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JULY 2024

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**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 16



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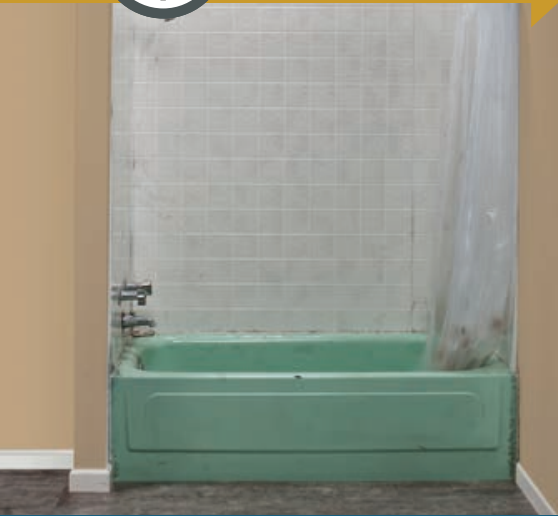
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July 2024



10

06 Texas Book Man

Felton Cochran's cluttered bookshelves boast the finest collection of Southwest literature you can buy.

*Story by Carlton Stowers
Photos by Dave Shafer*

Speaking of the Rangers

It wouldn't be a baseball game in Arlington without Chuck Morgan on the call.

By Lori Grossman

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A stack of Mammaw's Peanut Butter Ice Cream Treats (see Page 27).
Photo by Jason David Page

ABOVE

Chuck Morgan has been the stadium announcer for more than 3,000 Texas Rangers games.
Courtesy Texas Rangers



Co-op Roots



WITH FLOWERY LANGUAGE, *Texas Co-op Power* announced in its debut issue 80 years ago this month that “there will no longer exist that vacant, uncultivated space within the garden of printed and published facts.”

The magazine itself was unflowery in July 1944—just four plain pages of newsprint. But it had strong roots: messaging that informed and unified members of newly formed electric cooperatives.

Here’s what readers learned in that first issue:

In 1936, less than 3% of Texas farms had electricity, compared to 30% in 1944.

A farm in Dublin, Texas, increased its production 70% with the help of electricity.

And, of course, there was a notice of an annual meeting.

By the August issue, with a circulation of 14,000, the publication had grown to eight pages and ran the first of what has become a beloved string of recipes—for fruit-stuffed spareribs.

Those strong roots today sustain a communications platform that includes nearly 1.9 million slick magazines every month and a website, plus social media access that’s just a click away on any device.

Visit our website to see the inaugural issue of *Texas Co-op Power* from 1944. And watch for our upcoming contest to win a commemorative cast-iron skillet.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I’d like to be famous for ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our May prompt: **Summer means ...**

Starlit nights and firefly viewing while listening to the insect night sounds that lull you to sleep.

SANDRA VALDERAZ
PEDERNALES EC
LEANDER

The smell of cut grass, sunscreen and chlorine.

BOBBI FLOWERS
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES
BRYAN

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JAMES SELF
DEAF SMITH EC
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Visit our website to see more responses.

TCP Contests and More

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FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS
Mascots

RECOMMENDED READING

Ten years ago we threw darts at an outline of Texas and headed out to write about the places pinpointed. Read *Darting Around Texas* from July 2014 and see where we ended up.

Seeking Gold in France

Texas will be well-represented among American athletes when the Summer Olympics kick off July 26 in Paris—as it was the last time the French capital hosted the Games, 100 years ago.

Charley Paddock of Gainesville, a track star in 1924, pictured second from right, was the first person labeled as the “fastest man alive.” That was in 1919, a year before he starred in the 1920 Olympics, winning gold in the 100 meters and silver in the 200.

Paddock again won silver in the 200 in 1924. *Chariots of Fire*, the 1981 Oscar-winning film, captured the religious tensions of members of the British track team at those Games. Paddock was portrayed as a brash American in the movie.



MAY 2024 Overpass Easels

“I have seen two of these and wondered how they originated. Your article answered all my questions, and I now am eager to see the others during my travels.”

CAROL STRICKLAND
TRI-COUNTY EC
MILLSAP



COURTESY MICHAEL FORD

Highway Memorials

You have helped to preserve the memory of the jet pilots who trained at Kingsville Naval Air Station [Overpass Easels, May 2024]. Those young men were selfless and courageous. We lived on a cotton farm south of the base and watched as they flew overhead.

My sister married Lt. Ralph Foulks, who went missing after he flew off the USS Oriskany in January 1968 during the Vietnam War. His remains were returned from Vietnam and buried in 1993.

Elizabeth Cumberland
Bluebonnet EC
Martindale

Ranch Hand Legacy

My granddad was a hand for the Four Sixes and Triangles ranches, and the Piper tank is named after my great-granddad Jon Piper [Sixes on the Small Screen, May 2024].

Brendan Hill
Via Facebook



B.J. HINKLE

Perspective on Bowie

It’s easy to judge 19th-century characters and practices by 20th- and 21st-century standards—and Jim Bowie might not have had a sterling reputation [TCP Talk, April 2024]. But it cannot be denied that he (and the other Alamo defenders) did not have to be there, he didn’t have to join the Texian Army in the first place and he didn’t have to be co-commander.

He did those things because of his sense of duty and died for it. He and the others at the Alamo made a down payment on a free Texas with their blood. There certainly is honor in that.

Carl Crisp
Houston County EC
Elkhart

Quilters’ Bond

The timing of *The Fabric of Life* was perfect [May 2024]. A lot of quilters in the state had just finished participating in the two-month All Texas Shop Hop, including shops that spread from Odessa north to Amarillo, east to Texarkana and south to Alamo in the Rio Grande Valley.

Sherry Reid Carroll
Taylor EC
Flower Mound

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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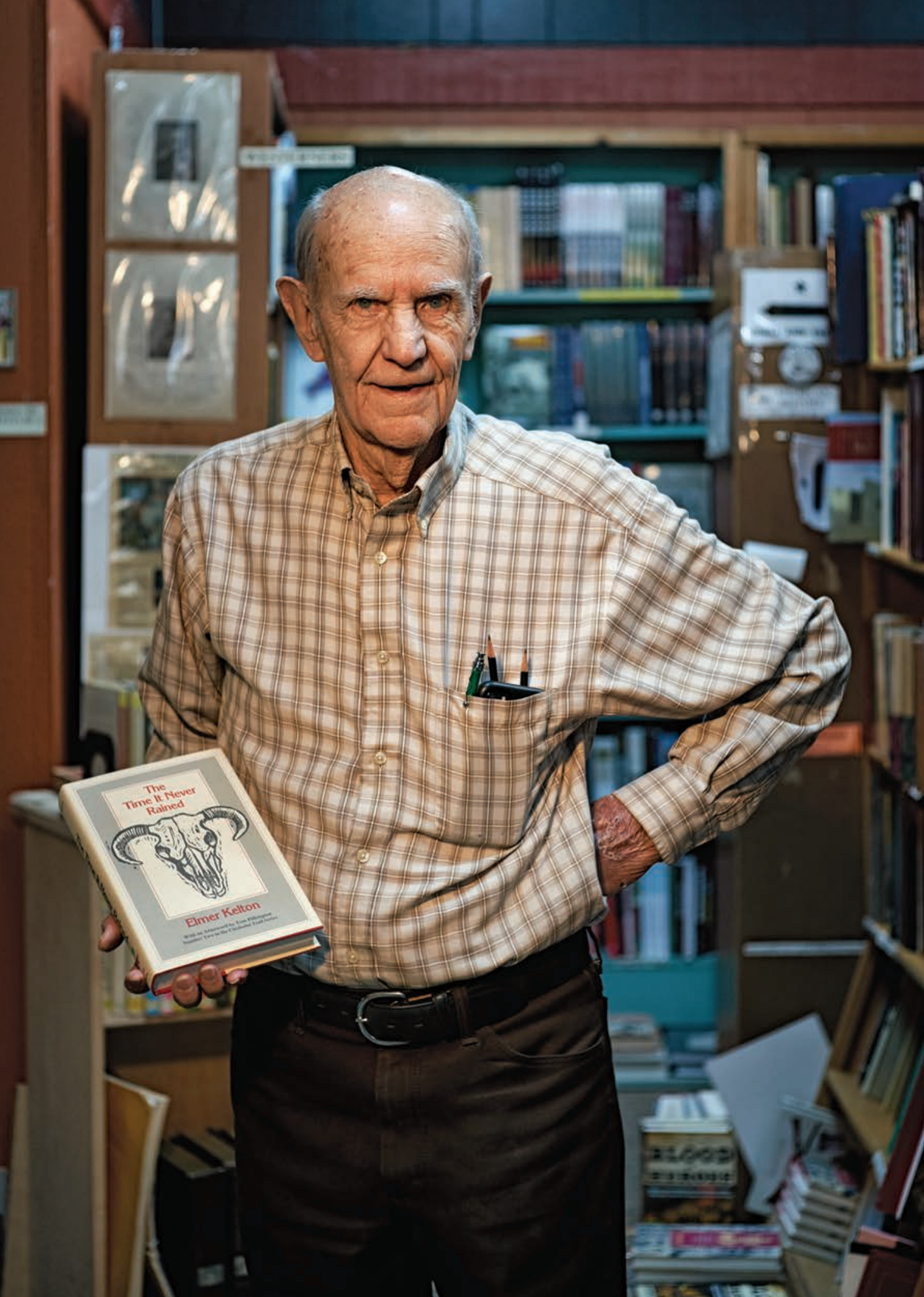
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The Time It Never Rained
Elmer Kelton
With an Afterword by Tompkins
Sensational! True to the Old-Timey Style!

