frame makes it durable and comfortable. Its dual motors power it at up to 3.7 miles per hour and its automatic electromagnetic brakes stop on a dime. The rechargeable battery powers it for up to 8 miles on a single charge. Plus, its exclusive foldable design enables you to transport it easily and even store it in a closet or under a bed when it's not in use.

Why spend another day letting mobility issues hamper your lifestyle? Call now and find out how you can have your very own Zoomer.

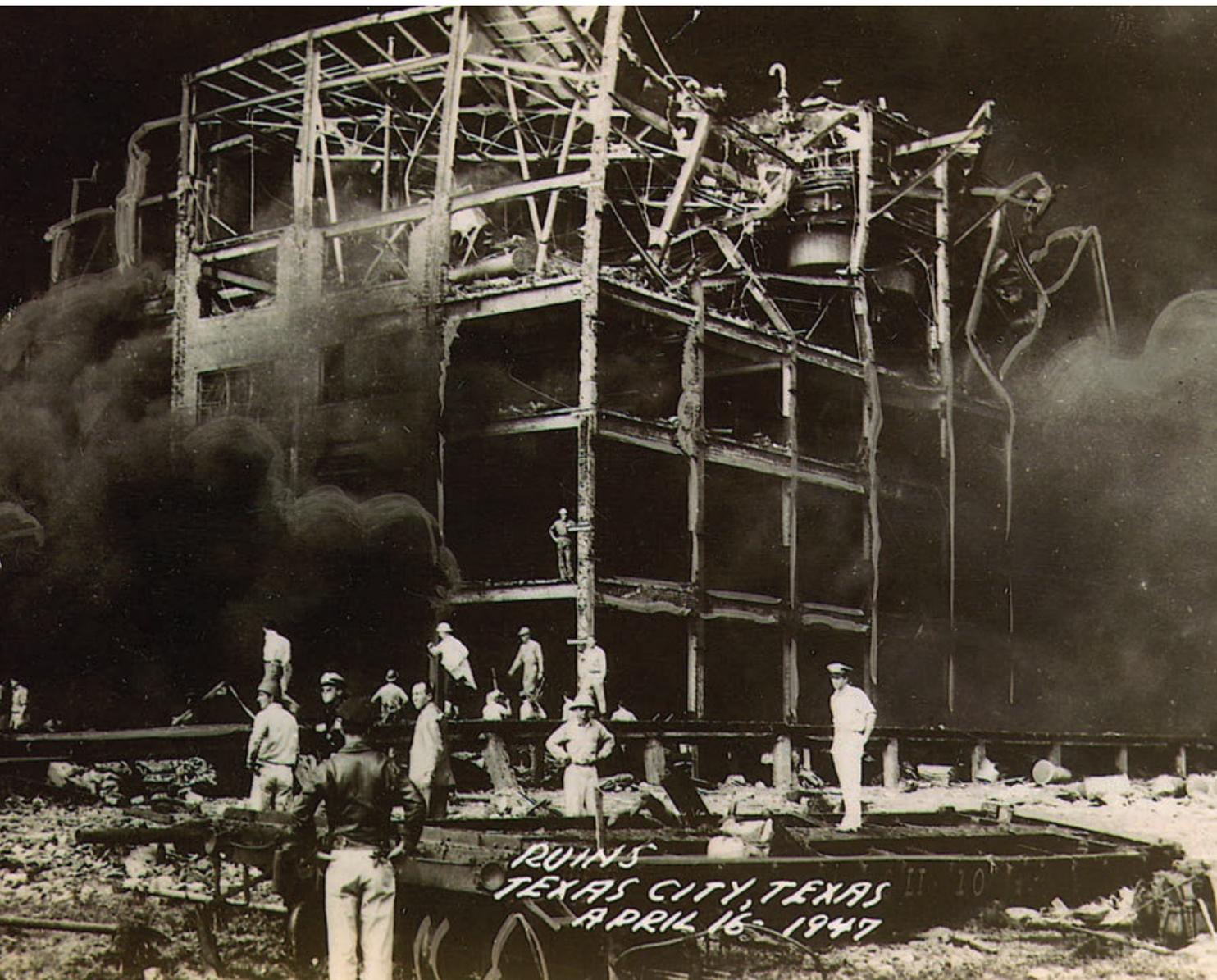


Ready to get your own Zoomer? We'd love to talk to you.

Call now toll free and order one today! **1-888-223-7165**

Please mention code 116683 when ordering.





RUINS
TEXAS CITY, TEXAS
APRIL 16, 1947

Heroes Next Door

Seventy-five years after the Texas City disaster, those who rushed in haven't been forgotten

BY BILL MINUTAGLIO

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I received a message that just didn't seem right: An indomitable and indestructible Texan, someone so brave it felt like he could live forever, had passed away.

He was a former soldier who had fought in some of the deadliest moments of World War II. And then, after surviving the ravages of battle, he and others had stared down what some have called the greatest human-made tragedy of 20th-century America—an event that came to be called the Texas City disaster.

COURTESY WOODSON RESEARCH CENTER, FONDREN LIBRARY, RICE UNIVERSITY

It was what some imagined an atomic bomb blast to be like. Others simply thought that Judgment Day had abruptly arrived.

Curtis Trahan had lived through so many things that it wasn't all that unusual to assume he could march on and on. But his family let me know that he had indeed succumbed. They wondered if I would speak at his memorial service.

Of course, I agreed—while knowing it would be virtually impossible to give proper tribute to him and all the other ordinary folks in Texas City who displayed unyielding courage, empathy and humanity during the most profound tragedy imaginable.

Tall and soft-spoken, Trahan was mayor of the small port town near Houston on April 16, 1947. That morning, as kids and families gathered to watch firefighters tackle what seemed like a small fire on a dock, there was suddenly a massive explosion.

It was what some imagined an atomic bomb blast to be like. Others simply thought that Judgment Day had abruptly arrived.

The earth rumbled and shuddered, oceangoing ships were heaved out of the water, buildings collapsed, airplanes were sucked from the sky—and hundreds of men, women and children instantly perished. Almost every member of the Texas City Fire Department was killed in the blink of an eye. Dozens and dozens of people were never seen again.

The final numbers were debated, but it appears that the Texas City disaster killed as many as 500. It's possible that more died but were never accounted for, and another 5,000 were injured. Dozens of human remains went unidentified.

Despite unrelenting fires, carnage and chaos, hundreds of people, including Trahan, raced to the scene. They organized rescue efforts, comforted the wounded and asked for help from lawmakers in Austin and Washington. They refused to sleep, marshaled volunteers and demanded answers for the pained community. So many Texans and more than a few souls from out of state stayed for weeks and months on end to treat the victims, donate blood, clear the rubble and help families search for loved ones.

The FBI arrived to investigate whether it had been some sort of attack. Soldiers were sent to restore order. Frank Sinatra agreed to do a fundraiser. Hundreds of cars, homes and buildings needed repairs. The financial toll, in today's dollars, would reach into the billions. Scientists were in awe at how the detonations were felt dozens of miles away

in Houston and even registered on measuring devices in other states.

The blast was ultimately deemed an

accident. One theory held that a carelessly tossed cigarette had set fire to tons of ammonium nitrate fertilizer sitting in the hold of a ship. It was, ironically, fertilizer that the United States was sending to Europe to nourish war-ravaged farms and speed the healing of a decimated continent.

Investigations and court cases would stretch on for years, circling around whether or not more could have been done to warn the good people in Texas City that the bags and bags of fertilizer were not just lifesaving—they were also deadly.

Ammonium nitrate was already well-recognized by then to be both a powerful fertilizer and explosive. Bombmakers used it in World War I, and later, terrorists also sought it out. The compound was used by Timothy McVeigh to blow up a federal building in Oklahoma, and in 2013, there was an explosion at a fertilizer facility in West, Texas, that led to 15 deaths.

Now, as another aching anniversary for the Texas City disaster approaches, I think of the last conversation I had with Trahan. For many long years, he had watched as the stricken city rebuilt bit by bit. Businesses eventually reopened, the freighters came back, and school classes and church services resumed.

But for Trahan and others, the wounds from the Texas City disaster never went entirely away. He and many more had seen too much, endured so much, for the mental and even physical scars to truly vanish.

We sat in his little home, and he talked about how he had first moved to Texas City because he thought it would be a quiet place to raise a family. That he had run for mayor so that anyone from any race or background would be treated the same.

