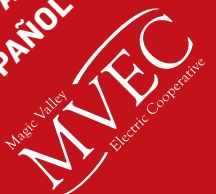


TEXAS CO-OP POWER

HOPES OF HARMONY

East Texas freedom colony fostered integration

SEE PAGE 18
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TexasCoopPower.com

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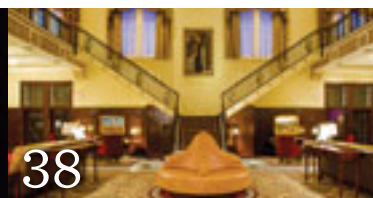
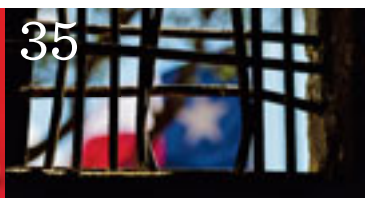
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Dark Corner and High Hill

By Lonni Taylor

NEXT MONTH

What the Devil? Exploring Lucifer's pointed influence on naming Texas places, plants and critters.



PLAYERS: COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS. HORNS: KOSTSOV | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

ON THE COVER *The settlement for former slaves founded by George Washington Grant in 1866 has all but disappeared.* Photo by Julia Robinson

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Pop and Spike on Purpose

What a heartwarming story [*Pop and Spike*, December 2017]. It gives me hope that I, too, will find purpose in my retirement years. God bless Spike and Pop. I hope they have many happy, joyful and purposeful years together.

BARBARA STOHLER VIA FACEBOOK

We all need a purpose. I think it's a benefit of living. And Mama's probably looking on, being happy as well.

KATHLEEN DAVIS | NACOGDOCHES
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC

Head of the Table

The Cornsilk Pudding Pie [Recipes, November 2017] was the hands-down favorite on our Thanksgiving table!

JOY MILLER VIA FACEBOOK | CIBOLO
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC



Helping Veterans

We learned so much about the Gary Sinise Foundation [*Welcome Home*, November 2017] and its work with other charitable organizations and corporations in providing individualized, adapted, mortgage-free

Hanging With John

What a surprise to read your story [*John the Baptist*, December 2017] that sparked memories of a special time and place from my past.

As kids back in the late 1950s, my friends and I lived near and often visited the woods where John left his notes with Bible scriptures. We always referred to him as Crazy John.

We met him only once and visited for about a half-hour. He seemed like a normal guy, although definitely a hermit. John had a small campfire going and was drinking coffee from a tin cup. I remember him being unshaven and with dark, piercing eyes.

JOHN SIMMONS | STREETMAN | NAVARRO COUNTY EC



homes for wounded veterans. It was an inspiring article.

SARAH METSCHAN | AUSTIN
PEDERNALES EC

OK With Us

Let me preface this by stating that I dislike all things Texas—geography, teams, towns, etc. About a year back, Southwest Rural Electric Cooperative [based in Tipton, Oklahoma, with some members in Texas] started sending us *Texas Co-op Power* in addition to *Oklahoma Living*. On accident, I opened it and read a couple of things and enjoyed them, so I ended up reading the entire magazine.

Well, I read *Texas Co-op Power* cover to cover the first day it arrives. It's very well-written and contains interesting topics. You folks produce a great magazine.

I wonder, though, could you maybe change the name to just *Co-op Power*?

LUKE D. JESSUP | SNYDER, OKLAHOMA
SOUTHWEST RURAL EC

Hearty Buffalo

After reading the plight of the American bison in *Buffalo Bilked* [November 2017], I was immediately struck with how long it must have taken to sail from Texas to Spain in the late 1700s.

Using sea-distances.org, I was able to determine the distance by sea between Corpus Christi and Cadiz, Spain—approximately 4,800 miles. Sailing ships of that time could barely make 100 miles a day.

I'm astonished that the one wild female buffalo survived not only capture and the overland drive from La Bahia but

also the arduous sea voyage, suspended in a leather harness in the dark cargo hold of a Spanish ship for nearly 57 days.

MIKE HARDAWAY | MCKINNEY
COSERV

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Texas Co-op Power

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BY THE NUMBERS

Texas Co-op Power's circulation hit **1.54 million** in December. It has the highest circulation of any magazine in the state.



HAPPENINGS

Who Wrote the Book of Love?

The Round Top Festival Institute combines a love of books and a love of romance with its **VALENTINE'S CONCERT WITH DICK SMITH AND FRIENDS** on **FEBRUARY 10**.

After the performance, featuring popular songs celebrating sweethearts, guests may sponsor a book and bid on silent auction items to benefit the institute's library.

Concert pianist James Dick established the institute, a member of Fayette Electric Cooperative, in 1971 to nurture aspiring young musicians. It has grown to encompass a campus of more than 200 acres, featuring the 1,000-seat Festival Concert Hall.

WEB EXTRAS
► Find more happenings online.

INFO ► (979) 249-3129, festivalhill.org



CO-OP PEOPLE

RED HATS UPDATE

It's been two years since we first put the word out that Nancy Johnson, a member of Southwest Texas EC, has the dream of providing all babies born in Texas in February with red hats. Johnson volunteers as the Texas ringleader for the American Heart Association's Little Hats, Big Hearts project to raise awareness of congenital heart defects. February is American Heart Month.

Johnson's home in Sonora is the de facto headquarters for her efforts, and thousands of handmade hats—knitted, crocheted and loomed—have passed through it since that first Currents item in 2016 and a cover story in 2017 were published. Hundreds of volunteers have contacted Johnson after learning of her quest through *Texas Co-op Power*.

Johnson arranges for hospitals to participate in the program. She says she added 20 hospitals to the program in the past year. "I am covering many rural, small-town hospitals where most of the co-op people go for their health care," she says. She also added Cook Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth.

To learn more, donate or make hats, contact Nancy Johnson at (325) 226-3659 or 19nanjo41@gmail.com, or visit heart.org.

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CO-OPS IN THE COMMUNITY

Hurricane Harvey

IN TRUE COOPERATIVE SPIRIT, folks in Virginia and Louisiana sent emergency supplies to Texas co-ops after Hurricane Harvey hit in August 2017.

Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative, based in Chase City, Virginia, sent an 18-wheeler packed with hundreds of items, including water, personal hygiene products, cleaning supplies and handwritten messages of faith and encouragement 1,300 miles to Victoria EC.

“Cooperation Among Cooperatives is the sixth founding cooperative principle on which we operate, and I cannot think of a finer example of seeing this principle put into action,” said Blaine Warzecha, general manager of Victoria EC.

Employees from Dixie Electric Membership Corporation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, sent cleaning supplies, paper goods, diapers, water and \$100 gift cards to Sam Houston EC. Center of Hope, a charitable organization sponsored by churches in the Livingston area, distributed the relief supplies. Employees at Dixie Electric, who experienced major flooding in 2016, wanted to return the favor after they received financial help from Sam Houston EC employees during that crisis.

HURRICANE HARVEY created a rush on gas stations around Texas in the days after the storm pounded the state. The gas shortage, fueled in part by social media, created lines 10 cars deep, causing concern at CoServ, which needed to keep its fleet of vehicles rolling.

So the co-op set up a fuel tanker at its main office in Corinth and bought 3,600 gallons of diesel and 3,200 gallons of unleaded, which kept its vehicles on the road and out of lines.

“People may have panicked because of social media, but CoServ didn’t,” said Randy Hall, CoServ’s director of job training and safety.



SPORTS SECTION

Passing the Torch

When the Olympic torch passed through Dallas on December 12, 2001, on its way to Salt Lake City, Mayor Ron Kirk chose 89-year-old Dorothy Franey Langkop to carry the torch up the steps of City Hall. Who better than one of Texas’ greatest-ever ice skaters?

Langkop was born in Minnesota and won bronze in women’s speed skating at the 1932 Winter Olympics before setting 12 world records in the sport. But she’s best known for The Franey Ice Revue, her figure skating show that ran 14 years at the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas beginning in 1943. Langkop died in 2011.



Other former Winter Olympics greats, including Chad Hedrick, Brian Leetch and Tara Lipinski, also have called the Lone Star State home at points in their lives.

So while Texas isn’t known for its snow or ice, Texans still may be in the mix when the 2018 Winter Olympic Games kick off February 9 in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

WORTH REPEATING

“Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom.”

—GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER, a former slave turned botanist who revolutionized agriculture by inventing new uses for such crops as peanuts and soybeans, producing adhesives, bleach, buttermilk, ink, shoe polish, synthetic rubber, pavement and more. February 11 is National Inventors’ Day.



Thursday afternoon. There have been

“The creek is the worst one I ever saw. It rises very suddenly and its channel changes frequently. It is near our house, but out of sight. One day last week it was very rainy and toward evening, Harry Stratton went down on foot to cross the creek but it was too high, so he came in here, and while he was here the rain poured down. Father was over at the schoolhouse, and not before dark Mother felt anxious about him, and as it had started she went down to the creek and just as she got there he came up on the other side but although he was on horseback it was impossible for him to cross, so he turned back. It had stopped raining and the creek had fallen as fast as it had raised.”

—SARAH WILLIAMS, October 12, 1875, courtesy of the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College

A VISION OF HARMONY

GRANT'S COLONY, AN EAST TEXAS FREEDOM COLONY, OFFERED INTEGRATION FOR FORMER SLAVES

The creek rose and fell, like the fortunes of the former slaves who lived in Grant's Colony near Huntsville during and after Reconstruction. In small settlements that sprang up after the Civil War, newly freed blacks made their homes and learned to navigate as free people in what we now call freedom colonies.

Zachary Doleshal of Sam Houston State University didn't intend to study freedom colonies. He first discovered Grant's Colony not as a history professor but as a newcomer to Huntsville. His wife was hired as a math professor at Sam Houston State first, and he set out to explore his new hometown. He traveled down Grant Colony Cemetery Road east of Huntsville and found himself on a gravel road surrounded by forest. At the end of the road, true to its name, he found a cemetery.

“When I saw it, I thought ‘What is this place?’” Doleshal says. His curiosity was piqued, and when he was assigned to teach public history, he knew discovering who Grant was and how he came to have a colony named after him would be a focus.

Freedom colonies developed in varying ways in Texas. Historian Thad Sitton, author of *Freedom Colonies*, says some communities sprang up organically as families looking to escape life on the plantation created homesteads in unincorporated parts of counties throughout the

South. Others were created when philanthropic whites donated, or sometimes opportunistic whites sold, land to the newly freed slaves. Those created by blacks on unincorporated parcels of land often had very little interaction with whites. Grant's Colony was different, however.

It was founded by George Washington Grant, a wealthy, white slaveholder and landowner who had a spiritual awakening after marrying his beloved wife, Mary Jane, a charter member of the First Christian Church in Huntsville, now known as Disciples of Christ. The religious conversion was swift and his conviction deep. He made a fortune in the 1850s ferrying passengers by stagecoach on the two-and-a-half-day journey from Austin to Houston, and he plowed the profits into purchasing more than 11,000 acres of land in Walker and Grimes counties.

The Civil War exposed tensions over the issue of slavery in religious denominations such as the Quakers and the Disciples of Christ. Many members and their churches were strict pacifists and often abolitionists. They believed that the church and nation should be unified under Christ. Through their church, the Grants had ties to a Quaker congregation, called “Friends,” in Ohio. This friendship would prove fortuitous for Grant's Colony.

George Grant had a vision for bringing his newly discovered religious ideals to life. In 1866, he dedicated 6,000 acres around

STORY BY LADAWN FLETCHER
PHOTOS BY JULIA ROBINSON

A logging and gas lease road winds through Sam Houston National Forest near the site of Grant's Colony. New growth has choked the once open site.

GEORGE GRANT HAD A VISION FOR BRINGING HIS NEWLY DISCOVERED RELIGIOUS IDEALS TO LIFE. IN 1866, HE DEDICATED 6,000 ACRES AROUND HARMON CREEK TO CREATE A COMMUNITY.



OVER THE YEARS, HE ADVERTISED PLOTS OF LAND FOR LEASE OR SALE TO ANYONE AND EVERYONE. HE ENVISIONED A COLONY IN WHICH BLACKS AND WHITES LIVED TOGETHER IN HARMONY.

Harmon Creek to create a community. Over the years, he advertised plots of land for lease or sale to anyone and everyone. He envisioned a colony in which blacks and whites lived together in harmony. He called his colony “Harmony Settlement,” and he worked with the Freedmen’s Bureau to make it happen. Freedmen’s agents were almost universally despised in the South, and partnering with them to help create an integrated colony in the 1870s was perceived by almost all as a ludicrous idea. But the newly freed slaves were very interested, even if white citizens were not.

The integration experiment Grant conducted is especially intriguing in light of what was happening in Texas at the time. The late 1870s were particularly treacherous for blacks in Texas. Gains made by blacks in the years immediately after the war were rolled back by Gov. Richard Coke and the Democratic Party, which aligned itself with white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. Violence and intimidation were so pervasive that many black Texans joined freedmen from Louisiana and Mississippi or migrated to Kansas to seek equality and escape Jim Crow, voter disenfranchisement and the Klan.

Grant’s Colony, although certainly not immune to the inequality and terror beyond its borders, did enjoy some protection.

“In many cases, having a white benefactor was enormously helpful to the freedom colonies,” Sitton says. “It gave the community a spokesperson on their behalf to the white citizens.”

In his research, Doleshal found very little unrest in the colony. “Not to downplay the violence that did happen, but Grant’s Colony was a place of peace, more or less,” he says.

Grant donated land to build two churches and a school. The school attracted more than 100 students ranging from ages 6 to 20. With the school built, Grant turned his attention toward securing teachers using his connections with Quaker congregations in Ohio. After the war, Quakers were dispatched to the

HE CALLED HIS COLONY “HARMONY SETTLEMENT,”

South to run schools for newly freed slaves. The Williams family, Edward, Hannah and daughter Sarah, had met Grant before, and he persuaded them to manage the New Harmony School.

The school grew under their tutelage. Dozens of letters written primarily by young Sarah Williams to family still living in Ohio catalogued daily life in the colony over six years. At its peak, in the 1870s and 1880s, more than 400 people called Grant’s Colony home. They grew sorghum, cucumbers, tomatoes and peaches, which they canned or dried and sold. They built the school and all the furnishings for it. The town had a mill, cotton gin and post office.

Grant’s Colony also spawned leaders. It was run by an all-black, 12-person council. The community’s leadership extended beyond the boundaries of the settlement when Richard Williams, a former slave and member of the council, was elected to the Texas Legislature in 1870 and re-elected in 1872. He is mentioned with admiration in the letters Sarah Williams sent home.

For a few decades, the colony thrived. But by the 1900s, it began to falter. Grant died in 1889 with substantial debts. In his will, he asked for the colony to remain intact and only the remain-



ing land sold. The sale of the remaining land was not enough to satisfy his creditors, and, in 1900, all the property was sold. Homesteads remained, including the Grant family's, but by then the school and the post office were gone.

The decline of the colony is chronicled by the headstones in the cemetery. "The 1880s and 1890s tombstones were not elaborate by any stretch, but they were nice. Legible. Clearly professionally made," Doleshal says. "But in the 1910s and 1920s, you see gravestones that are poured with rough concrete and

property deeds from a Walker County Appraisal District map. The students pieced together where the old roads had been. Things took a positive turn when they received a 1936 aerial photograph from the Forest Service.

Walter Kingsborough, archaeologist for the Forest Service, joined the search. Armed with aerial photos and old maps, the students were able to determine where key structures, such as the school, existed. The

Forest Service provided metal detectors, and the group scoured the area for remnants of lives long forgotten. They found a few things but not much.

Artifacts lend context, but they rarely tell the stories—people do. Doleshal still is looking for descendants of the residents of Grant's Colony. His students have managed to find some using genealogical studies, but those who remember hearing about life in the colony have proved elusive.

In the meantime, Doleshal hopes the work he and his students are doing will provide a nuanced picture of Reconstruction in Texas. For blacks, it was an alternately heady and terrifying time to be an American citizen. But buried among those oft-recounted struggles in our nation's history, there are also stories of great courage and imagination.

For Doleshal, Grant stands out in Reconstruction-era Texas, even if he isn't well-known. He is proud to share with others the story of the man who dared to build a community reflective of his faith and the promise of a newly reconciled nation.

LaDawn Fletcher is a Houston-area writer who enjoys writing about Texas.