III

Felton Cochran's cluttered bookshelves—
the finest collection of Southwest literature
for sale—endure despite the internet

TEXAS BOOK MAN

BY CARLTON STOWERS • PHOTOS BY DAVE SHAFER

Felton Cochran gave up his rat-race career as a wholesale liquor salesman when, as he recalls, he came to the realization that the rats were winning. Compounding the problem was his concern that he was becoming one of his own best customers.

In the wake of that epiphany, he decided it was time to take leave of such workplaces as Fort Worth, Dallas and Lubbock and return home.

All he took with him on his return to San Angelo was what money he'd saved, his treasured collection of rare books on Texas history and a genuine concern for how to earn a living.

It was 1995, and Cochran's résumé was thin. He'd spent three years as a journalism major at the University of North Texas in the early 1960s before dropping out to sell whiskey. Then there was his self-taught knowledge of Texana and Southwestern literature.

He made the crapshoot decision to see if the latter might somehow pay the bills.

Thus, the little Cactus Book Shop, in the heart of San Angelo, was born of financial necessity and a lifetime fondness for the gentle pace of the community and its people. Here, Cochran likes to say, a traffic jam is a half-dozen pickups waiting for the light to turn green.

Today his store is the go-to destination of researchers, writers, collectors, genealogists and those simply fascinated

by Texas history. Need a hard-to-find, long-out-of-print biography of one of the state's early pioneers, ranchers, oilmen, politicians or infamous scallywags? Want the history of any of the 254 counties in Texas? Autographed first editions of many of the state's legendary novelists? Go see Felton Cochran.

You'll pardon him if it sounds like grade A Texas boasting, but he insists he now oversees the finest collection of Southwestern literature to be found under one roof. Some academics might argue that collections at major universities like the University of Texas, Texas Tech University and the famed Wittliff Collections of 30,000 titles at Texas State University merit strong consideration. But those books aren't for sale.

Steve Davis, curator of the Wittliff's Southwestern Writers Collection, is quick to give Cochran his due, calling the Cactus "a legend among book collectors and a must-stop for any book lover or anyone interested in Texana."

Cochran's East Concho Avenue shop might best be described as clutter comfortable.

Old West memorabilia, like strands of early barbed wire, are on display. Nose around long enough and you see the citation from *True West Magazine*, which in 2020 named the Cactus as the nation's best Western history bookstore, or even the Texas Readers' Club membership certificate that a young Cochran received back in his elementary school days. But it's the musty aroma of old books wafting along the narrow aisles and the wiry, balding man behind the front counter that are the primary lures.

Felton Cochran, owner of the Cactus Book Shop in San Angelo, holds his favorite book, *The Time It Never Rained* by Elmer Kelton, who was a prolific novelist and longtime friend.



III

Now, after 29 years of bookselling, Cochran says it's not unusual to buy a book from someone whose grandfather he originally sold it to.

had an armload of books, which I assumed were for her mother. Not so. The girl, having recently developed an interest in Texas history, had picked the titles. That did my heart good."

An avid reader since those childhood days when his mother would regularly drive him to visit the public library, Cochran is a man who knows the secrets hidden in the pages of the volumes he sells. Pressed to recommend his favorite book on Texas history, he suggests *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans*, fellow Texan T.R. Fehrenbach's lyrical 800-page history lesson. "Without Texas," the late San Antonian author wrote, "there would be no American West." Cochran, who has done his homework, agrees.

Western author Patrick Dearen has been a regular since Cochran's store opened. "Felton and his store have been an invaluable asset to me over the years," says the winner of a Spur Award, which recognizes distinguished writing about the American West. "I've also done a great deal of research at the Midland Nita Stewart Haley Memorial Library, using books their archivist has purchased from Cochran."

All Texas history seems to run through this storefront. "J. Frank Dobie once said that there have been more books written about Texas than any other state in the U.S.," Cochran says. "It is a subject that is so diverse that it offers something for everyone."

The shop owner always has time to talk about books and bygone days.

In an era when many bookstores—independents to nationwide franchises—have lost the battle with the internet and disappeared, the Cactus Book Shop serves a niche that allows it to endure and prosper. Even at 83, Cochran is in touch with today's technology. He maintains a website, and his electronic catalog goes out monthly to customers in 28 states. The phone rings steadily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays with requests from seekers and sellers.

It is, however, the walk-in customers Cochran most enjoys—particularly when they represent a new generation of history lovers.

"Not long ago," he says, "a lady and her 14-year-old home-schooled daughter came in and shopped for quite some time. When they came to the checkout counter, the girl

ABOVE Felton's store is clutter comfortable, with a collection that seems as vast as his beloved state. OPPOSITE Proof that Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan and movie legend Robert Duvall found what they were looking for at the Cactus.

For instance, among his books that customers can't seem to get enough of are those focusing on the Big Bend. "We are a stopping place for those en route to the region," he says.

If a particular book you're seeking is not among the estimated 12,000 volumes crammed along the shop's floor-to-ceiling shelves, Cochran will try to find it. "Today," he says, "the hunt for that rare title is the biggest thrill." For that reason, he remains on high alert for estate sales and is on a first-name basis with numerous rare book collectors who might one day decide the time has come to sell their books.

Sometimes, he says, easy-to-sell treasures come from the most unusual places. He recalls a phone call a few years ago from the sister of Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Larry McMurtry, informing him that she had several valuable books she was interested in selling. Aware that her brother operated a major bookselling business in his hometown, Archer City, Cochran asked why she hadn't offered her books to him. In most colorful language, she explained that she was seriously unhappy with her famous sibling and not inclined to speak to him.

Now, after 29 years of bookselling, Cochran says it's not unusual to buy a book from someone whose grandfather he originally sold it to.

A longtime friendship with another celebrated author has kept Cochran's cash register humming. The late Elmer Kelton, recognized by many as the premier Western fiction writer of all time, also called San Angelo home, and Cochran made sure he stocked the most complete collection of the seven-time Spur Award winner's works.

In-store book signing became a routine event each time a new Kelton Western was published.

"I remember that for the first one we did, I optimistically ordered 100 copies from his publisher," Cochran says. "We sold out in less than an hour and took orders for 200 more."