He said that when hell on earth came to his little town, he simply did what he had to do. What he believed most people would do: You race to rescue your neighbors. You pull them from the rubble. You give them balm, hope and resolve.

And then Trahan waved his hand and suggested quietly that he hadn't done anything that merited remembering.

Later, when I spoke at his memorial service, I tried to convey the essence of that final visit with Trahan. How a disaster can reveal both courage and humility—and how you often don't have to look very far to find everyday angels.

Some reside right next door. ■

The Texas City explosion, so powerful it blew two planes out of the sky, killed as many as 500 people in April 1947.



BEST IN TOW

Chefs bring big-time flavor to small-town Graham for the **Food Truck Championship of Texas**

After parking my car across from a feed store, I make my way up Fourth Street in Graham toward the downtown square. It's a little after noon, and the area is buzzing with activity. Live music rattles through the streets up ahead, and I pass a group of people heading back to their vehicles, toothpicks in hand. "Scrumdiddlyumptious!" one of them says, patting his stomach in satisfaction. I get excited.

Forty-two food trucks are competing today in the Food Truck Championship of Texas, an annual contest that has been held in Graham since 2015. Admission is free for all guests, who can also enjoy live music, an artisan showcase, children's activities and a late-night concert at the Young County Arena after the food.

Up for grabs are numerous awards, bragging rights and the coveted \$10,000 grand championship prize for the best food truck—crowned by a panel of expert judges. The stakes are high for competitors who arrive from hundreds of miles away—rigs in tow—in a test to be the best. This year's event is June 4.

For folks like me, choosing what to eat is the real food truck challenge. And we can't lose.

As I approach the competition, my mouth waters and my nostrils are filled with the scent of fried seafood—no doubt coming from the combination of Mac's Cajun Shack, Catch Me If You Can Southern Creole and Blazin Cajun—all positioned near Fourth and Oak streets and serving dishes such as seafood pot pie, gumbo, shrimp and grits, boudin egg rolls, crawfish, and smoked alligator.

In a nearby building, judges Debbie Workman, a chef and restaurateur; Ched Pagtakhan, a chef, culinary arts teacher and food truck owner; and Dante Ramirez, a restaurateur and catering consultant, sample fare from all 42 trucks.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT Folks in line ponder the menu at one of the 42 food trucks. Brandon Anderson of Rack Attack Barbecue displays his team's grand champion prize. Attendees dig in. An entry labeled with a number for anonymous judging.



FROM LEFT Merle takes in the sights and scents. Corn dogs proved hard to pass up. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP Shaved ice makes a hot ride nice. Event volunteer Jayne Beale shows off the grand champion belt.



Picked-at plates litter tables across the room, each dish assigned a number to make the entries anonymous.

“I really like that egg roll,” Pagtakhan says.

Workman agrees. “The texture was good and flaky. And that pizza, No. 37, was so delicious and unique.”

No Small Wonder

One mile around, it’s no wonder that Graham calls its business district “America’s largest downtown square.” About an hour south of Wichita Falls and home to the Young County Courthouse and about 9,000 residents, Graham comes alive each June, when the chefs pull into town.

The smell of beef cooking on a flattop makes my stomach rumble as I approach Big Kat Burgers, but I press on, wanting to see all my options before diving in. A long line for Happy Dogs Corn Dogs tempts me, as does the mega line for Cousins Maine Lobster’s fresh lobster rolls.

Maya Justice, who is at the event with friends, recom-

Up for grabs are numerous awards, bragging rights and the coveted **\$10,000 grand championship prize** for the best food truck—crowned by a panel of expert judges.

mends Bada Bing Wood Fired Pizza, and several people are buzzing about the fried alligator from Crawldaddys Cajun Kitchen.

“To be able to have pad thai and a Maine lobster roll at the same time here in Graham, America, is incredible,” says Grant Ingram, executive director of economic development with the city of Graham. “It’s so hard to pinpoint a favorite because the variety of trucks we’re able to attract in north central Hill Country is amazing.”

I decide the best approach here is sampling smaller items from multiple trucks, and I hop in line at Treviños Craft Smokehouse truck and wait.

“That Dr Pepper pulled pork taco from the Gypsy Kit truck is oh-em-gee,” says Jenny French, who’s behind me in line at Treviño’s. She and her husband, Ken, came to support their neighbors, the Treviños, at the championship and are getting their fill like everyone else. “I wanted that



The Big Kat Burgers crew.

The Trucks in This Story

- Addie Cakes & Lily Pies, Paradise
- Bada Bing Wood Fired Pizza, San Angelo
- Big Kat Burgers, Fort Worth
- Bite My Biscuit, Fort Worth
- Blazin Cajun, Graham
- Catch Me If You Can, Tyler
- Cousins Maine Lobster, Houston
- Crawdaddys Cajun Kitchen, Bridgeport
- Gypsy Kit, Wichita Falls
- Happy Dogs Corn Dogs, Gainesville
- Mac's Cajun Shack, Fort Worth
- Rack Attack Barbecue, Burlison
- Sakura Southern Seoul, Wichita Falls
- Treviños Craft Smokehouse, Jacksboro
- Yatai Food Kart, Fort Worth

Maine lobster, but the line is so long,” Ken says. “I’ll never know how it tastes.”

I grab a pulled pork taco on a homemade tortilla and head for a table on the courthouse lawn for my first bite of the day. The tender pulled pork and soft tortilla hit the spot on this hot day, and after perusing a few craft booths, I hit the streets again to walk it off and make room for more samples.

The growing line at Addie Cakes & Lily Pies gets my attention, and dessert sounds like just the thing after walking three laps around the square. Toe-tappin’ tunes fill the air, making my wait for a white chocolate Key lime cheesecake more enjoyable. The tart yet sweet treat is perfect for summertime and makes waiting in line feel like a no-brainer.

While visiting with more foodies, I hear lots of chatter about a chicken sandwich on a biscuit. I have to have it, so I make my way to the Bite My Biscuit truck—the 2016 grand champion—for the Nashville hot fried chicken sandwich on a buttermilk biscuit with honey coleslaw and pickles. The \$5 dish is the perfect size (and price) for an event like this, and upon trying the spicy, buttery, delicious concoction, I see why everyone is talking about it.

2021 Winners

- Grand Champion** Rack Attack Barbecue
- Best Signature Dish** Pokey O’s
- People’s Choice** Daddy Bob’s Smokewagon
- Best Food Truck Spirit** Blake’s Snow Shack
- Best Food Truck Design** Sakura Southern Seoul
- Best Menu** Cousins Maine Lobster
- Best Dessert Dish** Addie Cakes & Lily Pies
- Best Barbecue Dish** Smokin 3 C’s
- Best International Dish** Yatai Food Kart
- Best American Dish** Bite My Biscuit



Judges, from left, Ched Pagtakhan, Debbie Workman and Dante Ramirez experienced a day of tasting and hearty discussions.

There's the Beef

Full and satisfied, I grab a chair and wait for the awards ceremony.

"To go through 40-plus plates and taste them all and go through each one on uniqueness, presentation and flavors, it's tough," Ramirez announces. "This was difficult for us."

The audience cheers and whoops for each winner, including Bite My Biscuit for that tasty Nashville hot fried chicken biscuit, Yatai Food Kart for their signature ramen dish, Addie Cakes & Lily Pies for their pecan praline cheesecake, Cousins Maine Lobster for the best menu award, and Sakura Southern Seoul for best food truck design.

As the emcee inches closer to announcing the grand champion, the crowd grows quiet. "The 2021 Food Truck Championship grand champion: Rack Attack Barbecue with their dino beef rib and taking home a check for \$10,000." The crowd erupts in applause as the Rack Attack team roars with excitement, hugging each other as they claim their prize and a professional wrestling-style belt emblazoned with "2021 Grand Champion."

It was Rack Attack Barbecue's first time competing in the event, so a championship win makes owner Brandon Anderson, who opened the business in March 2018, ecstatic.

"This is the first time I've ever presented food that I've made to real chefs and real food critics, so it's a big deal for us," he says. "I'm really happy."

Anderson knew they'd won something when they were dispatched to the awards ceremony, and as the ceremony progressed, they knew through the process of elimination that grand champion was a possibility—as astonishing

"To be able to have pad thai and a Maine lobster roll at the same time here in Graham, America, is incredible."

as that seemed. "I still can't believe it," he says after the ceremony. "We've worked so hard."