Opposite: Author LaDawn Fletcher, left, and Sam Houston State University professor Zachary Doleshal visit Grant's Colony Cemetery, which is still used. Above: The cemetery is the final resting place for residents of the freedmen's town.

AND HE WORKED WITH THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.

the name written with fingers."

Around 1910, the bridge over Harmon Creek that connected the two sides of the colony washed away. The school was moved from the property in the 1920s, signaling the end of the community. In the late 1930s, the land was sold to the U.S. Forest Service, and any remaining families left the area. The earth reclaimed what was left of the colony, and the area sat undisturbed for almost 80 years.

In 2016, Doleshal's students stood in the forest outside Huntsville, looking for anything left of Grant's Colony. "All we had to work with at the beginning was the cemetery. That was our starting point. I had students just walking around in the woods. I hate to say it; I told them, 'Just walk around and maybe you'll get lucky,'" he says. "They did not," he adds ruefully.

The class then found an old topographic map, which they matched with

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to see one of Sarah Williams' handwritten letters and text from others.

THURSDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

—
Book tells the largely
unknown story of segregated
African-American high school
football programs in Texas
—

BY MICHAEL HURD



FROM 1920 TO 1970, the Prairie View Interscholastic League served as the governing body for athletic, academic and music competitions for segregated black high schools in Texas. Founded at Prairie View A&M University as the Texas Interscholastic League of Colored Schools, the PVIL mirrored the University Interscholastic League (founded at the University of Texas at Austin), which directed the same activities for the state’s white high schools. From its inception in 1910, the UIL denied membership to African-American schools.

After integration, the two leagues merged in 1967, and the majority of the PVIL’s 500 schools closed. Only eight remain as members of the UIL. White schools played their football games on Friday and Saturday nights; PVIL games were on Wednesday and Thursday nights. Yet the underpublicized PVIL produced a who’s who of high school, college and pro football talent, including Otis Taylor (Houston Worthing High School), Bubba Smith (Beaumont Charlton-Pollard), Jerry LeVias (Beaumont Hebert), Dick “Night Train” Lane (Austin Anderson), “Mean Joe” Greene (Temple Dunbar), Abner Haynes (Dallas Lincoln) and Ken Hous-

ton (Lufkin Dunbar). In Houston, from the 1940s to 1960s, the Jack Yates Lions and Phillis Wheatley Wildcats met on Thanksgiving Day in the largest prep school game in the country, drawing standing-room-only crowds that reached 40,000.

In this excerpt from my book, *Thursday Night Lights* (University of Texas Press, 2017), I write about my motivation for telling the story of black high school football in Texas.

EXCERPT [Jeppesen Stadium in Houston] sat on a 60-acre tract bordered by Holman Street to the north, Cullen Boulevard to the east, Wheeler Avenue to the south, and Scott Street to the west. Scott was a major artery of asphalt potholes connecting the growing black communities from the Third Ward south to Sunnyside. The stadium and its field house were one block east of the all-black high school named after the minister, community leader and former slave, John Henry “Jack” Yates—who was also the first pastor of the first black Baptist church in Houston, Antioch Baptist Church, established in 1866. The crimson-and-gold Jack Yates High School Lions had a perfect home-field advantage



This is most likely the 1909 team from Dallas Colored High School, which played in one of the first games between black high schools in Texas.

and a walking commute to observe competing PVIL teams and even Friday night action.

Alphonse Dotson, a lineman for Yates, talked about those gatherings: “We would go over to Jeppesen and watch the [white] schools play on Friday nights. Hell, we could play with them and play well, hold our own. We would have done well against them, but that they kept us separate was for a different reason. We’d also have some camaraderie with guys from [PVIL schools] across town, might have a fight. But as long as you weren’t courting a girl from somebody else’s neighborhood, you were fine. You wanted to win when you played against them, but you wanted them to do well afterwards.”

The stadium stood as a buffer between the Houston College for Negroes, just getting its start by holding night classes at Yates, to the southwest on Wheeler, and segregated University of Houston, immediately to the northeast on Cullen. By 1947, the College for Negroes had begun developing its own campus, and Wheeler ran through the center of what would become Texas Southern University.

Besides the players and coaches, what I knew about high school football were the Wednesday and Thursday night games I saw at Jeppesen. So I was puzzled the first time I heard the phrase “Friday night lights.” And as I researched this book, I found that I was not alone in that reaction, since most of the former PVIL players and coaches I spoke with around the state agreed the term had little to no meaning for them. Most black high schools in Texas played on nights other than Fridays unless they had their own facility, as only a few did, such as Texarkana Dunbar. Its Buffalo Stadium was located behind Theron Jones Elementary School, and during lunchtime my classmates and I chased one another around the field.

On game nights, I would wander through the gravel-and-red-clay parking lot, look for my parents, and pass visiting players in dirty, sweaty togs kissing their cheerleader girlfriends before boarding buses for the trip home. (I thought that was pretty cool.) White schools had priority for the Friday night use of public stadiums shared with black schools. Asked about Jeppesen Stadium’s use, a stunned former PVIL football player responded as though

the place was the PVIL schools' private domain: "You mean they used that stadium on Friday nights?"

I remember a cold, drizzly December night in 1961 at Jeppesen. I was 12 and sat bundled up next to my dad in the stands as Orsby Crenshaw and the Austin L.C. Anderson Yellow Jackets won a 20-13 contest against Yates for the PVIL Class 4A state championship. Anderson was coached by Raymond Timmons, who that night bested the great Andrew "Pat" Patterson, whose

in his own world around the school track on a hot spring day to whatever groovy tunes were streaming through his transistor radio earplug, and Taylor, back in the 'hood, sitting at the wheel of his brand-new candy-apple-red Thunderbird convertible as the fellas in Reedwood took a break from playing basketball to crowd around and admire the vehicle, which he bought after he signed his rookie contract with the Kansas City Chiefs. Both guys would show up on the big stage. Lattin threw down a monster



1958 PVIL championship team from Livingston Dunbar High School

team had come into the game undefeated. It would be the last of four state titles for the Yellow Jackets, and the only state championship game I ever witnessed.

That was my high school football experience growing up, attending segregated schools in the 1960s.

It had nothing to do with Friday night lights.

More to the point, as one PVIL alum put it, "Friday night lights? That's white folks."

This book is about "black folks" who coached and played high school football behind the veil of segregation in Texas for half a century, 1920–1970, as members of the all-black Prairie View Interscholastic League, whose games were played primarily on Wednesday and Thursday nights in most towns, Tuesdays in others, some on Saturdays, but rarely on prime-time Friday nights, when games for white schools were played. The book's title, *Thursday Night Lights*, is not just a riff on "Friday night lights" but also identifies a defining reality of high school football games played in racially charged times when even the midweek scheduling of games for black teams carried a "less than" feel.

The PVIL's genesis was as the Texas Interscholastic League of Colored Schools, organized three years after white policemen and citizens' mistreatment of black soldiers from the 24th U.S. Infantry led to the horror—17 people shot and killed—of the Camp Logan mutiny and Houston riot of 1917. The league folded in 1970, one year after the University of Texas fielded its last all-white football team.

Emotionally, I have been writing this book since adolescence and the first time I saw PVIL greatness up close and personal in David Lattin and Otis Taylor, Worthing and Sunnyside heroes. I remember a profusely sweating "Big Daddy D" jogging coolly

dunk to set the tone for Texas Western's destruction of Adolph Rupp's Kentucky Wildcats in the 1966 NCAA championship game, an upset for the ages that is credited with ushering in the recruitment of more blacks by previously all-white programs. Taylor, a strong but graceful receiver, was among the cadre of players from historically black colleges who helped bring the American Football League to life. In Super Bowl IV, Taylor, a prototypical big, fast receiver, caught a short pass from Len Dawson, broke tackles by cornerback Earsell Mackbee and safety Karl Kassulke, and high-stepped down the right sideline to the end zone, securing the Chiefs' 23-7 upset win over Minnesota.

Lattin and Taylor were local heroes, and I followed their careers, but I had a vested interest in following other PVIL football players from the Houston area, too, as a fan and then as a sportswriter. I read team depth charts and player bios, noted high school affiliations, and had flashbacks of sitting in the stands at Jeppesen while watching some of those teams play. *Thursday Night Lights* reveals the PVIL quilt that was a patchwork of athletic, academic and social achievements pieced together for a black community striving to succeed, to take care of its own despite the era's racism. For me, its history became a simmering narrative bred in familiarity, born from segregation.