"Not only was Elmer a wonderful writer, but he was the kindest, most down-to-earth man I've ever known. On several occasions, I would be at his house, having coffee, when a complete stranger would knock on the door, carrying an armload of books he hoped to have autographed. Elmer would invite him in, pour him a cup of coffee and start signing. For all the awards and recognition he received, I don't think he ever fully realized the remarkable impact his writing had on people."

Among Cochran's prized possessions is a first printing of Kelton's 2004 novel, *Texas Vendetta*, which is dedicated to "Felton Cochran, Bookseller Extraordinaire." Of course, it's not for sale.

It wasn't until Kelton's passing in 2009 that his old friend finally put his bygone journalism studies to use. When TCU Press published a book of reflections on the fabled author, it included *My Friend, Elmer Kelton*, a moving essay written by Cochran.

Among the steady stream of ardent collectors of Kelton first editions to visit the Cactus Book Shop have been Baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan and movie legend Robert Duvall.

They, like so many others before and since, left as satisfied customers. ■



Speaking of the Rangers

It wouldn't be a baseball game in Arlington without



Chuck Morgan on the call



COURTESY TEXAS RANGERS

BY LORI GROSSMAN

If he's said it once, he's said it a thousand times: "It's baseball time in Texas."

And as that mellifluous greeting echoes softly around Globe Life Field, Chuck Morgan begins the soundtrack of a Texas Rangers baseball game. Even as players (and stadiums) have come and gone through the decades in Arlington, Morgan has been perched behind a microphone high in the press box as the stadium voice for the team.

It's a job, but he freely admits he's really just passionate about baseball, as he was as a kid in southern Illinois who dreamed about playing in the big leagues. But like most kids with such dreams, he ended up far off the base paths.

Instead, he found himself in Nashville, hosting an all-night radio show for truckers at country radio giant WSM-AM, home of the Grand Ole Opry, in the late 1970s. He welcomed country artists including Roy Acuff, Bill Monroe and Marty Robbins into the studio. On Saturday nights, he co-hosted the Opry and made a handful of appearances in cornfield sketches with George "Goober" Lindsey on the popular TV show *Hee Haw*.

"On my late-night radio show, I would have a *Hee Haw* week in both June and October," Morgan says. "The producer of the show, Sam Lovullo, would come over with a special guest or two. After a couple years of doing this, Sam said, 'Chuck, we have never had you on. Come over tomorrow. We will get you some overalls and put you in the cornfield with Goober.'"

But Morgan also found a baseball field in Nashville, where he spent three seasons as the public-address announcer for the minor league Sounds, 1978–80.

"While working for the Sounds, I met Larry Schmittou," Chuck recalls. "He left to join the Texas Rangers as vice president of marketing. One day, he called and asked if I wanted to work in the big leagues.

"My love for baseball won."

Chuck Morgan, the stadium voice for the Texas Rangers, during the second game of the 2023 season. Little did he know then how glorious last season would turn out for Rangers Nation.



That was in 1983. Forty-one years later, many Texas Rangers fans have only ever known Morgan's voice at Arlington's ballparks (all three). There are no official records for major league baseball's announcers, but according to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, it's widely believed Morgan lays claim to the longest streak of games among current announcers, including the 2002 season he spent with the Kansas City Royals.

He has announced the starting lineups for more than 3,250 consecutive games, including one of the Rangers' historic World Series wins last season en route to the franchise's first championship. And he'll add the 2024 MLB All-Star Game to that list when Arlington hosts the Midsummer Classic on July 16 for only the second time in history.

One of Morgan's microphones—the one he used for his 3,000th straight game September 26, 2020—has a home in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

These days, his official job title is executive vice president of game entertainment, promotions and production—a title that barely gets its arms around all that Morgan has brought to Rangers games over more than four decades.

"Basically, everything you see and hear when you come to Globe Life Field, I'm responsible for it," he says.

Many of his ideas have become a cherished part of the ballpark experience, including his welcome at the beginning of each game.

"I've said, 'It's baseball time in Texas' since the late 1990s



to honor former Rangers broadcaster Mark Holtz, who passed away in 1997," Morgan says of continuing Holtz's greeting.

Long-time Rangers employees told Morgan about other team traditions, including the playing of the tune *Cotton-Eyed Joe* during the seventh-inning stretch. It's still played today. His most-often imitated innovation might be the dot mascot races, which happen in the middle of the sixth inning.

"We'd done a simple black-and-white animation in Nashville," Morgan says. "Later, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Morgan at what was originally called the Ballpark in Arlington, the Rangers' second stadium in Texas. In his country music radio days in Nashville, Morgan rubbed shoulders with, from left, stars Bill Monroe, Roy Acuff and Barbara Mandrell. Morgan during the Rangers' World Series victory parade.



Morgan has announced the starting lineups for more than 3,250 consecutive games, including one of the Rangers' historic World Series wins last season en route to the franchise's first championship.

sportswriter Jim Reeves saw two lights chasing each other on the scoreboard at an Oklahoma City 89ers game. He suggested that I should do something like that. About a month later, in May of 1987, we had our first dot race in Arlington Stadium.”

Now Morgan's voice is as much a part of a home game as any other Rangers tradition. His long-time colleague, Rangers radio play-by-play broadcaster Eric Nadel, thinks he knows why.

“He communicates tremendous passion without screaming at you the way many PA announcers do these days,” Nadel says. “His warmth as a person comes through loud and clear when you hear him, and his voice quality as a former radio star is second to none.”

That warmth likely soothed fans and players alike during the lean years, when the team wasn't close to making the playoffs. That luck began to change in 1996, when they faced the New York Yankees in the franchise's playoffs debut.

They lost that series in '96, but 14 years later, they won their first American League pennant—beating the Yankees. Reaching the 2010 World Series was vindication—and sweet revenge—for the team, the fans and the front office, including Morgan.

“I had to temper my excitement because I had my job to

Baseball Times in Texas

APRIL 4, 1983 Chuck Morgan calls his first MLB game, the Rangers' home opener against the Chicago White Sox.

AUGUST 22, 1989 Nolan Ryan becomes the first pitcher with 5,000 strikeouts when he fans Oakland's Rickey Henderson.

MAY 1, 1991 Ryan throws his record seventh no-hitter in a 3-0 win over the Toronto Blue Jays.

JULY 28, 1994 Kenny Rogers pitches a perfect game, 4-0 over the California Angels.

2001 Morgan is named best PA announcer by *The Sporting News*, an honor he receives again in 2003.

JULY 30, 2017 Adrián Beltré gets his 3,000th hit.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2020 Morgan's 3,000th straight game behind the mic, a Rangers win against the Houston Astros. The mic he used is now in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

OCTOBER 2020 Morgan works the National League divisional and championship series and the World Series, all played in Arlington after the postseason format was altered because of the pandemic.

JULY 16, 2024 Globe Life Field will host the 94th MLB All-Star Game.

do,” he says. “But like the fans, it was very emotional. And the crowd was so loud. It was a great feeling to know that the Rangers had won the AL championship and were going to their first World Series.”

The Rangers lost to the San Francisco Giants that year. They made it back to the World Series in 2011, only to suffer a gut-wrenching loss to the St. Louis Cardinals. That loss wasn't laid to rest until last year. The Rangers beat the Arizona Diamondbacks—51 years after the franchise moved to Arlington from Washington in 1972—and won their first World Series, four games to one.

“I was in Arizona for Game 5, and it was one of the great experiences of my life,” Morgan says. “It doesn't get any better than that.”

While Morgan and Ranger fans celebrated, the players were singing their favorite song from the amazing 2023 season—Creed's *Higher*—in the beer- and champagne-soaked visiting clubhouse. Morgan might want to include it in his Globe Life Field playlist from time to time.

And how about one more song for the winners of the 2023 World Series?

We Are the Champions. ■

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1920s Style for a 1920s Price

It was a warm summer afternoon and my wife and I were mingling with the best of them. The occasion was a 1920s-themed party, and everyone was dressed to the nines. Parked on the manse's circular driveway was a beautiful classic convertible. It was here that I got the idea for our new 1920s Retrograde Watch.