Anderson says he thought the winning dish might relate to Texas, which inspired him to serve a beef rib—what he calls "king in Texas."

"I figured everyone would want to try it, so we smoked them, pulled the meat off the bones and served it on top of smoked mashed potatoes," he says.

It worked. "Their dish was very unique," Pagtakhan says. "The doneness on the smoked beef rib was perfect, the flavor was balanced, and the smoked mashed potatoes was a perfect pairing."

Unfortunately, Rack Attack Barbecue ceased operations a few months after the 2021 Food Truck Championship, so this year's showdown will have a new grand champion in addition to plenty of friendly competition and delectable grub up for grabs.

Gina LeGrand, owner of Addie Cakes & Lily Pies, which won the best dessert category last year, will be ready. "I hope we continue our winning streak—or maybe win overall," she says. "Winning the grand prize with a dessert is challenging, but how incredible would that be?" ■

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Meet Charlie

TEXAS' FIRST

Leak-sniffing This 2½-year- old Lab mix uses sniffs

Dog

and signals to guide Aqua
Water Supply to unseen
water line problems.

By Clayton Stromberger
Photos by Sarah Beal

ALONG A QUIET STRETCH of roadside on the eastern edge of Bastrop, a man and a dog move side by side in knee-high brush, slowly zigzagging along a fence line.

“Charlie, search!” says the man, gently but firmly. “Find it. Let’s go.”

The black Lab-shepherd mix with intent amber eyes is wearing a blue harness vest hooked to a long plastic leash held loosely by his handler, Clifton Smith. That gives Charlie room to maneuver through the underbrush.

Charlie leads with his nose, swooping in low for extra sniffs, then swivels in a new direction and circles back, like a kid on a scavenger hunt.

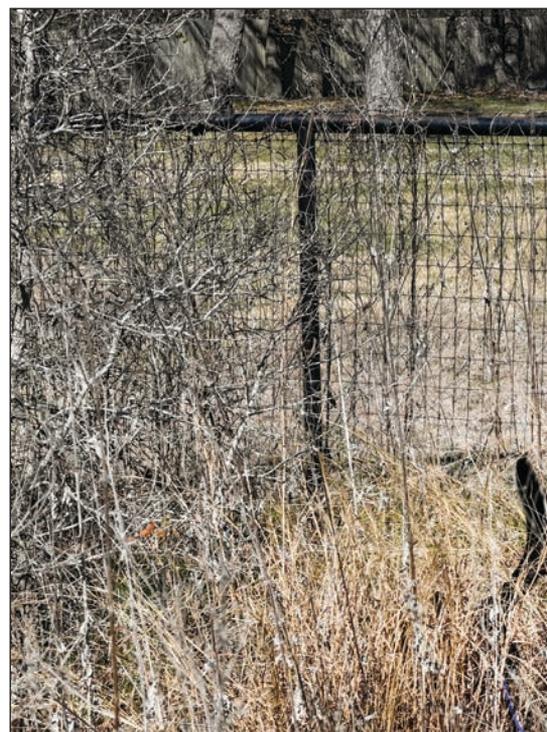
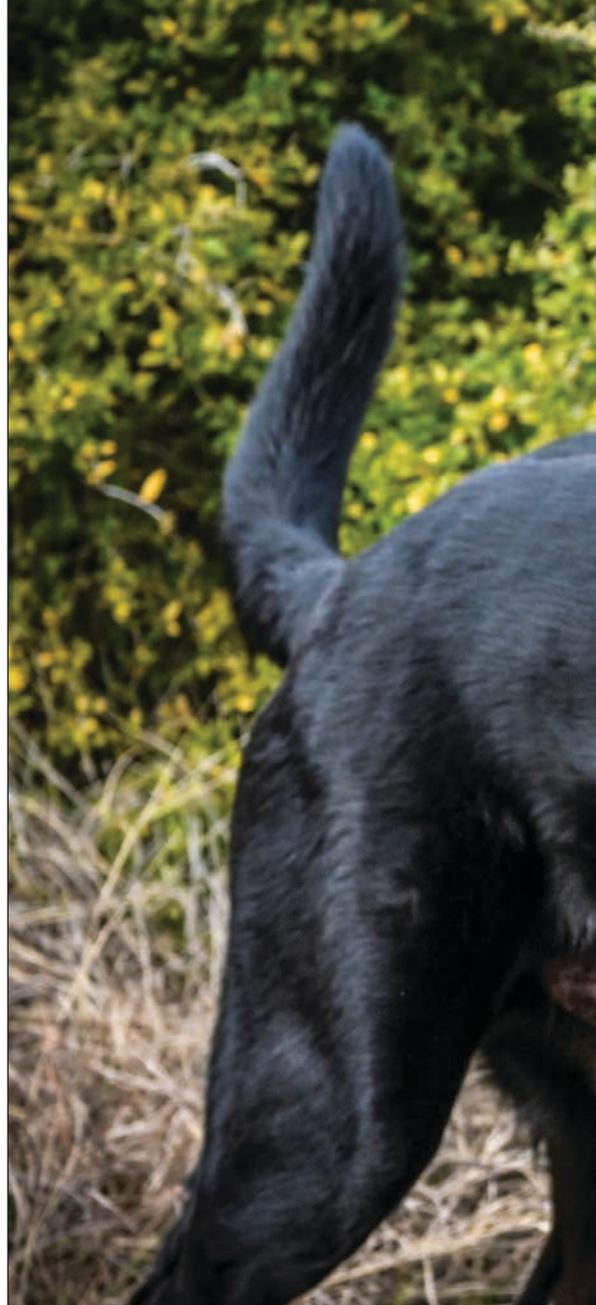
On a nearby front porch, a man in a weathered gimme cap pauses and squints quizzically at the scene.

“Show me,” Smith says to Charlie. “Show me. Where? Search. Find it. Find it. Where’s it at?”

Suddenly Charlie, his tail pointed upward, zeros in on a spot and plants his paws in a quick bow. His eyes flash toward his co-worker. Here!

The dog’s subtle “alert” means that somewhere beneath that patch of roadside grass, water is slowly seeping from an Aqua Water Supply Corp. pipe.

Continued on page 20





Charlie, a rescue dog, is one of only four water-leak detection dogs known to be working full time in the United States. It's a typical workday, and Charlie is up to his tail in tall grass, left, as he sniffs for water leaks along Union Chapel Road in Cedar Creek with his handler, Clifton Smith. The pair work for Aqua Water Supply Corp., which serves residents and businesses in a 1,065-square-mile area in six Texas counties, including most of Bastrop County and parts of Travis, Lee, Caldwell, Fayette and Williamson counties.

Dave McMurry, Aqua Water Supply Corp.'s general manager, greets Charlie in the company's headquarters in Bastrop. Charlie's friendly demeanor has given him free run of the office when he is taking a work break. The dog is a valued employee at Aqua Water: As of late February, Charlie and his handler Clifton Smith have located about 150 leaks in less than a year.



Continued from page 18

“Good boy, good boy!” Smith responds, and from his pocket he produces a slingshot-style ball toy. “Here, go!” and Smith sends the ball whirling across a patch of grass. He drops the leash and Charlie bolts in happy pursuit. While Charlie is playing, Smith marks the spot with a small blue flag.

It's another successful moment in the field for the Aqua Water's most unusual full time employee. Charlie, a 2½-year-old rescue dog, is the first working water-leak detection dog in Texas, and one of only four known to be working full-time in the U.S.

Charlie and Smith started working together in May 2021. Their partnership is an innovative new leak-detection approach for the Central Texas water company, which supplies drinking water to rural residents and businesses in a 1,065-square-mile area that includes most of Bastrop County and parts of Travis, Lee, Caldwell, Fayette and Williamson counties.

After one more ball toss and fetch, Charlie and Smith hop back into their Aqua Water Supply vehicle – a silver Tahoe with caution lights on the top and “Aqua K-9” emblazoned on the side – and head down the road for the next service call. The rest of the day's schedule: Work hard, play hard, rest a bit and repeat, in endless variations.

Later, Aqua Water will send a crew to dig where Charlie hit the spot and repair a leak that could have gone undetected for months.

Leaks are a very common problem in the water delivery industry. “Like every other water utility, we have a large unknown water loss,” says Dave McMurry, Aqua Water's general manager. “The average across the country is 10 percent to 30 percent annually. That's a lot of money, so you can justify some expense looking for it.”