I had to tell this story.

Michael Hurd is director of the Texas Institute for the Preservation of History and Culture at Prairie View A&M University. He is a Houston native and former sportswriter for the *Austin American-Statesman*, *USA Today* and Yahoo Sports.

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to find resources to learn more about the PVIL.

Steel of Approval

At \$49, this blade of Damascus steel is a real steal

Damascus steel is legendary. Tales of its unmatched strength, sharpness and durability ring through the ages. There are stories of gun rifles being sliced in two by Damascus steel swords and individual strands of hair being sliced in half, even if they gently floated down on to the edge of the blade.

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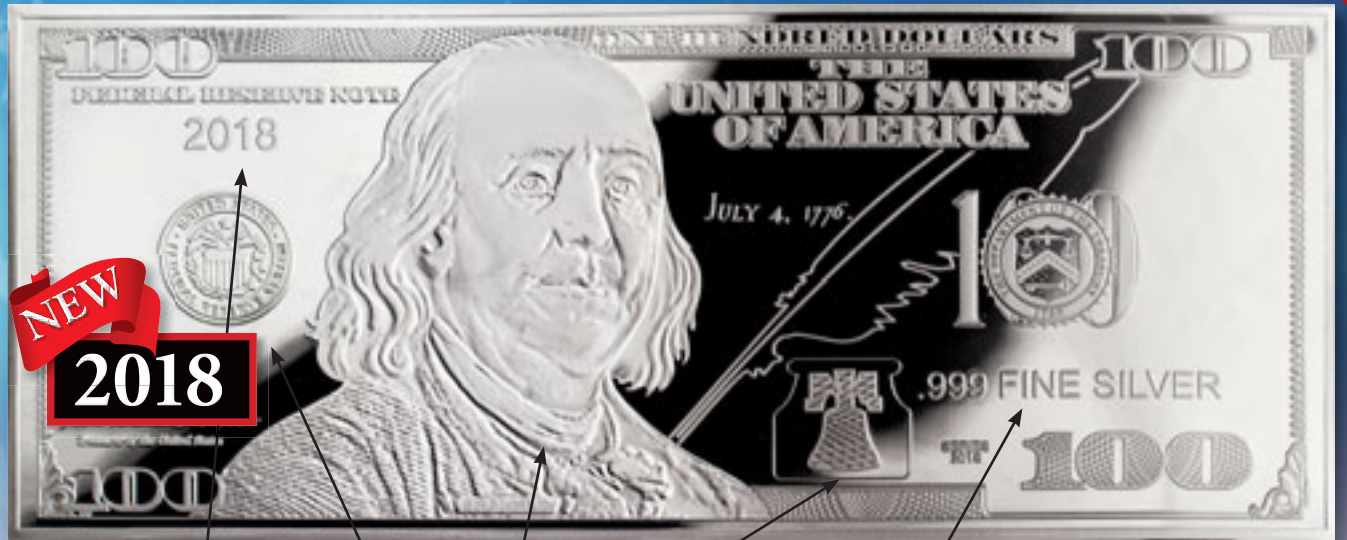
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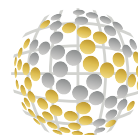
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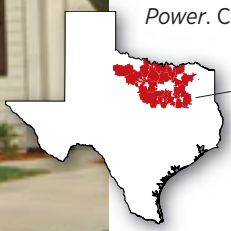
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MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER 2018 Rate Change

— John W. Herrera

Recently, a letter was sent to all Magic Valley members regarding a rate increase that will go into effect March 1, 2018. This is our first rate increase since 2006, and I'd like to expand on why we had to adjust our rates.


In 2017, Magic Valley conducted a cost of service study to analyze our current rates, which were established in 2011. The results of the study were finalized in the fall of 2017 and, based on the findings, MVEC's Board of Directors voted to implement a rate increase for 2018. The rate increase will affect each rate class differently. For example, our residential members will see their monthly customer charge increase from \$20.00 to \$23.25; however, the energy charge rate of \$.087696 per kWh will remain the same. The customer charge is a monthly charge that the Cooperative uses to cover our monthly fixed costs like vehicle maintenance, billing, cost of maintaining equipment such as poles, wires, transformers, etc. The energy charge rate is the cost of energy to MVEC from South Texas Electric Cooperatives (STEC), our generation and transmission provider. Commercial members, based on what rate class they are currently in, will see an increase on either their monthly customer charge or their demand charge.

As your trusted electric cooperative, our primary goal is to minimize the effects of rate increases, while maintaining cost-effective, reliable energy service that you can count on. Today, more than ever, we rely on electricity in our daily lives to accomplish many tasks. From the mobile devices that we use on a daily basis to the production of goods across our Nation, electricity is something that we expect to have access to everyday. Although the costs of many goods and services have gone up over the past few years, MVEC has worked diligently to ensure that your monthly energy bill is still affordable. As I mentioned earlier, we have not had a rate increase since 2006. Our last rate adjustment was in 2011 and resulted in a rate decrease for our members. This goes to show the commitment that Magic Valley's Board of Directors and employees have towards our members.

The last point I'd like to make regarding the rate increase is simply that you can rest assured your Cooperative has not entered this matter lightly. It took due diligence on behalf of the Board of Directors and all the employees of Magic Valley Electric Cooperative to hold off on a rate increase for over 11 years. We continue to keep our rates low while keeping our members' best interest in mind. We can continuously do this because of our successful business model.

Magic Valley is not driven to create profits or dividends for our stock holders. The cooperative was formed out of a need to serve those individuals who were not profitable for the big companies to serve. As such, one of the attributes of any cooperative is that they are formed and managed with only one thought in mind: the members. It is for you that we work so hard, and it is for you that we continue to exist.

We're here to help and to deliver the affordable and reliable power you've come to know and expect.


John W. Herrera
General Manager

Magic Valley Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 267
1 3/4 Mi. W. Hwy 83
Mercedes, TX 78570

GENERAL MANAGER

John W. Herrera

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RECIPE OF THE MONTH

TEXAS MESQUITE CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Recipe by: Ariella Gorena published in Mesquite Country Cookbook



They say everything is BIG in Texas! And our idea of a chocolate chip cookie is a BIG Hershey's Kiss!

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 stick butter softened
- 1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1/4 granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons wheat germ
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 egg
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup plus 1 teaspoon all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup Cappadona Ranch Mesquite Bean Flour*
- 1 cup pecans halves or chunks
- 2 cups Hershey's Kisses, with or without almonds

* You may purchase it at cappadonaranch.com or, if you prefer, you may substitute this item of the recipe for 1 cup all-purpose flour.

DIRECTIONS: Combine butter and next four ingredients in a bowl. Mix with a wooden spoon until creamy. Add vanilla, egg, and baking soda and blend until smooth. Mix the flours until smooth. Add pecans and kisses. Cover and chill for a minimum of two hours. Use two heaping tablespoons dough to make one cookie. (I make sure each cookie has at least 3 Hershey kisses and 2 pecan halves.) Place uncooked cookies onto foil lined baking sheets, 4 to 6 cookies per sheet. (Instead of foil I use parchment paper.) Bake at 350° for 10 to 15 minutes. Cool slightly on pan. Enjoy!

PORTIONS: 12 to 18 cookies Note: Doubling this recipe is not recommended.



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Thelma Garza, tggarza@unitedwayofsobx.org
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"211"

2016-2017 Results



3,818
Families Served



\$3,793,163
Earned Income
Credits Refunded



\$7,566,431
Total Refunds

STAYCATION: BROWNSVILLE SHIP CHANNEL CRUISE

Story by: Eileen Mattei
Photos by: John Faulk

As the largest ship-breaking site in the U.S., the Port of Brownsville provides wondrous views of the mind-bogglingly-large aircraft carriers Constellation and Independence being dismantled. Add in the towering marine oil rigs at AmFELS and the shrimp fleet also on the Brownsville Ship Channel, and you've got enough reasons to hop onboard a Ship Channel cruise.