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the FUTURE looks BRIGHT



Story by Will Holford and Melissa Segrest ● Photos by Sarah Beal

This spring, 135 graduating high school seniors were awarded Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's Scholarships of Excellence. After years of hard work, academic achievement and extracurricular activities, each student received a \$2,500 scholarship to pursue a bachelor's degree, associate degree or trade and technical school certification.

It was a record number of scholarships awarded by the cooperative in a single year. The recipients attended 30 high schools across Bluebonnet's 14-county service area. Four recipients were homeschooled.

"Congratulations to these hardworking students who earned a Bluebonnet scholarship this year, and thanks to all the outstanding students who participated in the application process," said General Manager Matt Bentke. "It is rewarding for Bluebonnet to help these students take the next step toward their academic and career goals. One of our values is supporting the communities in which we live and serve. We are proud to support these students who will continue to give back to their communities."

More than 260 graduating high school seniors submitted scholarship applications in March of this year. Scholarships were awarded in April based on students' academic achievement, community service and leadership, work experience and extracurricular activities, awards, honors and an essay.

Sherry Murphy, a Bluebonnet community and development representative, has been the scholarship program organizer for two years. She and the cooperative's four other community representatives work year-round to promote the scholarship program.

"All of the representatives reach out to schools, counselors, administrators and teachers," Murphy said. "Each school is different, so our approaches vary. We've also reached out to youth organizations at area churches, 4-H clubs and AgriLife program directors."

Some of the fields of study the students plan to pursue include animal science, nursing, computer engineering, automotive mechanics, neuroscience, business, electrical and power transmission, criminal justice, dental hygiene, cybersecurity and forensic investigative science.

The graduates plan to attend major Texas universities including Texas A&M, The University of Texas at Austin, Texas Tech, Southern Methodist and Texas State, as well as other area institutions including Blinn College and Austin Community College. Students pursuing trade or technical certifications plan to attend Texas State Technical College, Universal

Story continued on Page 18





Bluebonnet awards \$337,500 in **scholarships** to record number of area graduating **high school seniors**



Among Bluebonnet scholarship recipients, here gathered at the co-op's Brenham service center, are, front row (seated), from left: Marty Naumann, Kaylee Sodolak, Addison Schramme, Kiefer Ellis, David Romo, Saif Mohammed, Madeline Holton, Kylan Canon, Madison Moran and Kaylie Wybro. Second row, from left: Ella Knobloch, Kaylin Jacobs, Sienna Kelm, Kelly Urbanovsky, Otylia Hicks, Avery Smith, Jacy Anderson, Ciara Coker, Laci Strack, Rachael Hohlt, Savannah Chalmers and Audra Kroll. Third row, from left: Cooper Odenbach, Braden Perkkio, Kaden Roskey, Nathan Scott, Joshua Green, Dalton Winkelmann, Colten Wensel, Zane Aschenbeck, Gage Kmiec, Chasidy Nowicki, Della Jasinski, Alex Dallmeyer and Zach Leuschner.

■ Get to know 5 scholarship recipients,
PAGES 18-21

■ A family scholarship tradition,
PAGE 20



At left: Karley Schulz, a recent graduate from Lexington High School, tosses her cap. Schulz plans to attend Temple Junior College to study diagnostic medical sonography. **Learn more about her on Page 20.**

At right: Caldwell-area family and friends take photos of their graduating high school seniors at the Brenham scholarship reception in April.





There were 42 scholarship recipients at Bluebonnet's Bastrop headquarters reception. They are, front row (seated) from left: Emma Weldon, Brooke Napier and Alexis Woods. Second row, from left: Camryn Davis, Jordan Medina, Paisley Smith, Michelle Rico-Cuellar, Juliana Nichols, Yadira Perez Lugo, James Butler Jr., Keily Ramirez-Acosta and Kristen Nevaeh Castro. Third row, from left: Harley Thornton, Cassy Tiner, Avery Williams, Courtney Shepard, Katherine Oliver, Zabastian Adams, Caleb Cadena, Venus Gonzales-Vega, Kailey Martinez, Sammy Pieper, Daniel Medina and Alison Boswell. Fourth row, from left: Paden Maass, Johnique 'J.T.' Thomas, Jared Wildebrandt, Sydney Moilan, Ty Denges, Edgar Guzman-Rangel, Seth Staples, Ronald Collins, Erin Jameson, McKayla Flores, Lorenzo Chairez and Adan Velasquez. Fifth row, from left, Carlton "Luke" Bauer, Avery Bezner, Vanessa Segovia Gutierrez, Cindy Ruiz, John-Anthony Shea Borsi and Tara Williams. Not pictured: Eleanor Davis and Estrella Jaimes.

Story continued from Page 16

Technical Institute and other schools to learn about becoming diesel mechanics, mortgage loan officers and land surveyors, among other jobs.

Scholarship recipient Cooper Odenbach just graduated from Caldwell High School and plans to major in poultry science at Texas A&M. His goal is to become a poultry nutritionist. "There's a high need for them," he said. "They make a good amount of money, and I've learned about it because my father is in the poultry industry." As an officer in FFA, Cooper judged poultry competitions. His college studies will focus on poultry nutrition and health, as well as how the industry keeps consumers safe.



Cooper Odenbach

"This scholarship will help me pay my tuition, and for books, classes and other expenses," he said. "It's an honor to receive this support from Bluebonnet."

To be eligible for a Scholarship of Excellence, a student must reside with a parent or guardian who is a Bluebonnet member. Students may attend a public or private high school, or be homeschooled.

Bluebonnet members do not pay for the scholarships through bill payments or electric rates. Scholarships of Excellence are funded through Bluebonnet's Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament and unclaimed capital credit payments to former members that are returned to Bluebonnet from the State of Texas.

In the last 20 years, Bluebonnet has awarded 1,191 scholarships totaling \$2.5 million.

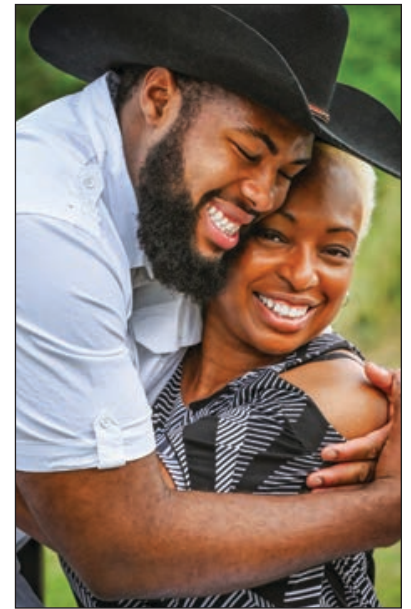
Applications for Scholarships of Excellence for students who plan to graduate in the 2024-2025 school year will open in November at bluebonnet.coop/scholarships.

Johnique 'J.T.' Thomas

MANOR EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Johnique "J.T." Thomas is an ambitious young man driven by a deeply personal mission to revolutionize healthcare, specifically women's health during pregnancy and childbirth. Those areas of healthcare have impacted his family and raised his awareness of problems. His experiences have motivated him to work hard, excel in school and support his community.

- **Hometown:** Elgin
- **Where he plans to study:** U.S. Air Force Academy
- **Skills excited to learn:** Leadership: "I'm going to learn how to lead effectively, not just in the military, but over an entire community."
- **Area of study:** Biology
- **Future plans:** Maternal-fetal medicine doctor at a free clinic in Elgin or Manor
- **Career aspirations:** U.S. surgeon general
- **Hobbies:** Cooking, tending to cows and miniature donkeys on his family farm, and playing football; J.T. earned a football scholarship to the U.S. Air Force Academy, where he will continue playing at the center position.
- **Surprising trait:** Despite his apparent ease when talking with others about his goals, J.T. says he is shy.