Aqua has about 1,900 miles of water line, much of it a foot and a half underground. Leaks can be caused by problems as diverse as aging metal pipes or shifting rocks that grind into newer PVC pipe. Traditional approaches to detecting leaks – acoustic equipment to listen for the hiss of escaping water or infrared cameras – can be hit or miss, and satellite scans seeking water line anomalies are often

THE NOSE KNOWS

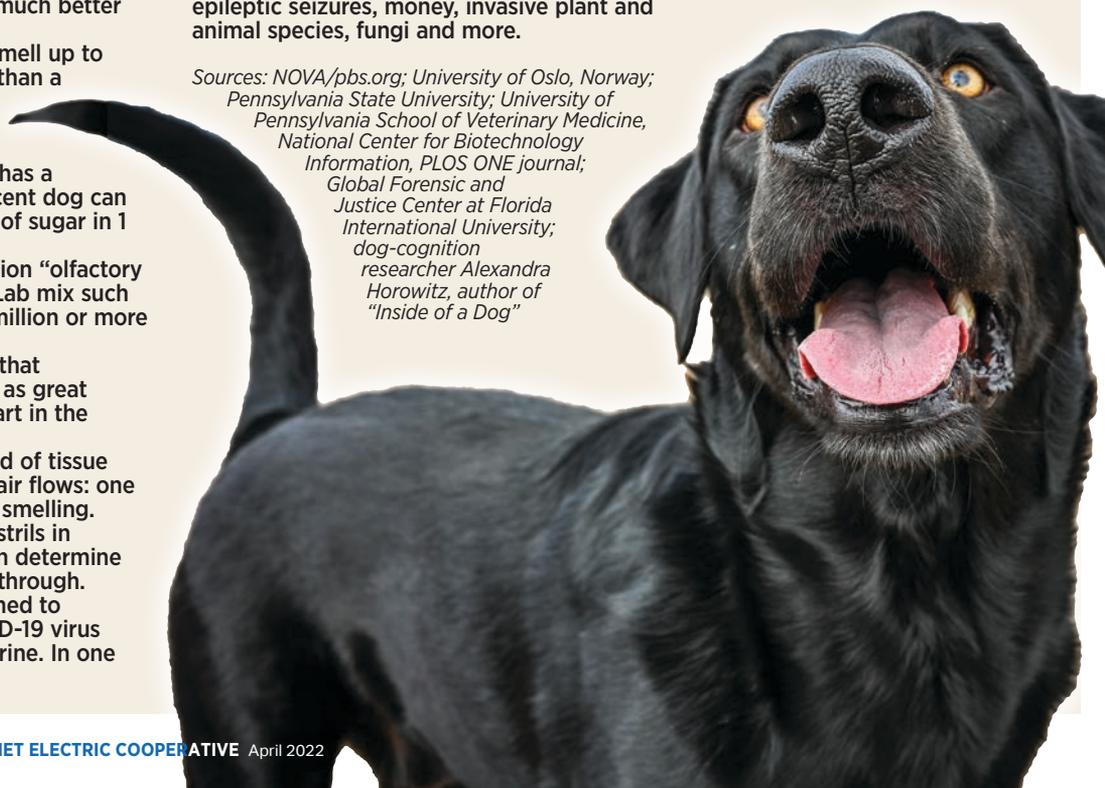
Just how good is the sense of smell in a dog like Charlie? Probably much better than you realized:

- He may have a sense of smell up to 100,000 times more acute than a human's.
- An analogy: If a scent was sugar, a human may notice a cup of coffee has a teaspoon of sugar in it; a scent dog can detect that same teaspoon of sugar in 1 million gallons of water.
- Humans have up to 6 million “olfactory receptors” in our noses. A Lab mix such as Charlie could have 220 million or more receptors.
- The part of a dog's brain that analyzes smells is 40 times as great (proportionately) as that part in the human brain.
- When a dog inhales, a fold of tissue separates oxygen into two air flows: one for breathing, the other for smelling.
- Dogs can wiggle both nostrils in different ways, and they can determine which nostril a scent came through.
- Dogs have now been trained to successfully smell the COVID-19 virus from a person's breath or urine. In one

study, dogs were 97.5% accurate.

● Scent dogs have been trained not just to sniff out people, cadavers, explosives and drugs, but also diseases (including cancer) and oncoming epileptic seizures, money, invasive plant and animal species, fungi and more.

Sources: NOVA/pbs.org; University of Oslo, Norway; Pennsylvania State University; University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, National Center for Biotechnology Information, PLOS ONE journal; Global Forensic and Justice Center at Florida International University; dog-cognition researcher Alexandra Horowitz, author of “Inside of a Dog”



prohibitively expensive for most regional water companies.

Charlie's payday comes hourly in the form of his favorite thing: playtime. He has proved to be a good return on Aqua Water's total investment in him, an estimated \$20,000. Since he started working less than a year ago, he and Clifton Smith have located about 150 leaks together.

How does Charlie "smell" water? He doesn't: He sniffs for chlorine.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency requires all public water systems in the U.S. to add a small amount of chlorine (or a chlorine-based disinfectant) to its water. That amount has been deemed safe for water use or consumption. The chlorine kills disease-causing bacteria, viruses and other microorganisms.

As leaking water sinks into the soil, the added chlorine becomes a gas that slowly rises through small air pockets toward the surface. That is what the remarkable scent-analyzing instrument known as Charlie's nose has been trained to seek and identify.

Across the centuries, humans have trained dogs to do everything from aid in the hunt to herd farm animals to support people with impaired vision or assist police and military. In recent years, dog training has become more targeted toward skills using their stunningly keen sense of smell.

A dog's nose can be 10,000 to 100,000 times as sensitive as a human's. They have up to 300 million olfactory receptors in their noses compared with our 5 million to 6 million, according to research reports. In recent years, service dogs have been trained to sniff out unhealthy blood glucose levels in people with diabetes, cancer

Continued on next page

Charlie makes an exceptional leak-sniffing dog for one particular reason — his love of playing fetch with a ball. After finding a leak, he gets the coveted reward with his handler, Clifton Smith. At left, Smith tosses the ball. Charlie's original owners said they would throw a ball for him as much as three hours a day. That exhausting 'ball drive' trait is one of the keys to his success.



Charlie's handler, Clifton Smith, has learned over time how to read the subtle 'alerts' the dog is giving him. Smith takes Charlie to an area where leaks in the water distribution system are suspected and releases him. If the dog detects a trace of chlorine gas, he may mark the spot with a few different behaviors: movement, a little bow toward the spot, lying down and, almost always, eye contact with handler Clifton Smith.



When asked to confirm the leak, Charlie barks and lies down again. For Aqua Water, it's about locating potentially expensive leaks. For Charlie, it's all about a chance to get the 'good boy' approval from his handler and, of course, to play fetch.

BEST BREEDS FOR SCENT SKILLS

Not all dogs are created equal. These are the breeds with the best senses of smell.

Bloodhound

At the top of most lists, this breed is sometimes called “a nose with a dog attached.” The bloodhound has the largest olfactory cortex (40 times as large as a human’s) and 300 million scent receptors (more than any other scent dog). It can follow a scent for days and the loose skin around its face and long drooping ears trap scent particles. It is the first animal whose evidence is admissible in some U.S. courts.



Basset hound

A low-slung stature keeps their wrinkled faces and long ears close to the ground to enhance ability to follow a scent. Originally bred by French monks during the Middle Ages to hunt hares, basset hounds underwent more breeding in Great Britain in the 1800s. A close second to the bloodhound in scent-trailing ability.

Beagle

A lot of energy in a small package, the beagle was bred for hunting prey through forests. It has 225 million scent receptors in the nose, equal to the much larger German shepherd. In contrast, a dachshund has 125 million scent receptors, and humans have a mere 5 million to 6 million. Beagles are used by law enforcement and to sniff out drugs, bombs and illegal food imports.



German shepherd

Bred to be a herding dog but better as a scent detector, the German shepherd tracks scents in the air as well as near the ground. It’s particularly good at tracking human scents. A longtime favorite of police, military and others for bomb detection and search-and-rescue skills, it can also be an excellent service dog and excel in obedience trials. The German shepherd is the second most popular breed in the U.S. after Labrador retrievers.