Get it over with: Stand in bow of the ship, spread your arms wide and feel like the star of 'Titanic.' Then relax on a carefree four-hour voyage and watch dolphins jump out of the water at Brazos Pass. Construction of a natural gas pipeline to Mexico is visibly underway on Brazos Island south of South Padre. We spot barges ferrying six diesel-carrying tanker trucks at a time to the machinery building the pipeline.

Ibis, roseate spoonbills and assorted herons rest on tiny spoil islands that barely break the surface. From the Laguna Madre, our boat moves into the 200-foot wide Ship Channel and Gulf Intracoastal Waterway heading for the turning basin 15 miles ahead. Cormorants and pelicans bob on the water and dive into action as a bait shrimper chugs past pulling a net. Shorebirds stalk the mudflats and

shallows for food. Yucca and prickly pear add color to the west bank. Behind them, cars zip past on Highway 48.

A shrimp trawler hung with nets motors past us. We cruisers quickly develop an eye for barges-- barges that ride high out of the water are empty, while those sitting low in the water mean a full cargo.

A tour's first stop in the Port's 40,000 acres is often inside the Shrimp Basin, which 40 years ago was home to America's largest shrimp fleet—over 400 boats. Today about 100 trawlers call this port home, although most are out in the Gulf during the winter.

At the first of the four ship recycling yards, red sparks from cutting torches show us where crews are cutting the heavy metal of a former Navy ship into slabs. Since 2014, five aircraft carriers have arrived at the port to be recycled, along with several cargo ships. The once-proud Saratoga and the Independence are currently being broken into scrap metal. First the interior fixtures and walls are removed. Then the metal is cut free, starting at the top working down to the water line. A crane lifts the metal to shore where it is cut into smaller pieces and placed on barges to go to a steel mill for recycling.

“On one hand, it’s amazing that a hunk of steel this massive can be recycled for a new generation. But I think about all the sailors who climbed up and down those ladders. What were their jobs on board? What were their stories?”

At AmFELS, marine oil rigs tower overhead. A semi-submersible floating oil rig is being repaired while a jack-up rig is under construction. The jungle of crisscrossing metal studs resembles an old-fashioned erector set, complete with helicopter pad. It’s hard to believe these rigs are floated out to Gulf drilling sites.

A trim tug boat (home port New Orleans) pushes two barges. The yeasty smell of grain sorghum reaches us as we near the grain elevators. Close by, mountains of caliche are used for the new pipeline.

When we pull near another aircraft carrier, the smell of hot, scorched metal drifts down to us. Again we see sparks as the cutting torches break up the ship. Retired Navy Chief Anita Westervelt describes our trip past the hulks as simultaneously exciting and heartbreaking. “On one hand, it’s amazing that a hunk of steel this massive can be recycled for a new generation. But I think about all the sailors who climbed up and down those ladders. What were their jobs on board? What were their stories?”

Bonnie Adams, who has been on four different Brownsville Ship Channel tours, says she likes getting



different perspectives. “You never know what you’ll see. It changes all the time.” Some ship Channel cruises go out to the jetties, while others go through the swing bridge at Long Island. Some tours pride themselves on interesting, accurate tour guides, and others have more shrimp. I’ve most enjoyed my cruises on the Osprey and Double Sunshine.

For more information, see ospreycruises.com and for the Double Sunshine see the originaldolphinwatch.net.



A MESQUITE TREAT

Beans from the ubiquitous Texas trees surprise with flavor and nutrition

Story by: Eileen Mattei

Photos by: John Faulk

A tantalizing aroma floats through Victoria Cappadona's kitchen, where mesquite bean pods are simmering. She offers me a taste of the warm Cappadona Ranch mesquite jelly she creates from an infusion of mesquite pods mixed with lemon, sugar and pectin. The silky, amber jelly melts on my tongue and makes me want to eat it by the spoonful. Imagine honey collected from hives in a sun-drenched grove of flowering mesquites.

When city girl Victoria Barrera from McAllen married into a Hidalgo County ranching family (members of Magic Valley Electric Cooperative), she asked her father-in-law about uses for all the mesquite beans. Fred Cappadona told her that cattle and wildlife eat them. Years ago, he explained, he heard stories about Native Americans and early settlers making flour from the pods and medicinal remedies from the tree's leaves, sap and bark.

In 2012, while researching traditional uses of mesquite, Victoria Cappadona found that mesquite concoctions, lotions and teas had long been used for fevers, burns, wounds, headaches, eye inflammations and digestive problems. The potential use of mesquite beans in recipes captured her attention.

"Who would have thought mesquite would be so amazing a food? The shell is what has the natural sugar and flavor of the mesquite," she explains. "The natural fructose means it doesn't initially require insulin to break it down. And since it takes hours to metabolize, you don't get sugar spikes."

Nutritional studies have revealed that mesquite beans have a low glycemic index and are high in fiber, calcium and iron.

Victoria Cappadona perfected a mesquite bean jelly recipe and made jars for family and friends. As demand soared, she developed another mesquite jelly with chile pequin that balances sweet and hot. She designed the Cappadona Ranch Mesquite Bean Jelly logo and began selling both varieties at livestock shows, festivals and online.

"Many older people say, 'Oh, my gosh, that jelly reminds me of when I was a kid chewing on a mesquite bean,' " said Cappadona's husband, Justin. And her father, a retired physician, recalled eating mesquite pods as candy. That's no surprise, since the pods' sugar content can reach 30 percent.

During June and July, the Cappadonas and their three sons—Cayetano, 15; Federico, 13; and Vicente, 10—harvest mesquite beans on the 2,500-acre ranch. "A good mesquite looks like a Christmas tree covered in golden pods," she said. Justin Cappadona drives the front-end loader fitted with a railed platform where the boys stand and harvest the beans. In 2016, they picked enough to fill sixteen 55-gallon drums. That supplies enough for all the flour, tea, coffee and jelly they produce in a year. About 2 pounds of beans can be simmered into enough jelly for more than 100 eight-ounce jars.

"The kids are learning responsibility and the value

of a dollar,” Victoria Cappadona said. “We have a limited window for picking, so when there is work to be done, they need to help out. When they are involved, they appreciate the results more.”

Victoria Cappadona sun-dries the pods and stores them to make jelly year-round. “Heaven knows we have enough mesquite trees to do that.” Previously, even after doubling production every year, she ran out of jelly before Christmas. She has moved the operation to a commercial kitchen in McAllen to accommodate growth.

The website, cappadonaranch.com, offers Victoria’s video recipes, including mesquite flour pancakes. “The nut-flavored flour, ground from the whole bean, is great for baking and gluten-free,” she said. “You replace one cup of wheat flour with one-quarter to one-half cup of mesquite flour. The pancakes taste so nutty and sweet, they don’t need syrup.”

An accident led to another tasty product. “The boys were squabbling, a delivery man was at the door and beans were drying in the oven. When I got back to the beans, they were roasted,” Victoria Cappadona said. Recalling a story that Civil War soldiers made camp coffee from roasted mesquite beans, she decided to grind the pods in a coffee grinder and brew them. The result was a savory, high-protein coffee substitute. She also ground roasted mesquite seeds for tea. “With their natural sugar, the tea and coffee provide an energy rush without caffeine.



“We suspected mesquite’s nutritional value was remarkable, but we wanted proof—and got it,” she said, thanks to a McAllen Chamber of Commerce Innovation Grant. It enabled Cappadona Ranch to order nutritional studies that cost \$1,000 per product. A USDA Value-Added Producer Grant helped buy ingredients and packaging. The brand participates in the Texas Department of Agriculture’s Go Texan program, which promotes the state’s products.

While cattlemen might have a love-hate relationship with the mesquite tree itself, Cappadona Ranch has transformed the tree’s beans into delectable native Texan foods.

For more information about Cappadona Ranch you can visit cappadonaranch.com



Photos courtesy of the McAllen Military Academy



MENSAJE DEL DIRECTOR GENERAL

Ajuste de Tarifa 2018

— John W. Herrera

Recientemente, enviamos una carta a todos los miembros de Magic Valley con información sobre el aumento de tarifas que se implementará a partir del 1 de marzo, 2018. Este es el primer aumento a nuestras tarifas desde 2006 y me gustaría explicar por qué tuvimos que ajustarlas.