J.T. Thomas with his grandmother Pamela Fowler at their home near Elgin. He has lofty career goals that start with his plans to attend the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado and study biology.

"My final goal is to become U.S. surgeon general. As a doctor, I'll be able to help patients, and when I open my clinic, I'll be able to help my community. But as surgeon general, I'll be able to help not just Americans, but provide and build trust to help the world."

Paisley Smith

CEDAR CREEK HIGH SCHOOL

Paisley Smith has her sights set on a future in computer programming. She plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in computer science at The University of Texas at Austin, aiming to specialize in artificial intelligence or machine learning. "I hope to contribute to the innovation of technology with programming, since that is something I am very passionate about," Paisley said. While the scholarship reduces the cost of a college education and validates her hard work, Paisley said she sees it as an opportunity to focus on coursework. She hopes to become part of the Turing Scholars Honors Program for computer science students at UT.

- **Hometown:** Cedar Creek
- **Favorite class:** Statistics: "My teacher Jessica McAnnally-Linz has had the most impact on me. Under her guidance, I learned effective college-level study habits and developed a genuine enjoyment for learning."
- **Favorite extracurricular activity:** Code Ninjas, an after-school program that provides high-quality coding training
- **Career aspiration:** Software engineer
- **Advice to her younger self:** Explore your personal interests early: "I discovered my passion for computer science during my junior year, so sometimes I wish I had looked into STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) earlier."



Paisley Smith, who was valedictorian of the 2024 class at Cedar Creek High School, has plans to attend The University of Texas at Austin to study computer science. Her favorite class in high school was statistics, she said.

- **College goals:** Gain the skills, knowledge and education to become a software engineer or computer programmer

"The scholarship serves as an acknowledgment of my potential and abilities, and I'm grateful for the opportunity given to me by Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative."

Kaylee Sodolak

BRENHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Kaylee Sodolak grew up in Washington County. At 16, she earned a veterinary assistant certificate after 500 hours of volunteer work at Brenham Veterinary Hospital and acing a written test. It is her proudest accomplishment. With two pets to care for at home — Sky, a 4-year-old Maltipoo, and Gracie, a 2-year-old cat — Kaylee's love for animals has been a big part of her life. "As I started volunteering, I got to learn more about the different types of animals you get to work with, and I found a passion for it," she said. "I was always excited to go to the vet and see a new client every day, learn about what's wrong with them and be a part of helping them. That inspired me to keep earning my hours and start studying for the vet assistant exam." Kaylee plans to continue her education at Texas A&M University after completing courses in animal science at Blinn College in Brenham.

- **Hometown:** Brenham
- **Favorite class:** Veterinary medicine applications: "It has helped prepare me for life after high school as I continue on my path to becoming a small- and large-animal veterinarian."
- **Favorite animal:** Dogs, because they're energetic and sweet
- **Where she plans to study:** Blinn College in Brenham
- **Area of study:** Animal science
- **Career aspirations:** Veterinarian



Kaylee Sodolak earned her veterinary assistant certificate at 16, and plans to one day become a veterinarian. Here she holds Sky, her beloved pet Maltipoo.

- **Greatest accomplishment:** Obtaining a veterinary assistant certificate, which requires an exam, 500 hours of work experience and demonstrating hands-on experience

"I will miss my family the most after moving away from home. My parents have had the biggest influence on my life. They always tell me to never give up and to do my best. I'll always remember that and their unwavering support."



Scholarship recipients who attended an April reception at Bluebonnet's Giddings service center are, front row (seated) from left: Keller Tyree, Connor Huddleston, Alexis Macik, Kaylan Curl, Riley Rodgers, Madelyn Dixon, Louise Woodward, Sarah Adams, Emma Lyon, Emme Dallmeyer, Noah Sierra and Beau Bollinger. Second row, from left, Karley Schulz, Kinley Voight, Kamryn Schmidt, Abby Wunderlich, Idalia Warren, Alyssa Brade, Abigail Schneider, Rorri Boyd, Melanie Martinez, Mari Sanders, Haven Straughter, Mason Schimank, Julia Bayer, Lauren Boettcher and Libbi Tharp. Third row, from left: Kaylon Metcalf, Adam Kieschnick, Kylie Morse, Jay Kohlman, Jonathan Marshall, Fermin Luna, Nolan Schneider, Luke Lindner and Holt Brockenbush.

A FAMILY TRADITION

BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC Cooperative awarded its first scholarships in 1998 to eight area high school graduates. Andrew Woodward was one of those students and today his daughter, Louise Woodward, is following in his academic footsteps.

This spring, Louise received a Scholarship of Excellence from the cooperative. Andrew, 44, gratefully remembers his scholarship. He knew back then he wanted to study biology. "I always enjoyed nature, plants and animals when I was a kid," he said.



Louise Woodward and her father Andrew Woodward don their respective graduation caps. *Laura Skelding photo*

Andrew used the scholarship to go to Rice University in Houston, graduating with a double major in biology and biochemistry, and then getting a doctorate in biochemistry there.

Louise also wants to major in biology, and plans to use her scholarship to attend St. Edward's University in Austin. While her father's focus was plant genetics, Louise is more interested in working with people. "My current plan is to be a heart ultrasound technician," she said.

A love of learning runs in the family: Tina Henderson Woodward, Andrew's wife and Louise's mother, went to Blinn College in Brenham and Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, earning undergraduate and master's degrees in education and library science.

Their eldest daughter Margaret Woodward, 21, is entering her senior year at Rice and majoring in history. In 2020, she was chosen to represent Bluebonnet on the annual Government Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. and receive a scholarship from the cooperative.

Andrew was a biology professor at several Central Texas colleges and universities, and has taught at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton for 13 years. Tina is Lexington High School's librarian and campus testing coordinator. Their daughters have grown up on the Woodward family ranch in Lexington.

Youngest sibling Charlotte Woodward, 15, who just finished her high school freshman year, has time to decide on her future. One thing is certain for her, Andrew said: "She'll be encouraged to apply for a Bluebonnet scholarship."

Karley Schulz

LEXINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

One of the happiest moments in Karley Schulz's life was holding her niece Swayzi for the first time. "Seeing her tiny face and feeling her warmth filled me with an overwhelming sense of joy and love that I'll never forget," she said. This is one of the reasons Karley is excited to pursue a career as a sonographer — to provide compassion and support for expectant parents during ultrasound appointments. "Being able to share in their joy and excitement as they see their baby for the first time is a unique and rewarding experience," she said. "I look forward to developing the skills necessary to create a comfortable and reassuring environment for these special moments."



Karley Schulz hopes to become a sonographer at a hospital or an obstetrics-gynecology clinic.

- **Hometown:** Lexington
- **Best thing about hometown:** Small, tight-knit community with family
- **Where she plans to study:** Temple College
- **Area of study:** Diagnostic medical sonography
- **Skills most excited to learn:** Providing compassion and support during sonography appointments
- **Career aspirations:** Traveling sonographer, then sonographer at a hospital or an obstetrics-gynecology clinic in Bluebonnet's service area
- **Role model:** Heather Exner, Karley's mother: "She constantly motivates me to strive for excellence, even during challenging times when I feel like giving up."

"I plan to utilize my trade to provide mothers in the community with images of their babies, aiming to provide feelings of support and excitement. By offering this service, I hope to create cherished memories for expecting mothers and contribute to a positive experience during such a significant time in their lives."



Scholarship recipients who attended a reception at Bluebonnet's Maxwell service center are, front row (seated), from left: Skylar Dredla, Katalina Postert, Annabella Wagner, Job Mayberry, Kolton Boyd and Skylar Samuelson. Second row, from left, Andrew Ni, Gareth Schulte, Hannah Wheeler, Zoe Seaver, Taylor Dredla, Maegan Zapata, Weston "Cole" Frey and Madian Castillo. Third row, from left, Brenden Jones, Phone Kant, Nathan Garcia and Kaden Pena. Not pictured: Ysabel Castillo and Katelynn Shinkle.