Labrador retriever

Originally bred to help fish catchers in Newfoundland pull nets and retrieve fish, Labs are also America’s favorite dog. They are used for all manner of scent tasks, including search and rescue, explosive detection, and, more recently, to sniff out cancer and other diseases by smelling breath or urine. Labs are intelligent and typically easily trained.



Belgian Malinois

Agile and weighing less than a German shepherd, the Malinois was originally bred to herd. It can track people or substances, leap, pull sleds and excel in agility courses. For more than 100 years, it has been used by police and military for sniffing out contraband and other tasks. It is favored by Navy SEALs as trained parachutists and repelling attacks, and several Malinois protect the grounds of the White House.

Sources: National Center for Biotechnology Information, Family Dog Project detection test report, American Kennel Club,

biologydictionary.net

Continued from previous page

from a patient’s breath or, for those with epilepsy, indications of an upcoming seizure before it happens.

Reports of a successfully trained water leak-detecting dog first surfaced in Australia in 2018. Then a second trainee, a cocker spaniel named Snipe, started sniffing out leaks in the United Kingdom.

America’s first leak-detection dog is Vessel, who started working for Central Arkansas Water in 2019. Vessel, also a Lab-shepherd mix, learned his craft from respected Arkansas dog trainers Carrie Kessler and Tracy Owen at the request of the CEO of Central Arkansas Water, who wanted to give this new approach a try.

Heather Tucker, Aqua Water’s conservation manager, read about Vessel and General Manager McMurry asked her to research what it would take to get a leak-detection dog for Aqua. She contacted Kessler and Owen, who already had a perfect candidate: Charlie.

The bouncy 1-year-old rescue pup had been adopted by a family with four children. They loved Charlie, but the family could not keep up with his incessant fixation on playing fetch. He would play for hours without tiring. Trainers call this trait “ball drive” and it is key to Charlie’s specialized training.

Charlie’s owner had heard about trainers Kessler and Owen and their involvement in Arkansas Paws in Prison, which teaches inmates at seven Arkansas prisons how to give basic obedience training to rescue dogs. The family hated saying goodbye to Charlie, but hoped the program would give him a meaningful outlet for his energy.

It worked: Charlie’s fetch fixation and intelligence made him a great candidate for scent training.

Since finding the smell of chlorine was the goal, trainers Kessler and Owen used chlorine in the same way they did with other scent-based training. They slowly guided Charlie toward a Q-tip moistened with city water. When he found that chlorine scent, he got his treasured reward – playing ball. This “imprinting” training gradually moved through stages, with the chlorine becoming harder and harder to sniff out.

The next step was to find the right partner for Charlie, since scent-detection dogs work closely with their handler. “We had hopes for the dog,” Aqua Water’s McMurry recalls, “and I knew that whoever





Charlie gets a hug from Clifton Smith's daughter, Chelsea, 11, left. Charlie lives with the family of five alongside three other pet dogs at their home near Paige. The Smiths are careful to give all of their pets distilled water only, to avoid exposing Charlie to a whiff of chlorine. 'When he's home, he's a pet,' Smith says. Below, Charlie enjoys the object of his intense affection after a good day on the job.

we put as the handler had to be very dedicated. Both of them as a team were going to have to prove this concept. I was kind of concerned because I stuck my neck out a little bit."

Clifton Smith, an 18-year veteran of the company, grew up in the Bastrop area and began working at Aqua right out of high school. He started out running a weed-eater around the smiley-faced water towers and worked his way up to a zone operator and backhoe driver. When Smith heard about the new position, he decided to



apply to become Aqua's first K-9 leak detection specialist.

"Clifton's very driven too," says his wife, Erin Smith. "He was excited to have a new challenge. It had never been done before in Texas, and he was excited to be a part of that." Smith traveled to Arkansas for a week of training. He and Charlie bonded right away.

Charlie's leak alerts can be subtle. Smith had never trained a dog, and he and Charlie had to form a close working relationship – one that's still evolving. Smith has regular trouble-shooting conversations with Kessler, Owen and Vessel's handler Tim Preator in Arkansas.

Charlie lives with Smith, his wife and their three children (and three other pet dogs) at their home near Paige. The Smiths make sure to give Charlie only distilled water in his bowl, as they do with all the other pets, just so he's not over-exposed to the chlorine smell on his off hours.

Each weekday morning Smith and Charlie hop in the Tahoe, drop the Smith children off at school and begin their workday. Sometimes they respond to a call from a customer who suspects a leak, or they follow up Smith's hunch about a problem area where a line is known to have issues. Other times Smith cruises along certain stretches of the service area, looking for a tell-tale patch of green amid brown grass.

Charlie's reputation is growing within the Aqua ranks, McMurry says, as the dog continues to alert in spots where no one suspected a leak. Aqua Water says Charlie is accurate most of the time, and is much more accurate than other leak detection devices.

"The manager of our distribution system at first said, 'I'll believe it when I see it,'" McMurry says. "Charlie's convinced them all. One of them said to me recently, 'When Charlie says there's a leak, I dig.'"

Charlie has become something of a celebrity around the Aqua service area, with his special brown "working dog" vest. You might see him and Smith at Petco on a pit stop some weekday. He wears the blue leak-detection vest only when he is working. "He knows, once I get that vest out, it's time for business," Smith says.

When he isn't working, Charlie is lovable and gregarious. "He never meets anyone who isn't a friend," Smith says of his partner. Once, Smith recalls, Charlie even charmed two Bastrop County Sheriff's Department officers. They had pulled Smith over, suspicious that he was gallivanting around in a fake K-9 police car.

"I told them about Charlie and what he does, and at first they were like, 'You gotta be kidding me,'" Smith recalls. "They ended up taking a lot of photos with him."

Kessler and Owen in Arkansas now each have their own dog training business, and there are more leak-sniffing dogs under their tutelage. For now, Charlie remains one of a small and select group of dogs doing this work.

No one knows how long Charlie's career will last. His retirement date is "whenever he decides he doesn't want to work anymore," Smith says. Then Charlie would transition to the laid-back lifestyle of a regular pet at the Smiths' home.

In the meantime, Charlie and Smith continue to develop their unique partnership. Smith works to keep things fun and interesting for Charlie, mixing up which balls he uses each day and working in some treats and tug-toy action. Charlie's desire to chase a ball hasn't dimmed. "He'll play ball until your arm won't work anymore," Smith says.

"We talk about the 'ball drive' and the 'food drive' with these dogs," he says, "but I think at the core of all of it is that they are really wanting to be pleasers and work for you to make you happy – and when that happens, they get to play." ■

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THANK A LINE WORKER

April 11 is National Lineman Appreciation Day

LOOKING FOR A GOOD DAY to thank the men and women who build, restore and maintain your — and Bluebonnet's — power supply system? Try Monday, April 11. That's National Lineman Appreciation Day, and it's an opportunity to acknowledge the 24/7 work done by line workers to construct, maintain, and restore your power after an outage and to keep the power flowing at all times, even under dangerous conditions and during severe weather.

Electric cooperatives observe the second Monday in April as National Lineman Appreciation Day, after a 2014 decision by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association board. If you feel like thanking them twice, line workers at all utilities are celebrated on April 18, based on a U.S. Senate resolution passed in 2013.

Check Bluebonnet's social media on April 11 for a tribute to Bluebonnet's line workers, and feel free to share your thanks on those posts.

Want to become a line worker? Bluebonnet accepts applications for its U.S. Department of Labor Certified Apprentice Program on the first Tuesday of every month. Find applications and other career opportunities at bluebonnet.coop by clicking on Careers at the bottom of any page.



Check Bluebonnet's social media on April 11 for a tribute to our line workers. Here, Brandon Krivacka, in Brenham, prepares a transformer to be installed at a location where new construction is taking place. Sarah Beal photo

A return to the Texas Lineman's Rodeo

A team of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative line workers — journeymen and apprentices — will once again compete against their peers from across Texas in the annual Texas Lineman's Rodeo on July 16, 2022, at Nolte Island Park near Seguin.

The annual contest was canceled in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 and extreme weather. Conditions are still being monitored in order to provide a safe environment for line work-

ers from across the state to compete at the event.

At the competition, there will be a variety of judged and timed events that mirror much of the work line workers do daily: climbing poles, repairing power lines and working on equipment. There is even an event involving a pole-top rescue of a mannequin the size and weight of an injured line worker. Apprentices who compete also take a written test. If that's not enough to fill your day, there's even a competitive barbecue cook-off.