En 2017, Magic Valley realizó un estudio del costo de servicio; los resultados fueron presentados en el otoño de 2017. Con base en las conclusiones y las recomendaciones de la empresa consultora, la Junta Directiva votó a favor de ajustar las tarifas en 2018. El aumento afectará de manera diferente cada clase de tarifa. Por ejemplo, los miembros residenciales verán el cargo mensual al cliente en su factura aumentar de \$20.00 a \$23.25; sin embargo, la tarifa por el cargo de energía de \$.087696 por kWh seguirá siendo la misma. El cargo al cliente es un cobro mensual fijo para cubrir los gastos operativos como el mantenimiento de los vehículos, facturación, costo del mantenimiento del equipo como postes, alambrado, transformadores, etc. La tarifa por el cargo de energía es el costo de la energía para MVEC de South Texas Electric Cooperativa (STEC), nuestro proveedor de generación y transmisión. Los miembros comerciales, dependiendo en qué tipo de tarifa que se encuentran actualmente, verán un aumento en el cargo mensual o en el cargo de demanda.

Como tu cooperativa eléctrica de confianza, nuestro principal objetivo es minimizar los efectos del aumento de tarifas y mantener un costo efectivo y energía confiable y accesible en la que puedas confiar. Hoy, más que nunca, dependemos mucho de la electricidad para hacer cosas de nuestra vida cotidiana. Desde los celulares que utilizamos diariamente, hasta la producción de los bienes en nuestra nación, la electricidad se ha convertido en algo a lo que esperamos tener acceso diariamente. Aunque el costo de muchos productos y servicios ha aumentado en los años recientes, MVEC ha trabajado diligentemente para asegurarse de que las facturas mensuales de energía eléctrica sigan siendo accesibles. Como mencioné anteriormente, no hemos tenido un aumento de tarifa desde 2006. El último ajuste fue en 2011 y fue una reducción a la tarifa, lo que demuestra el compromiso de la Junta Directiva y los empleados de Magic Valley tiene con sus miembros.

El último punto que quiero tratar con relación al aumento de tarifa es simplemente que puedes estar seguro de que tu cooperativa no se tomó este asunto a la ligera. La Junta Directiva y todos los y las empleadas de Magic Valley tomamos las medidas necesarias para mantener estables las tarifas para más de 11 años. Continuaremos conservando nuestros precios accesibles y lo haremos siempre pensando en los intereses de nuestros miembros. Podemos hacer esto gracias a nuestro exitoso modelo de negocio.

Magic Valley es una organización sin fines de lucro que es propiedad de sus miembros y controlada por ellos mismos. La cooperativa fue formada por la necesidad para servir a aquellos individuos que las grandes empresas eléctricas no pudieron servir porque no era negocio. Por eso, una de las características de cualquier cooperativa que se forma es tener un solo pensamiento en mente: las y los miembros. Es por ti que trabajamos duro y es por ti que seguimos existiendo.

Estamos aquí para ayudarte y brindarte la energía confiable y accesible que has llegado a esperar de tu cooperativa.


John W. Herrera
 Director General

Magic Valley Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 267
 1 3/4 Mi. W. Hwy 83
 Mercedes, TX 78570

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John W. Herrera

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RECETA DEL MES

GALLETAS TEXANAS DE MEZQUITE CON CHISPAS DE CHOCOLATE

Receta de: Ariella Gorena publicada en el libro Mesquite Country Cookbook



Se dice que todo es grande en Texas y nuestra idea de galleta de chocolate de Hershey's Kisses es así de grande.

INGREDIENTES:

- 1 stick butter softened
- 1 barra de mantequilla suavizada
- ½ taza de azúcar morena
- ¼ de azúcar granulada
- 2 cucharadas de germen de trigo
- ¼ cucharadita de sal
- 1 cucharadita de vainilla
- 1 huevo
- ½ cucharadita de bicarbonato
- ½ taza más 1 cucharadita de harina regular
- ½ taza de harina de marca Cappadona
- Ranch Mesquite Bean Flour*
- 1 taza de mitades o trozos de nuez
- 2 tazas de Hershey's Kisses de chocolate con o sin almendras

*Se puede comprar en cappadonaranch.com o, si lo prefieres, puedes sustituir este ingrediente de la receta por 1 taza de harina regular.

INSTRUCCIONES: Combina la mantequilla y los siguientes cuatro ingredientes en un recipiente. Mezcla los ingredientes con una cuchara de madera hasta que quede cremoso. Añade la vainilla, el huevo y el bicarbonato y bate hasta obtener una mezcla uniforme. Mezcla las harinas hasta integrarlas. Agrega la nuez y los chocolates kisses.

Cúbrela y enfríala por un mínimo de dos horas. Utiliza dos cucharadas copeteadas de masa para cada galleta. (Asegúrate de que cada galleta tenga por lo menos 3 chocolates Kisses de Hershey y 2 mitades de nuez.) Coloca las galletas crudas en charolas para hornear forradas de papel aluminio, de 4 a 6 galletas por charola. (En lugar de papel aluminio a mí me gusta utilizar el papel para hornear, que también se conoce como pergamino o encerado.) Hornear a 350° durante 10 a 15 minutos. Deja que se enfríen un poco en la charola de hornear. ¡Disfrútalas!

PORCIONES: 12 a 18 galletas. Nota: No se recomienda duplicar las porciones de esta receta.

CALENDARIO DE EVENTOS



FELIZ DIA DE SAN VALENTIN

FEBRERO 14

ALEXIMAGE | ISTOCK.COM



FELIZ DIA DEL PRESIDENTE

FEBRERO 19

RIVERNORTH PHOTOGRAPHY | ISTOCK.COM

PASEO EN BARCO POR EL CANAL DEL PUERTO DE BROWNSVILLE

Historia por: Eileen Mattei
Fotografías por: John Faulk

El Puerto de Brownsville es el más grande deshuesadero de barcos en Estados Unidos y también ofrece maravillosas vistas de los magníficos portaaviones Constellation e Independence que están siendo desmantelados. Si le agregas la vista de las grandiosas plataformas petroleras de la empresa AmFELS y las lanchas camaroneras, tendrás suficientes motivos para subirte al barco para un crucero por el canal.

Cae en la tentación: párate en la proa del barco, extiende los brazos y siéntete como la estrella de la película "Titanic". Después relájate y disfruta el viaje de cuatro horas, donde podrás ver delfines saltar del agua en Brazos Pass. La construcción del ducto de gas natural hacia México es visible en la isla de Brazos, al sur de la Isla de Padre. Pudimos ver barcazas que llevaban seis camiones con pipas de diesel que se dirigían hacia la maquinaria de construcción del ducto.

Las aves ibis, espátulas rosadas y diversas garzas descansan sobre diminutas islas que apenas se pueden apreciar. De la Laguna Madre, nuestro barco entra al canal de navegación de 200 pies de ancho y al Gulf Intercoastal y se dirige hacia la cuenca, a 15 millas de distancia. Los cormoranes y pelícanos planean sobre el agua y se lanzan en picada cuando un barco camaronero pasa, remolcando una red de pesca. Las aves playeras acechan el llano y el lodazal para buscar comida. Las yucas y nopales le dan color a la rívera. A lo lejos, también se pueden observar los coches transitar por la Carretera 48.

Un barco camaronero con las redes colgando nos rebasa. Los turistas rápidamente desarrollamos un ojo para las barcazas – las que navegan altas en el agua van vacías mientras que las que van hundidas en el agua llevan carga completa.

La primera parada en el puerto de 40,000 acres es, frecuentemente, la cuenca camaronera, que hace 40 años albergaba la más grande flota camaronera de Estados Unidos, con más de 400 embarcaciones. Hoy en día, este puerto tiene alrededor de 100 barcos, aunque, durante el invierno, la mayoría se encuentra en el golfo.

En el primero de los cuatro deshuesaderos de barcos, las chispas de los sopletes de corte nos muestran donde los equipos de trabajadores están cortando en pedazos el pesado metal del antiguo barco de la

Marina de Guerra (Navy). Desde el 2014, cinco barcos han llegado al puerto para ser reciclados al igual que varias embarcaciones de carga. Los magníficos barcos Saragota e Independence están siendo convertidos en chatarra. Lo primero que se hace es quitar todas las partes del interior del barco, incluyendo las paredes. Después de terminar con el interior, se empieza con la parte superior del barco hasta llegar a la línea donde empieza el agua. Después, una grúa transporta el metal restante a la costa, donde terminan por fraccionarlo en pequeños trozos y se transporta en barcazas a una trituradora de acero, para su reciclaje.