Skylar Dredla

LULING HIGH SCHOOL

Skylar Dredla was introduced to radiology in eighth grade after fracturing her wrist in a junior high basketball game. After having X-rays, she became fascinated with the use of technology to diagnose injuries, because it's often the first step toward healing. "I have a heart for people, and I knew that I could connect with being a radiology technician because of that," she said. As a sophomore in high school, Skylar took a medical terminology class with teacher Sreya Patel that sparked her passion for science and medicine. She continued her education in anatomy, physiology and pathology, and earned a certified nursing aide credential in 2023.

- **Hometown:** Luling
- **Favorite teacher:** Sreya Patel, health science teacher: "I will remember her as the teacher who led me to my career path."
- **Where she plans to study:** Blinn College in Brenham
- **Area of study:** Applied sciences, specializing in radiologic technology
- **Career aspirations:** Specialize in magnetic resonance imaging after earning radiology certification
- **Best advice received:** "Create the world you want to live in" from actress and podcast host Sadie Robertson
- **Hobbies:** Sports, particularly volleyball, basketball and softball. Skylar looks forward to participating in intramural sports in college.
- **Impact of her scholarship:** It will help Skylar reach her goal of graduating from college debt-free



Skylar Dredla will attend — you guessed it — Blinn College in Brenham, to prepare for someday becoming a specialist in magnetic resonance imaging.

"This past school year, my (certified nursing aide) class had the opportunity to intern at Magnolia Living & Rehabilitation nursing home in Luling. This experience showed me that I want to pursue a role that allows me to help others and make a difference in their lives. One of my happiest moments has been spending time with the residents there and giving each one my time to show how much I care for them." ■

— Profiles by Alyssa Meinke, Sara Abrego and Melissa Segrest

ANNUAL MEETING 2024

Bluebonnet gathering marks reliability, growth, 85 years



By Will Holford

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative celebrated 85 years of providing safe, reliable power across its 14-county service area in Central Texas with about 500 members and guests during its Annual Meeting on May 14.

Two incumbent directors were re-elected this year. Shana Whiteley, director from District 2, Travis County, has served on Bluebonnet's Board since 2017. Bryan Bracewell, one of three directors from District 3, Bastrop County, has served on Bluebonnet's Board since 2018.

"Congratulations to Directors Whiteley and Bracewell," said Board Chairman Ben Flencher. "I am very proud to serve with them and our fellow directors representing Bluebonnet's members."

During the Annual Meeting, Bluebonnet members elect the directors who govern the electric cooperative. The nine directors serve staggered, three-year terms.

Since 1939, Bluebonnet has served homes, farms, ranches, schools, churches and businesses of all sizes, from small, family-owned stores to large industries. For every member-owner, Bluebonnet's goal is the same: provide outstanding service.

"Bluebonnet has a wonderful history and bright future," Flencher said. "The area Bluebonnet serves is where people want to live. Our exceptional staff is committed to providing the power that our members need."

General Manager Matt Bentke said Bluebonnet's financial strength and sound planning have provided its members with some of the lowest electric rates in the state, and historic amounts have been returned to members in capital credits. The cooperative has continued to experience strong residential and commercial growth, as well as record investments in its electric system and the communities Bluebonnet serves.

Bluebonnet's residential members pay



\$118.48 per 1,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity used, which is well below the statewide average for electric cooperatives and areas of the state where consumers have retail choice.

"Having one of the lowest rates in the state is a significant benefit of being a member-owner of Bluebonnet," Bentke said. "We understand the importance of maintaining affordable electric rates. We are experiencing the same inflationary pressures as everyone in the industry, but we have no plans to increase rates in the foreseeable future."

Consistent growth in Bluebonnet's service area contributes to the cooperative's success and financial stability. Bluebonnet marked its 85th anniversary this year by exceeding 132,000 meters in June. In addition to 5% annual meter growth, Bluebonnet added 126 large commercial members in 2023, for a total of 2,195 businesses of that size, Bentke said, adding that such diverse growth benefits every Bluebonnet member. "During the past



year, we have added more assets, made more improvements and completed more maintenance on our electric system than at any other time in our 85-year history," Bentke said.

Bluebonnet also invests in the communities across its service area. The cooperative sponsors events and donates fans and water at community activities. Bluebonnet employees have set a goal to donate 8,500 hours of community service to nonprofit organizations this year.

Registration for the Annual Meeting, which was at The Silos on 77 event center in Giddings, began at 1:30 p.m., and members and guests who arrived early enjoyed country and western music by the Nathan Colt Young band.

Members attending the Annual Meeting were eligible to win door prizes donated by Bluebonnet's vendors and business partners. The prizes varied from \$100 gift cards for area retail businesses to small appliances, power tools, outdoor cookers and two riding lawn mowers.

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5



6



7

Lynn Wittneben, a Bluebonnet member since 1970 from Austin County, attended the Annual Meeting for the first time with her daughter. “It was a beautiful day, so we decided ‘Hey, let’s go for it,’” Wittneben said. “I was pleasantly surprised with how many people came to the meeting. The music was great, everyone was so nice and welcoming.”

Plus, Wittneben’s daughter, Kerri Schovajsa, won a \$100 gift card in a door-prize drawing. “We definitely plan to be at next year’s Annual Meeting,” Wittneben said.

The day after the Annual Meeting, J.E. Dunn’s name was drawn as the winner of a 2011 Ford F-150 extended cab 4x4 truck that was retired from Bluebonnet’s fleet. Members were entered in the truck drawing by submitting a proxy form in advance or registering at the Annual Meeting.

If you were unable to attend this year’s Annual Meeting, you can watch a video recap at bluebonnet.coop/annualmeeting. Next year’s Annual Meeting will be Tuesday, May 13, 2025. ■

1) Rodney Brossette of Somerville and Kitty Collins of College Station find a dance floor while the Nathan Colt Young band performs.

2) General Manager Matt Bentke visits with a member at the meeting. About 500 members and guests attended.

3) Bluebonnet staffers, from left, James Jordan, Paul Herzog and Drew Gaeke answer members’ questions.

4) JoAnn Beckerman, left, of Giddings, and Elvera Drews, of Brenham, enjoy kolaches.

5) Diane Jaehne, a member from Washington County, raises a hand to indicate that she is the winner of a Cub Cadet riding lawn mower during the door prize drawings.

6) Bluebonnet’s Board of Directors Chairman Ben Flencher delivers his state-of-the-cooperative address.

7) J.E. Dunn of Manor, the winner of the truck giveaway, shows off her prize.

Sarah Beal photos

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



Corpus Christi is made up of Corpus Christians. No holier demonym than that, I'd suppose.

For places ending in “-o,” just add “-an.” Laredoans, San Angeloans, El Pasoans. Amarillo? Depends on whether you say Amarillo or Amarilla; George Strait sings *Amarillo by Morning*. So I go with him. The demonym, therefore, is Amarilloans.

San Antonio cannot follow this rule. “San Antonioans” is phonetically awkward. So we throw out the rule and just go with what sounds better: San Antonians.

If you have an “-on” ending, then by custom, add “-ian” to create the demonym. Houston becomes Houstonian. Sinton becomes Sintonian. Denton is Dentonian.

People in Austin seem to prefer Austin-ites. Austonian, though, cannot be the demonym. It's the adjective for style. You can say, “I love the Austonian vibe,” for instance.

For places ending in “-burg,” you just add “-er.” Fredericksburgers, Rosenburgers. Seems like we should have a town named Whataburg. Those residents would then be Whataburgers. I might move there just to be one.

Folks in Marfa are Marfans, but if they were Marfalites, it would be good marketing.

People in Paradise are Paradisians. Vega, in the Panhandle, has Vegans. Happy has Happians. Wink has Winkers. And Victoria has Victorians.