For more information, visit tla.org.

Bluebonnet goes blue in April to raise awareness of Child Abuse Prevention Month

APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION Month and Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative is raising awareness and providing information about area organizations involved in the prevention of abuse and support of victims.

Keep an eye on our social media channels in April to learn more about how you can get involved, key community events and resources. The cooperative's member service centers in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart and Manor will gleam with blue lights at night to support the awareness effort.

Area groups working to prevent abuse include three Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) agencies that serve 11 counties in the Bluebonnet region, as well as the Children's Advocacy Center that serves Bastrop, Lee and Fayette counties and the SAFE Alliance.

These local area organizations welcome volunteers and donations. At CASA, volunteers are adults who have been pre-screened and received training to work with children in the foster care system. Volunteers undergo a pre-screening interview, background check, 30-hour (virtual or classroom) training and observation hours in a courtroom. Volunteers can then be appointed by judges to work with one case (or a set of siblings).

The Children's Advocacy Center that serves Bastrop, Lee and Fayette counties and SAFE Alliance would benefit from donations. View their wish lists at childrensadvocacycenter.org/get-involved and



In April, Bluebonnet's member service centers in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart and Manor will be lighted blue every evening.

safeaustin.org/get-involved.

If you suspect child abuse, neglect or exploitation, report it by one of two ways: online at txabusehotline.org or by calling the Texas Abuse Hotline at 800-252-5400 (available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year). Learn more about this topic at childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing.

Find out about local child abuse assistance agencies with this story online at bluebonnet.coop or in our social media this month.

"In recent years, a group of international designers and artists has rediscovered the innate modernity of Italian blown glass, turning to Murano as inspiration..." — *New York Times*, 2020



The brightly-painted fisherman houses on Burano Island in Venice are the inspiration behind The Murano Rainbow Necklace



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only \$39!
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—Italy

Send Her Over The Rainbow

700-year old legendary art form for the price of your dreams.

Now I know how that little farm girl from Kansas felt when she went over the rainbow and awoke in a land of spectacular color. Look what I found in the land of ahhs!

Approaching Burano Island off of northern Venice was like being swept away in a dream. Known for its brightly-painted fisherman houses that line the canals, I was greeted with every color of the rainbow. Since before the Venetian Republic, Burano was home to fishermen and legend says that the houses were painted in bright hues so they could see their way home when fog blanketed the lagoon.

Inspiration struck. I wanted to capture this historical beauty in the centuries old art form of Murano. Still regarded as being the finest form craftsmanship in the world, Murano has evolved into modern day fashion statements.

So I hopped on a vaporetto for a forty minute ride to Venice and sought out the impeccable talents of one of Venice's finest Murano artisans. They've captured the vibrant colors of the iconic fisherman houses in the perfect hand-formed beads of *The Rainbow Murano Necklace*. To own a piece of authentic Murano is to own a piece of fine art steeped in history. Each and every piece is a one-of-a-kind masterpiece.

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The Murano Rainbow Necklace for only \$39. And, to help you double down on romance, I'll throw in the matching bracelet absolutely FREE! As one of the largest importers of handcrafted Italian jewelry, we have a way of making dreams that you dare to dream come true.

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• Necklace: 23" L; Bracelet: 7" L; Lobster clasps

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It was the jewelry piece that made the world stop and take notice. In the middle of a long volley during the big American tennis tournament, the chic blonde athlete had to stop play because her delicate diamond bracelet had broken and she had to find it. The tennis star recovered her beloved bracelet, but the world would never be the same.

From that moment on, the tennis bracelet has been on the lips and on the wrists of women in the know. Once called eternity bracelets, these bands of diamonds were known from then on as tennis bracelets, and remain *the* hot ticket item with jewelers.

with D Flawless diamonds from another company that costs \$57,000!

Want to look like a million bucks without stressing over losing or damaging something that cost you a fortune? The Love Wins Tennis Bracelet is a simple strand of glittering gems in precious sterling that epitomizes elegance.

FREE

earrings with your purchase of the Love Wins Bracelet.



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“Jewelry and Gems – The Buying Guide,” praised the technique used in our diamond alternative DiamondAura®: “The best diamond simulation to date, and even some jewelers have mistaken these stones for mined diamonds,” it raved. For comparison, we found a similarly designed 10 carat tennis bracelet

The first time we offered this bracelet, we sold out literally in minutes. It was our fastest selling product of 2021. It took six months to get it back in stock — Get yours before we run out! And there's more... we will also include our Ultimate Diamond Alternative™ DiamondAura® stud earrings for FREE!

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Two-Fisted Law and Order

Judge Roy Bean made the rules and found fame in his remote corner of West Texas

BY W.F. STRONG

IN THE BIG BEND TOWN of Langtry, Judge Roy Bean opened a saloon on the railroad right-of-way. It was 1882, and even though he was squatting, the railroad allowed him to stay. Bean named his bar the Jersey Lilly after actress Lillie Langtry.

When trains stopped for water, the passengers could order a drink at the Jersey Lilly. But Bean never had change, so if a customer paid a dollar for a 25-cent beer, he wouldn't get the other 75 cents. If he complained, Bean fined him 75 cents for disturbing the peace.

Bean had proclaimed himself the "law west of the Pecos" and preferred his own interpretation of the law. When he re-

ceived new state statutes every two years, he burned them. Once he sentenced a young man to hang but left the jail unlocked the night before the hanging so the condemned could escape.

In Bean's early years, he lived in San Antonio, where he found success with a saloon but sold the business to pursue opportunities in the railroad camps of West Texas. He gained notoriety when he took the law into his own hands.

When Bean held court in the Jersey Lilly, he would assemble a jury and swear the members in. The case would be presented, the verdict determined and sentencing pronounced quickly. Often the

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



sentence for misdemeanors was a round of drinks for the jury. He was very patriotic about Texas, too. He often preceded sentencing with words like: "You have offended the great state of Texas by committing this crime on her sacred soil."

One of his most famous cases had to do with a man who fell to his death off a bridge in Langtry. Bean found \$40 and a pistol on the man's body and fined him \$40 for carrying a concealed weapon. That was enough to get him buried.

Bean rose to international prominence when he organized a world heavyweight boxing championship between Bob Fitzsimmons and Peter Maher in 1896. Prizefighting was then illegal in Texas.

At first, the fight looked like it might be held on the sly in El Paso, but the governor sent 25 Texas Rangers over there to make sure it didn't happen. Then it seemed like it might be held in Juarez, but the governor of Chihuahua sent troops to prevent a fight there. Finally Bean sent a telegram to the promoter saying they could have it in Langtry—actually, right across the river on a Rio Grande sandbar, miles from any authority that would stop it.

So a menagerie of unlikely associates, boxers, gamblers, Texas Rangers, high rollers and spectators of all stripes boarded a train bound for parts unknown. The destination was kept a secret. Bean met them at his railside saloon, sold them beer at the exorbitant price of a dollar apiece and then escorted them across a pontoon bridge to the Mexican side of the river.

Fitzsimmons knocked out Maher after 95 seconds, so the fight was over before the spectators could settle in. But the big winner—as ever—was Bean. He became known worldwide as the man who made the fight possible. ■

Brunch

Crowd-pleasing additions for this much-anticipated meal

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Hosting brunch is one of my favorite things to do for friends. Whether for a group of four or 30, embracing the sweet and savory sides of brunch always gets my creativity in the kitchen going. This month I've taken a spin on the classic bagel breakfast and turned it into a scrumptious smoked salmon turnover. Pre-made puff pastry keeps it incredibly easy so you can put the dish together in a snap.

Smoked Salmon Turnovers

1 sheet prepared puff pastry, thawed if frozen
3 ounces smoked salmon
4 ounces cream cheese, softened
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
1 egg
1 tablespoon water
1 tablespoon everything bagel seasoning

COOK'S TIP Everything bagel seasoning can be found in most grocery stores, or make your own blend with sesame seeds, poppy seeds, salt, dried minced garlic and dried onion flakes.