“Por un lado, es increíble ver cómo un pedazo de acero masivo puede ser reciclado para dar vida a nueva generaciones de barcos, pero también pienso en todos los marineros que subieron y bajaron por las escaleras de esos barcos. ¿Cuál sería su trabajo a bordo? ¿Cuáles serían sus historias?”

En AmFELS, podrás observar las torres de las plataformas petroleras. Hay una plataforma flotante, semi-sumergible de perforación petrolera que está siendo reparada, mientras que una plataforma hidráulica está en construcción. Toda esta vista me recuerda un juego completo de construcción para niños, hasta con su helipuerto. Es difícil creer que todos estos equipos se transportan flotando para hacer perforaciones en el golfo.

Un barco remolcador (de Nuevo Orleans) va estirando dos barcasas. En cuanto nos acercamos a las plantas procesadoras de granos, podemos apreciar el olor a sorgo. Cerca, podemos también ver cerros de caliche que son utilizados para la construcción del oleoducto.

Cuando nos acercamos hacia otro portaaviones, el olor a metal caliente desciende sobre nosotros. De nuevo podemos apreciar las chispas de los sopletes de corte que perforan el metal de los barcos. Una turista, Anita Westervelt, que fue jefa de la marina y ya está jubilada, describe este viaje como algo simultáneamente emocionante y doloroso. “Por un lado, es increíble ver cómo un pedazo de acero masivo puede ser reciclado para dar vida a nueva generaciones de barcos, pero también pienso en todos los marineros que subieron y bajaron por las escaleras de esos barcos. ¿Cuál sería su trabajo a bordo? ¿Cuáles serían sus historias?”

Bonnie Adams, quien ha ido en cuatro cruceros por el Puerto de Brownsville, dice que a ella le gusta observar diferentes perspectivas. “Nunca sabes lo que vas a ver; siempre ves algo diferente.” Algunos de los paseos en barco llegan hasta el embarcadero y en otras ocasiones van por el puente colgante de Long Island en Puerto Isabel. Algunos de los negocios de tours se enorgullecen de ser interesantes y tener guías turistas expertos y en otros puede haber muchos camarones. Los tours que he disfrutado más son el Osprey y el Double Sunshine.

Para obtener mas información, visita ospreycrusises.com y para el Double Sunshine visita originaldolphinwatch.net.



UN DULCE GUSTO DE MEZQUITE

Las semillas de estos árboles texanos nos sorprenden con sabor y nutrición

Historia por: Eileen Mattei
Fotografías por: John Faulk

Un tentador aroma flota en la cocina de Victoria Cappadona, donde vainas de mezquite se cuecen lentamente. Ella me ofrece una probadita de mermelada tibia de Cappadona Ranchmezquite que ella hace al combinar vainas de mezquite con limón, azúcar y pectina. La suave mermelada ámbar se deshace en mi

boca y me dan ganas de comerla a cucharadas. Imagínate la miel recolectada de colmenas en un mezquital floreciente, bañado por el sol.

Cuando Victoria Barrera, una chica de la ciudad de McAllen se casó y formó parte de una familia ranchera en el Condado de Hidalgo (miembros de Magic Valley Electric Cooperative), ella le preguntó a su suegro sobre el uso de las semillas de mezquite. Fred Cappadona le dijo que el ganado y los animales silvestres la usan para comer. Hace muchos años, le explicó, escuchó historias sobre como los nativos americanos y los primeros colonizadores de América hacían harina de las vainas y remedios medicinales de las hojas de árbol.

En 2012, mientras investigaba sobre los usos tradicionales del árbol de mezquite, Victoria Cappadona descubrió que preparaciones de mezquite son utilizadas en lociones y tés y también se habían usado durante mucho tiempo para fiebres, quemaduras, heridas, dolores de cabeza, inflamaciones del ojo y problemas digestivos. El uso potencial de los granos de mezquite en recetas capturó su atención.

"¿Quién hubiera pensado que el mezquite sería tan

extraordinario en una comida? La vaina es la que contiene el azúcar natural y el sabor del mezquite." Victoria explica como "La fructosa natural significa que el cuerpo no necesita insulina para procesarla. Y puesto que se tarda horas en metabolizarse, no provoca picos de azúcar (sugar rush)." Los estudios nutricionales han revelado que los granos de mezquite tienen un bajo índice glucémico y son altos en fibra, hierro y calcio.

Victoria Cappadona perfeccionó la receta de mermelada de vainas de mezquite y preparó frascos para familiares y amigos. Cuando la demanda aumentó, ella creó otra receta de mermelada con chile piquín, que equilibra lo dulce y lo picante. Ella diseñó el logotipo de la mermelada del Rancho Cappadona y empezó vendido las variedades de la mermelada en las ferias de ganado (livestock shows), festivales y en línea.

"Muchas personas mayores dicen, 'ay, Dios mío, esta mermelada me recuerda mi niñez, cuando masticaba las semillas de mezquite,'" dice Justin Cappadona, esposo de Victoria. Y su padre, un médico jubilado, recuerda comer las vainas de mezquite como si fueran dulces. Esto no es ninguna sorpresa, ya que las vainas pueden tener hasta un 30 por ciento de azúcar.

Durante los meses de junio y julio, la familia Cappadona junto con sus tres hijos: Cayetano de 15, Federico de 13 y Vicente de 10, pizcan las vainas de mezquite en su rancho de 2,500 acres. "Un buen mezquite parece un árbol de Navidad cubierto de vainas doradas," dijo Victoria. Justin Cappadona

maneja el cargador delantero del tractor equipado con una plataforma de rejas donde los muchachos pueden ir parados pizcando las vainas. En el 2016, pizcaron lo suficiente para llenar dieciséis tanques de 55 galones. Todo esto proporciona lo suficiente para hacer toda la harina, té, café y mermelada que producen en un año. Alrededor de 2 libras de vainas pueden hervirse para hacer suficiente mermelada para más de 100 frascos de ocho onzas.

"Mis hijos están aprendiendo responsabilidad y el valor del dinero," dijo Victoria Cappadona. "Tenemos una ventana limitada de tiempo para pizcar, así que cuando hay trabajo, necesitan ayudarnos. Cuando se involucran, aprecian más los resultados."

Victoria Cappadona seca las vainas al sol y las almacena para hacer mermelada durante todo el año. "Dios sabe que tenemos suficientes mezquites para hacerlo." Antes, incluso después de duplicar la producción

de cada año, se nos acabó la mermelada antes de Navidad. Ella ha trasladado la operación a una cocina comercial en McAllen para adaptarse al crecimiento.

El sitio web cappadonaranch.com ofrece videos de las recetas de Victoria, incluso cómo hacer pancakes de mezquite. "La harina que se hace al moler las vainas tiene sabor a nuez y es ideal para hornear y no contiene gluten," dijo Victoria. "Puedes sustituir una taza de harina de trigo por $\frac{1}{4}$ o $\frac{1}{2}$ de taza de harina de mezquite. Los pancakes son dulces y saben tanto a nuez que no necesitas ponerles miel."

Un accidente nos llevó a descubrir otro sabroso producto. "Los chicos estaban peleando, un mensajero estaba llamando a la puerta y las semillas de mezquite estaban en el horno. Cuando regresé, las semillas se habían



tostado," dice Victoria Cappadona. Al recordar la historia de que los soldados de la Guerra Civil hacían café de campo con semillas tostadas de mezquite, ella decidió moler las semillas en un molino de café y poner el polvo a hervir. El resultado fue un sabroso sustituto del café, rico en proteína. Ella también molió semillas de mezquite asadas para el té. "Con su azúcar natural, el té y el café proporcionan un empuje de energía sin cafeína."

"Nosotros sospechábamos que el valor nutricional del mezquite era notable, pero queríamos la prueba... y la conseguimos", dijo ella, "gracias a una subvención para la innovación de la Cámara de Comercio de McAllen. Este apoyo permitió al Cappadona Ranch ordenar estudios nutricionales que cuestan \$1,000 por producto." Otra subvención para productores con valor agregado del USDA ayudó a comprar ingredientes y envases. La marca participa en el programa "Go Texan" del Departamento de Agricultura de Texas," que promueve los productos del estado.