No matter what we are by demonym, we're all collectively Texans. And that, to me, is about the best thing in the world a person can be. ■

Vegan Panhandlers

And other demonyms across Texas bend and break the rules of language

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY SHAW NIELSEN

LATELY I'VE BEEN on a deep dive into “demonymology.” Sounds ominous, but it's simply the study of what people from certain places call themselves. There are general rules for demonyms, but there's nothing that can't be broken for phonetic aesthetics or preference—or even whimsy.

For instance, adding “-ites” to a place name is a biblical tradition for identifying the people there: Canaanites, Levites, etc. So folks in Dallas are Dallasites, people in Dumas are Dumasites and residents of Paris, Texas, would be known as Parisites—except they've adopted the French custom and call themselves Parisians.

We have many unusual, rather unpredictable demonyms in Texas. Ivanhoe

could be Ivanhoers, but if you say it too fast it sounds indelicate. So Ivanhoans is preferred. Carthage? Carthaginians. Leander? Leanderthals. That one is the result of an important archaeological find near there.

What do you call people in Cactus? Cacti? Could be Cactusians, but that sounds like a cough. What about Cut and Shoot? They are Cut and Shooters. Rough crowd. Commerce is also a challenge. Are they Commercials? Commericians? No, probably Commercites. The demonym for Waco isn't Wackos but Wacoans.

Comfort is interesting. Are they Comforters? Actually, yes. Dime Box has Dime Boxers. Alice has a truly sophisticated demonym. They're Alicians.

Frozen Treats

Hello, July! Hello, Texas heat! Hello, relief.

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Nothing hits the spot after a hot day better than an icy *paleta* (popsicle). My coconut horchata paletas will keep you cool all summer long. Made from a base of horchata, a popular Mexican drink made by soaking rice in water, my paletas are light and refreshing with a hint of vanilla.

Coconut Horchata Paletas

1 cup unsweetened shredded coconut, divided use
½ cup uncooked white rice
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
4 cups hot water
4 cups room temperature water
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
¼ cup sugar

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Place ¼ cup coconut on a baking sheet. Bake, stirring occasionally, until coconut is lightly toasted, about 5 minutes. Set aside.
2. To a blender add rice, the remaining ¾ cup coconut, cinnamon and hot water. Cover and allow to steep for 15 minutes. Blend until smooth. Strain into a pitcher.
3. Stir in room temperature water, vanilla and sugar. Taste for sweetness, and add more sugar if desired.
4. Pour the coconut horchata into a popsicle mold. Freeze overnight. Serve, sprinkled with the toasted coconut.

SERVES 6

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Coconut Orange Frozen Bars.





Frozen Raspberry Squares

CLAUDIA PALACIOS SELLERS
MIDSOUTH EC

This no-fuss dessert Palacios Sellers has been whipping up since 1998 is always a hit at her home. Berries and chocolate are the ultimate combo. With store-bought cookies and just a few additional ingredients, you can make a delicious berry delight at home.

1 cup finely crushed Oreos, about 14 cookies

2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, melted

½ cup sugar

1 cup half-and-half

1 cup sour cream

12 ounces frozen raspberries

Chocolate syrup for serving

1. Coat an 8-by-8-inch baking dish with cooking spray. In a medium bowl, combine crushed Oreos with butter. Press mixture into the bottom of the baking dish.

2. In another bowl, stir together sugar, half-and-half, and sour cream. Fold in frozen raspberries and spread mixture evenly over cookie crust.

3. Cover and freeze 3–4 hours. Remove from freezer 10 minutes before serving. Slice into squares and serve drizzled with chocolate syrup.

SERVES 9

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



\$500 WINNER

Mammaw's Peanut Butter Ice Cream Treats

KIM NEW
BIG COUNTRY EC



A sweet mashup of two childhood favorites, this recipe from New's mother-in-law, Betty Sargent, is truly spectacular. From birthday parties to summer potlucks or movie nights, I'll be enjoying these peanut butter treats all year-round.

SERVES 9

1 cup peanut butter

1 cup light corn syrup

6 cups crisp rice cereal

1 quart vanilla ice cream

COOK'S TIP Leftover squares can be individually placed in plastic wrap and stored in the freezer for later.

1. Line two 8-by-8-inch metal pans with parchment paper.

2. In a large bowl, stir together peanut butter and corn syrup. Add cereal 1 or 2 cups at a time, stirring to coat with the peanut butter and corn syrup mixture.

3. Divide mixture evenly between the two pans. With damp hands, press mixture evenly into pans. Freeze 1 hour.

4. Scoop and spread ice cream evenly over cereal mixture in one pan. Run knife around edges of frozen cereal mixture in the other pan to release it onto top of ice cream. Press gently and return to freezer for 30 minutes. Slice into squares and serve.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

COOKIE EXCHANGE DUE JULY 10

Want to trade your best cookies for \$500? Send us the recipe your friends always rave about and that could be your prize money. Enter by July 10 for a chance to win \$500.





Pistachio Freeze

RUBY COWAN
HOUSTON COUNTY EC

If you're craving a deliciously salty and sweet dessert, Cowan has got you covered. I simply love the lightly salty cracker crust that pairs so well with the pistachio pudding. Bonus: This sweet and salty treat comes together in a snap!

55 butter crackers, divided use
¾ cup (1½ sticks) butter, melted
2 cups milk
2 packages pistachio pudding mix
(3.4 ounces each)
1 quart vanilla ice cream, softened
2 cups frozen whipped topping

1. In a large resealable plastic bag, crush 50 crackers with a rolling pin. Combine with butter and press into a 9-by-13-inch baking pan.
2. In a bowl, stir together milk and pudding. Add ice cream and whipped topping, stir to combine. Pour mixture over the crust. Crush remaining crackers with your hands and sprinkle over mixture.
3. Cover and freeze at least 1 hour. Slice and serve.

SERVES 10

TCP Find the August 2014 issue in our online archive and discover the best Co-op Country recipes in that month's Just Chill contest.

No-Guilt Goodies

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

How frozen fruit can become a delightful snack:

Spread yogurt on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and top with diced fresh fruit and nuts. Freeze, slice and serve.

Blend a frozen, peeled banana in a food processor with coconut milk for a delicious ice cream.

Drizzle melted chocolate over diced fruit spread on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, freeze and enjoy.

Slice watermelon wedges, insert a popsicle stick into the rind and freeze for a guilt-free popsicle.

Wash and fully dry fresh grapes. Place in a zip-close bag and freeze overnight for a refreshing snack.

Not just another Hunger Game.



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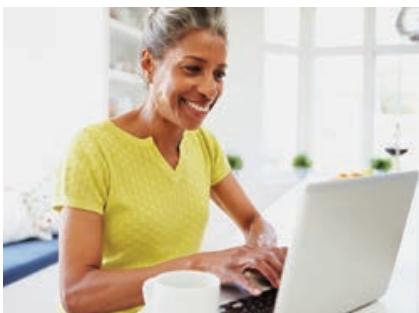
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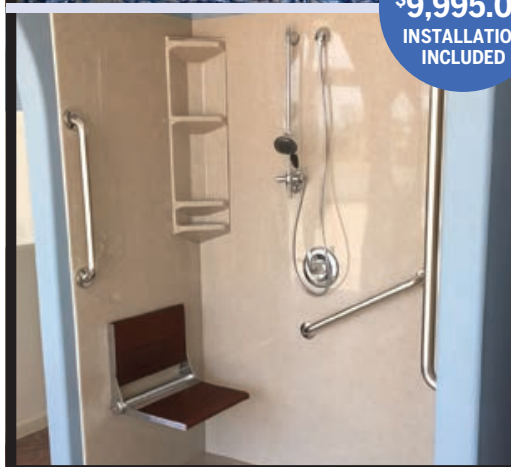
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Face to Face With History

Look into the mystery of the Malakoff Man at the Pearce Museum

BY CHET GARNER

A GROUP OF WORKERS near the East Texas town of Malakoff made an unusual discovery near the Trinity River in 1929. They were digging out a gravel pit when they unearthed a round stone about the size of a basketball lying 20 feet below ground level.