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment. Place puff pastry on a lightly floured surface and gently roll out to a rectangle, approximately 9 by 14 inches.
2. Roughly chop salmon and place in a bowl. Add cream cheese and chives and stir until evenly mixed, breaking up the salmon more as you stir.
3. Cut the puff pastry into 8 equal pieces. Add about 2 tablespoons filling to each piece, then fold pastry over to form a triangle. Press edges to seal and crimp with the tines of a fork. Repeat with remaining pastry and filling. Place filled turnovers on prepared baking sheet.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together egg and water, then brush over the tops of the turnovers. Sprinkle bagel seasoning evenly over the turnovers. Bake 15–18 minutes, until puffed and golden brown. Let cool slightly before serving.

SERVES 8

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





Whole-Grain Cinnamon Rolls

MOLLY BRET
COSERV

Overnight cinnamon rolls are perfect for a make-ahead brunch, and this recipe uses wheat flour to help balance the sweetness. Don't worry if any filling falls out as you shape the rolls; you can sprinkle it on top in the pan.

ROLLS

- 1 cup milk, warmed to about 100 degrees**
- 1 packet instant yeast**
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar or honey**
- 2 cups whole-wheat flour**
- 2–2½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more as needed, divided use**
- 2 eggs**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) butter, softened and cut into chunks**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt**
- 1–2 cups prepared cream cheese frosting**

FILLING

- 6 tablespoons ($\frac{3}{4}$ stick) butter, softened**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar**
- 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon**

1. ROLLS In a large bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer, combine warmed milk, yeast and sugar. Let rest 5 minutes, then gradually mix in wheat flour, 2 cups all-purpose flour, eggs (one at a time) and butter. If using a stand mixer, start speed at low and then turn to medium, mixing until a soft dough is formed. Add additional flour as needed to prevent sticking. Sprinkle in salt and

\$500 WINNER

BLT Strata

BARBARA REISS
PEDERNALES EC



Perfect for using up leftover bread, this strata has all the flavors of a classic BLT sandwich. Make sure to chill it for at least an hour, or overnight, to ensure the bread soaks up the custard.

SERVES 6



- 6 ounces thick-cut bacon, cut into small pieces**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped onion**
- 1 cup halved cherry tomatoes**
- 2 cups baby spinach or arugula**
- 6 ounces day-old bread, such as sourdough or challah, cut into cubes**
- 6 eggs**
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup packed shredded Gruyère or white cheddar**

- 1.** Grease a 2-quart baking dish and set aside.
- 2.** In a large skillet over medium heat, cook bacon until crisp. Drain bacon on a paper towel-lined plate and pour off all but 1 tablespoon of fat.
- 3.** Sauté onions in the same skillet over medium heat until they begin to soften and become translucent, 3–5 minutes. Add halved tomatoes and increase heat to medium-high. Cook, scraping up any browned bits in the pan, until onions have started to caramelize and tomatoes have softened. Stir in the spinach until wilted, then remove the pan from heat. Stir the bacon into the onion mixture.
- 4.** Add half the bread cubes to prepared baking dish, then top with half of the onion mixture. Repeat with remaining bread and onion mixture.
- 5.** In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, milk, salt and pepper, then pour evenly into the baking dish. Sprinkle cheese over the top, then cover with foil and refrigerate at least 1 hour and up to overnight.
- 6.** When ready to bake, remove strata from the refrigerator and preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake uncovered 40–45 minutes, until lightly browned on top.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

PIZZA NIGHT DUE APRIL 10

What makes your pizza irresistible? Submit your recipes on our website by April 10 for a chance to win \$500.



CONTINUED >

RECIPES CONTINUED

mix a few minutes more. Gently knead dough into a ball and place in a large greased bowl. Cover and let rise 1–2 hours or until doubled in size.

2. Once dough has risen, place it on a lightly floured surface. Roll dough into a 12-by-18-inch rectangle.

3. FILLING Spread softened butter over the surface of the dough. In a small bowl, combine sugar and cinnamon, then sprinkle over the dough evenly.

4. Roll up dough on the long end, then cut into 12 rolls. Lightly grease a 9-by-13-inch baking dish and place rolls cut-side up in the pan. Sprinkle any excess filling over rolls, then cover dish tightly and chill overnight.

5. When ready to bake, remove rolls and let rise 1–2 hours or until puffy. Preheat oven to 375 degrees and bake rolls 20–25 minutes. Let cool slightly and then top with prepared frosting.

SERVES 12



Tex-Mex Bacon and Egg Squares

MARILYN BURGESS
TRINITY VALLEY EC

Easy to make and crowd-pleasers, these squares are ideal for those who love the combination of chiles and cheese. Serve as is or with guacamole, sour cream or additional hot sauce.

- 2 cans (10 ounces) whole green chiles, drained**
- 8 ounces grated sharp cheddar cheese**

- 6 slices thick-cut bacon, cooked and cut into bite-size pieces**
- 6 eggs**
- Dash of hot sauce**
- Salt and pepper**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat an 8-by-8-inch baking dish with cooking spray. Arrange chiles evenly in the dish, then sprinkle on cheese and bacon.

2. In a bowl, beat together eggs, hot sauce, and salt and pepper, then pour evenly into the dish. Bake until eggs are firm and cheese has melted, 25–30 minutes. Cool 5 minutes, then cut into squares to serve.

SERVES 9

TCP Find more recipes to punch up your brunch at TexasCoopPower.com/food, where you can search through nearly 1,000 recipes.

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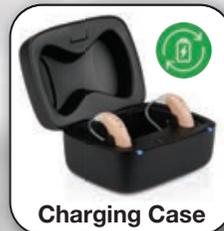
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Swinging Through Time

The Regency Bridge is the state’s last drivable suspension bridge

BY CHET GARNER

I COULD FEEL MY ENTIRE vehicle swaying as I cruised, ever so carefully, across the last drivable suspension bridge in Texas. I felt like a squirrel on a power line, but instead of being 30 feet above the ground, I was 75 feet above the Colorado River. To make matters even more tense, I could hear the wooden boards flexing and creaking beneath my tires.

I was deep in the northern Hill Country for this adventure of driving across the Regency Bridge, part road and part roller coaster. The bridge is truly the last of its kind and may only still exist because it connects two quiet gravel roads with very little traffic.

The Regency Bridge was built in 1939 to link the rural communities of San Saba and Mills counties and spans more than 400 feet from bank to bank. The drivable surface consists of planks suspended by metal cables, earning it the nickname Swinging Bridge.

Yes, it really swings. And in its 83 years of existence, it’s seen everything from buggies to cattle drives to electric cars.

I was about halfway across when I realized the bridge is so narrow that I could only see the road in front of me and the metal cables out each of my side windows. It left me with a really beautiful view of the expansive Colorado River basin marked by high limestone bluffs. I had to constantly remind myself to keep my eyes on the road or else my trip was going to meet a very abrupt end.

Those who might be nervous to cross should know that the Texas Department of Transportation has done multiple inspections and overhauls—the most recent in 2021. I survived my trip and had so much fun, I immediately turned around and did it all over again. ■

ABOVE Chet braves the Regency Bridge high above the Colorado River.

TCP See Chet’s crossing of the Regency on our website. Watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

APRIL 08

Brenham The Isaacs,
(979) 337-7240,
thebarnhillcenter.com

**Kerrville Montopolis:
The Living Coast,**
(830) 315-5483,
thearcadialive.org

**Canton [8–9] Antique Tractor/
Truck Show and Swap Meet,**
(214) 837-8861

**Corsicana [8–9] Texas
State Camping Squares,**
(832) 877-6534,
texasstatecampingsquares.com

**Kerrville [8–10, 15–16,
22–24] For Such a Time
as This,** (830) 896-9393,
caillouxperformingarts.com

09

**Grand Saline Main Street
Festival,** (903) 962-3122,
grandsalinemainstreet.com

**Newcastle Crawfish and
Cannons,** (940) 549-0401,
goodnightlovingrun.com

**New Braunfels [9–10]
Folkfest,** (830) 629-6504,
texasahandmadefurniture.com

**Stanton [9–10] Old Sorehead
Trade Days,** (432) 756-2006,
stantontex.com

**Quintana [9–May 8] Spring
Fling,** (979) 480-0999,
gcbo.org

12

**Paris [12–14] Lamar County
Junior Livestock Show
& Sale,** (903) 784-7984

15

**Alpine [15–17] Big Bend
Gem and Mineral Show,**
(432) 244-9503

16

Grandview [15-17] Antique Alley Texas, (817) 666-5024, facebook.com/antiquealleytexas

Lufkin The Queen's Cartoonists, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

San Marcos Easter Egg Hunt & Festival, (214) 641-5841, heritagesanmarcos.org

20

Corpus Christi [20-24] The Birdiest Festival in America, (361) 852-2100, birdiestfestival.org

21

Lake Jackson [21-24] [title of show], (979) 230-3000, onstage@brazosport.edu

22

Brenham Billy Joel Tribute by Brett Cline, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Henderson [22-23] East Texas Antique Tractor & Engine Club Show and Pull, (903) 646-3769, north-texas-antique-tractor-and-engine-club.org

Coleman [22-24] Great Western Trail Days, (325) 669-2292, greatwesterntraildays.com

New Braunfels [22-24] Car Club Swap Meet, (830) 708-1372, newbraunfelsareacarclub.com

23

Burton Cotton Gin Festival, (979) 289-3378, texascottonginmuseum.org

Fredericksburg Luckenbach Bluegrass Festival, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

MORE EVENTS >

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Pick of the Month

**An Evening With Renée
Elise Goldsberry**

Lufkin, April 30
(936) 633-5454
angelinaarts.org

Goldsberry, who won Tony and Grammy awards for her inspired performance in *Hamilton*, brings a four-piece band and a complement of backup singers to the Temple Theater.