As they looked at its smooth surface, the stone seemed to be looking back at them through two carved eyes. Was this a prehistoric sculpture? And how did it get buried in dirt that at the time was believed to be 100,000 years old—when humans didn't get to Texas until some 20,000 years ago? I had the same questions and set off for the Pearce Museum in Corsicana, southeast of Dallas, to get answers.

I was stunned by the wealth of artifacts inside this little-known museum on the campus of Navarro College. I could have spent hours exploring the immense Civil War collection, but I was on a mission for the mysterious. In a back room, I found three carved heads surrounded by Native American projectile points and an impressive hunter-gatherer display.

It turns out that following the original discovery in the Malakoff quarry, archaeologists found two more heads in the same vicinity. As far as explanations go, it seems science is as stumped as I am.

These unusual heads have as many supporters as they do critics, with some scientists attempting to discredit their integrity. Some believe them to be all-out fakes while others argue that they're authentic, dating them to when Paleo-Indians were known to have been in the Americas, roughly 9,000–15,000 years ago.

Unfortunately the dig site was flooded, halting any further investigations (insert conspiracy theories here). Regardless, it was fun staring down a mystery that can stare right back. ■

ABOVE Malakoff Man confounds Chet, as the stone heads have done for many over the past century.

TCP See these Malakoff heads for yourself in the video on our website. And see all Chet's Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details, and check our website for many more upcoming events.

JULY

6

Fredericksburg [6–7, 20–21] Pari-Mutuel Horse Racing, (830) 997-2359, gillespiefair.com

8

Lampasas [8–14] Spring Ho, (512) 556-5301, springho.com

11

Levelland [11–13] Junior Rodeo Cowboys Association Finals, (806) 290-2848, jrcarodeo.com

Mason [11–13] Round Up Weekend, (325) 347-5758, masontx.org

12

Midland [12–14] Celebration of the Arts, (432) 687-1149, acmidland.org

Ingram [12–Aug. 9] Summer ArtMart, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

13

Weatherford Parker County Peach Festival, (817) 596-3801, parkercountypeachfestival.com

New Braunfels [13–14] Petfest, (830) 488-7814, hillcountryconferences.com

17

Kilgore [17–20, 25–27] Tinker Bell, (903) 983-8601, texasshakespeare.com

19

Brenham Puppy Pals, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

20

Friona Cheeseburger Festival & Cook-Off, (806) 250-3491, friona-chamber.com

25

Clute [25-27] The Great Texas Mosquito Festival, 1-800-371-2971, mosquitofestival.com

26

Levelland [26-27] Fearless Champions Summer Showcase, (806) 894-4161, facebook.com/fearlesschampionsfallshowcase

Fredericksburg [26-28] Hill Country Swap Meet, (254) 751-7958, earhartproductions.com

27

Buffalo Gap Tour de Gap, (325) 829-0617, tourdegap.com

Giddings Sip & Shop Christmas in July, (979) 542-3455, giddingstx.com

McKinney Magical Moth Night, (972) 562-5566, heardmuseum.org

Bandera [27-28] National Day of the American Cowboy, (210) 632-4535, banderabusiness.com

28

San Angelo Buffalo Soldier Anniversary Day, (325) 657-4444, fortconcho.com

AUGUST

3

New Braunfels Already Gone: A Tribute to The Eagles, (830) 627-0808, brauntex.org

Submit Your Event

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



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Shells and Scales

Slithering and silently sneaking their way to the top this month are creatures that use their shells and scales as disguises, protection and even homes. Let's appreciate their photos, even if they might give us pause in real life.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 TRACY COSTELLO
PEDERNALES EC

"I found this small garter snake in the oregano plant in the backyard. I had to wait patiently for this little one to trust me enough to make an appearance."

2 CYRIL FERNANDES
PEDERNALES EC

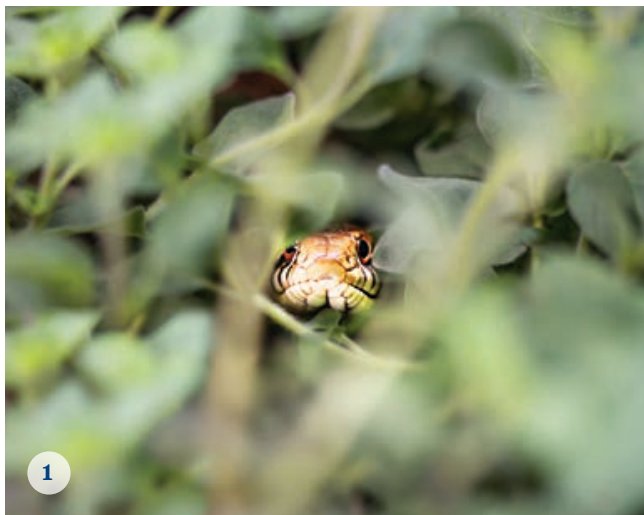
"The green anole is found throughout the eastern third of Texas, and it can change color from brown to green. Males have a pink throat fan called a dewlap that can be puffed up."

3 RICK KIEFFER
BLUEBONNET EC

"Spotted this little guy while camping at Cedar Breaks Park on Lake Georgetown."

4 TERESA MOULDS
BIG COUNTRY EC

"While this eastern hognose poses, a gorgone checkerspot alights on its head. The snake was in display mode, stretching the skin around head and neck in an effort to scare away large predators, me in this case."



Upcoming Contests

- DUE JUL 10 Mascots**
- DUE AUG 10 Young Photographers**
- DUE SEP 10 Parks**



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Shells and Scales photos from readers.



Culling Time

When tomato farming in Jacksonville meant selling the best and savoring the rest

BY CYNTHIA L. MATLOCK
ILLUSTRATION BY
SARAH FERONE

THE OTHER DAY, while picking tomatoes from my garden, I remembered how, growing up in the 1970s, we gathered under the large oak tree in my parents' yard and made tough decisions. Which produce would go to town?

Of all the crops we grew, tomatoes were my favorite because someone always brought a saltshaker to the fields. A misshapen or overripe tomato was a prime fruit for eating. Right there in the field, I would stop and enjoy the juicy snack.

After picking the ripe ones—and a few yellow and large green ones, too—we headed home around midmorning, sweaty and tired. The important part was next: culling time.

The prettiest, most perfectly shaped red tomatoes went into one basket,

while the blemished, funny-shaped or otherwise flawed ones filled another basket. Under the shade tree, a breeze kept us cool while we'd chat and separate the produce.

About 55 years prior, around 1917, the farms surrounding Jacksonville, in Cherokee County, south of Tyler, produced 90% of the tomatoes shipped from Texas. The area's sandy soil still grows some of the best tomatoes in the state. And my family learned to take part in that business.

We took our best tomatoes to town. However, have no fear—there were plenty of uses for the culled ones that we kept for ourselves: soup, cobbler, picante sauce and, of course, lots for canning.

Texas' tomato industry once employed thousands of people on the farms, in packing sheds and in the factories that made boxes and baskets. Over time Jacksonville became known as the tomato capital of the world.

Some of the old packing sheds with wide dock doors still stand next to the train tracks. That was where farmers sold their vegetables to be shipped all over. One of the six basket factories in the county still operates in town too. Many of my relatives worked at basket factories, or as we called them, box factories.

Competition and marketing problems caused a collapse in the tomato business in the 1950s. During the '70s we took our tomatoes and other vegetables to the local farmers market. Bulk buyers bought from us and drove to the larger Dallas or Houston farmers markets. There they could make double the profit.

Our father would stubbornly say, "I see no reason to drive that far' to sell a tomato."

Yesterday, examining my ripe tomatoes, I found one with yellow spots and a distorted shape. Oh well, even the imperfect ones have purpose. I grabbed the saltshaker. ■

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At the age of 56, a back operation left me dependent on a cane, significantly impacting my daily life. Simple tasks like going to the store or meeting friends became challenging, and I even had to cancel a long-awaited anniversary trip to Italy.

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