APRIL EVENTS CONTINUED

23

**Karnack Earth Day
Paddling Flotilla**,
(903) 736-3063,
tinyurl.com/2022flotilla

**Lake Jackson Kids
Reel Big Fish Event**,
(979) 297-4533,
visitbrazosport.com

**La Porte San Jacinto Cele-
bration**, (281) 479-2431,
thc.texas.gov

Wimberley Pie Social,
(512) 965-2662,
wimwic.org/pie-social

**Bryan [23-24] Bryan-
College Station Friends
of the Library Spring Book
Sale**, (979) 209-5600,
friendsbcs.org

**Granbury [23-24] Wine
Walk**, (817) 573-5548,
granburywinewalk.com

24

**Marble Falls [24-30] Paint
the Town**, (830) 693-4449,
hlcarts.com/ptt-2022-event

28

**Kerrville Symphony
of the Hills: Primitive
Echoes**, (830) 792-7469,
symphonyofthehills.org

**Freeport [28-30] River-
fest**, (979) 233-6061,
brazosport.org

**Turkey [28-30] Bob Wills
Day**, (806) 336-1471,
bobwillsday.com

29

**Fort Davis [29-30] Dark
Skies Festival**,
(512) 475-6763,
mcdonaldobservatory.org

**Gun Barrel City [29-30]
Gun Barrel Quilters Guild
Annual Quilt Show**,
(903) 391-3241,
gunbarrelquiltersguild.org

**Fredericksburg [29-May 1,
6-8, 13-15] Lend Me a
Tenor**, (830) 997-3588,
fredericksburgtheater.org

30

**Surfside Beach Old
Guys Surf Reunion**,
(979) 233-1531,
surfsidetx.org

**Waxahachie Bling Bang
Bash Designer Bag Bingo &
Gun Raffle**, (972) 937-1455,
casaofelliscounty.org

**Nacogdoches [30-May 1]
Multicultural Festival**,
(936) 564-7807,
sacredheartnac.org/mcf

MAY

01

**Surfside Beach Market in
the Park**, (979) 233-1531,
visitbrazosport.com

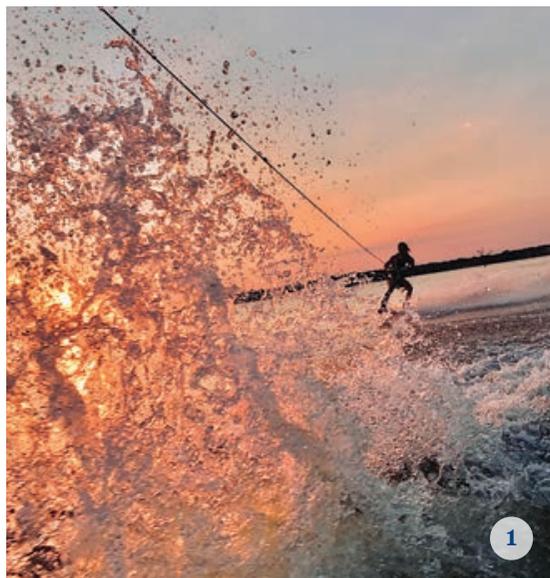
05

**Fredericksburg [5-8] 175th
Anniversary Grand Finale
Weekend**, (830) 997-6523,
175th.org

All Wet

Splish, splash, Texans love a good rain. And come hell or high water, someone's sure to take a dip. Take the plunge and see for yourself if these hold water.

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1

1 KYLE HARGROVE
FARMERS EC

"Kicking up some waves on a fun summer day."

2 MARK HOLLY
BANDERA EC

Horses enjoy a pond in a field of bluebonnets.

3 PAUL LAUDER
FARMERS EC

"Cruising in a vintage 1960s automobile-boat."

4 ERIKA ORDOG
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

Raindrops.



2



3



4

Upcoming Contests

DUE APR 10 Motorsports

DUE MAY 10 Light and Shadow

DUE JUN 10 Hometown Pride



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



No Hedging

Waging a battle—but losing the war—against vengeful hedge parsley

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS
ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREA COBB

I NEVER SUSPECTED a thing. As I pulled and yanked, I had no clue that the weeds I sought to eliminate planned a revenge I'd never forget.

"You better stop," my husband warned as I worked that spring evening in what we call the meadow, our adjoining lot turned nature preserve. "You're going to overdo it."

"I'll be fine," I retorted, bending down to pull another and another and another.

James rolled his eyes and left me knee-high in firewheel, prairie verbena, Engelmann's daisies, Texas stars and—horror!—common hedge parsley. The introduced species did not belong among our native beauties. So I was determined to get rid of them.

Honeybees flitted among the wildflowers as I used my right arm to tug out

another slim stem of hedge parsley. Their tiny flowers and fernlike leaves reminded me of their carrot cousin, Queen Anne's lace. Their bright white umbels also made them easy to target in my execution march across the meadow.

Occasionally I surveyed my progress, which was not impressive. I sighed. Hundreds more of the intruders swayed in the breeze, taunting my efforts. I knew it would take hours more to pull them all. But I kept going.

At least I'm making a dent, I convinced myself. There won't be as many next year.

But I knew the truth. Next year, *beaucoup* of their sticky seeds (that latch onto fur and socks) would germinate by the thousands. No matter what, hedge parsleys would flourish as they always have. The only difference, I would soon learn, was I'd never declare war against them again.

Just a few days later, on the road for a trip, my right shoulder began to ache. Gingerly, I rotated my upper arm and brushed off the pain. Yeah, it'd go away. I'd be OK.

But I wasn't. The week after we got home, James drove me to our medical clinic.

"I did the same thing," said the nurse practitioner as she checked my shoulder and arm. "I scrubbed floors by hand one afternoon. Then I stirred hot chocolate at the football stadium's concession stand. Took six months for my shoulder to heal."

"Six months," I echoed.

"Sure did," she said. "Don't worry." She patted my shoulder. "You'll get better. Just give it some time."

I did. Six months later, though, my right shoulder still reminded me of how I sinned in the meadow. Would it ever truly heal?

In the meantime, I dreaded the next spring. I could already envision the hedge parsleys waving their leaves in victory, sense their roots snaking deep into the soil.

Somehow I *had* to ignore them. Because, trust me, revenge of the hedge parsleys is for real. Just ask me and my right shoulder. ■



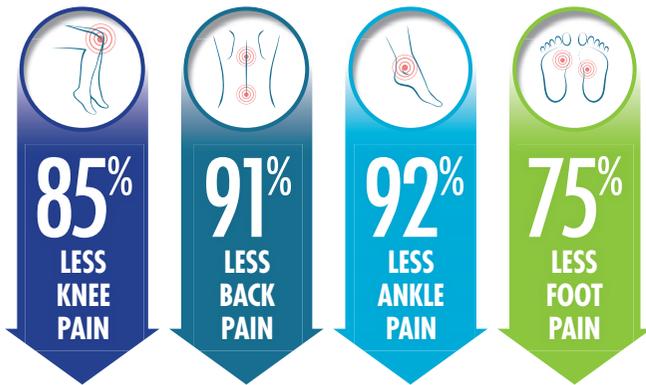
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