Aunque los ganaderos pueden tener una relación de amor-odio con el mezquite, el Rancho Cappadona ha transformado las semillas del árbol en deliciosas comidas nativas texanas.



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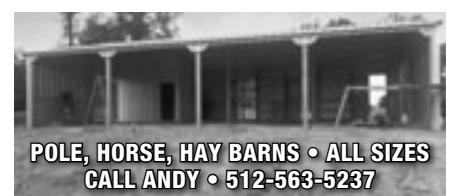
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The Rope Walker of Corsicana

Unraveling the mystery of a one-legged tightrope performer

BY GENE FOWLER

A CURIOUS GRAVE SITE IN THE CORSICANA Hebrew Cemetery has puzzled historians and fueled local lore for more than a century. A fragmented narrative and the words “Rope Walker 1884” chiseled on the headstone provide the only information about these mortal remains. However, the mystery at long last may have been unraveled.

The story tells that a traveling, one-legged tightrope walker came to town in 1884. One account has the rope walker hired by Meyers & Henning Dry Goods Emporium, which conducted business under the motto, “The Biggest Shovels to the Biggest Bodices, We Have It.”

However he came to Corsicana, the aerial ambulator wore a peg leg with a notch on the bottom to help him balance. Legend suggests that he had a heavy iron stove tied to his back when he ascended to the rope stretched across Beaton Street, the town’s main business thoroughfare.

“He had a long bar in his hand to help balance himself,” according to an account preserved in *The Perpetual Record Book of the Jewish Cemetery, Corsicana*. “When about halfway across he lost his balance and fell to the street from a 2-story height. He was badly crushed by the weight of the stove on his back.”

The injured performer was carried to a nearby hotel, where Dr. J.W. Gulick attended to him. When the man declared his Methodist faith, the evangelist Abe Mulkey was summoned. But when the rope walker sensed he was near death, he announced that he actually was Jewish. With no rabbi in town, a Jewish merchant was summoned and heard the funambulist’s recitation of a Hebrew prayer.

No one could persuade the dying man to state his name or whether he had any family. He remained an enigma even as he was lowered into his place of final rest. A 1936 article in the *Corsicana Daily*



Sun repeated these details, as related by Rachel Mae London, daughter of the late Max London, keeper of *The Perpetual Record Book*. Rachel Mae had witnessed the tragedy as a girl.

Frank X. Tolbert, author of the *Dallas Morning News’ Tolbert’s Texas* column, investigated the rope walker’s saga in 1958. Ten years later, Tolbert ran into artist and author Tom Lea in El Paso. Lea told the columnist that he had come across an account of a one-legged tightrope walker billed as “The Great Professor Berg” in a late 1870s Mesilla, New Mexico, newspaper story. Lea immortalized the professor in his 1952 novel *The Wonderful Country*.

A 1998 *Corsicana Daily Sun* report figured that Tolbert and Lea had cracked the case. Then came the internet. Massachusetts genealogist Jim Yarin ran across the rope walker story while researching a Corsicana family, and through digital diving in vintage newspaper databases, he unearthed two names for a one-legged funambulist who toured the U.S. from 1868 to 1883, Professor Daniel De Houne and Professor Moses Berg.

A 1969 Pittsburgh paper Yarin found confirmed that Berg was the funambulist’s

real name and that De Houne was a showbiz alias. An 1873 article in the *New York Evening Telegram* stated that, just before the Civil War, De Houne immigrated to Texas from Berlin, where he had performed for 13 years with a circus. Fighting for the Kansas 7th Cavalry in the Civil War, he lost his leg at the Battle of Middleburg in 1862. To support his wife and six children back in Texas, he took his showbiz stunts on the road, swallowing swords, swinging on a trapeze and dancing with a table balanced on his teeth.

Appearing in Fort Worth a month before his fatal fall in Corsicana, Professor De Houne ballyhooed that he would even cook pancakes on the stove while walking on the rope.

Not all Corsicanans accept Yarin’s evidence. Babbette Samuels, who took on the responsibility of caretaking the Jewish cemetery with her husband in the 1990s, says, “Logically, a Jewish husband and father’s dying words would mention his family, especially since he was risking his life to support his family. For 133 years, no family member has shown up to claim him.”

Gene Fowler is an Austin writer who specializes in Texas history and music.

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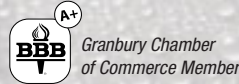


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Peanut Butter + Chocolate: A Love Story

LONG BEFORE A SUCCESSFUL AD campaign launched a candy's fame with the line "two great tastes that taste great together," the perfect union of chocolate and peanut butter was a force to be reckoned with. Each flavor enhances the other's best qualities: salty, nutty peanuts anchor and elevate chocolate's silky texture and sweetness. So, for this month of valentine giving, we share your best peanut butter and chocolate recipes. In the following recipe, chunky peanut butter provides a great crunch, and brown sugar adds a delicious butterscotch flavor.

PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR

Peanut Butter Chocolate Chunk Cookies

- 1/4 cups flour
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup chunky peanut butter, at room temperature
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 egg, at room temperature
- 1 tablespoon whole milk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup peanut butter chips
- 1/2 cup bittersweet chocolate chunks
- 1 tablespoon sprinkling sugar

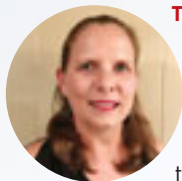
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt.
3. In another large bowl, beat the butter and peanut butter together until fluffy. Add the white and brown sugars

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

MELISSA BRISKO

Recipes

Peanut Butter + Chocolate: A Love Story



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

SANDRA NICHOLS | GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

This recipe hails from Nichols' 89-year-old Aunt Delta. "Growing up, she always had good sweets to eat at her house. I think of her when I make these," Nichols says. Topped with chocolate and peanut butter, the bar cookies are perfect for lunchboxes, potlucks and parties.

Aunt Delta's Peanut Butter Fingers

DOUGH

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup dark brown sugar
- 1 egg
- ⅓ cup creamy peanut butter
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup oatmeal
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup chocolate chips (dark or milk)

PEANUT BUTTER ICING

- ½ cup powdered sugar
- ¼ cup creamy peanut butter
- 2 tablespoons milk, or more for texture

1. DOUGH: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 10-by-15-inch rimmed baking sheet (or 9-by-13-inch for thicker bars) with butter or nonstick spray.



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July's recipe contest topic is **How Do You Like Your Shrimp?** Nothing beats the sweet flavor of fresh Gulf shrimp. Share your best recipe (from tacos to pasta to spicy Creole). The deadline is **February 10**.

ENTER ONLINE at TexasCoopPower.com/contests; MAIL to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; FAX to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.

2. Cream together butter and sugars until light and fluffy. Add egg and beat until combined. Add peanut butter and vanilla, and beat another minute until smooth.

3. In a separate bowl, whisk together flour, oatmeal, baking soda and salt. Using a spoon or a rubber spatula, stir the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients. Spread the batter to the edge of the prepared baking sheet, and use a wet hand to smooth evenly.

4. Bake 20 minutes or until golden brown and a knife inserted in the center comes out fairly clean. Scatter chocolate chips over the top, allow them to melt 5 minutes and then spread the chocolate evenly.

5. ICING: Whisk together powdered sugar, peanut butter and enough milk to make a soft icing. (It should have the consistency of honey.) Use a whisk or fork to drizzle the icing over the chocolate topping. Allow to cool completely (or refrigerate), then slice into bars. ▶ Makes 36–60 bars, depending on baking sheet and bar size.

COOK'S TIP Old-fashioned oats or the thick-cut variety will give these bars the best texture. If you like your desserts with a salty edge, double the salt—or top the peanut butter drizzle with flaky Maldon sea salt.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

and beat until smooth. Add the egg and mix well. Stir in the milk and vanilla.

4. Add the dry ingredients to the wet mixture and beat thoroughly. Stir in the peanut butter chips and chocolate chunks.

5. Place a tablespoon of sprinkling sugar in a small bowl. Drop the dough by rounded teaspoonfuls into the sugar then place on baking sheet, leaving several inches between for expansion.

6. Bake 10–12 minutes until lightly golden. To maintain a chewy texture in the middle, do not overbake. (Cookies may appear to be underdone, but they are not.)

7. Cool the cookies on the sheets 1 minute, then remove to a rack to cool completely. ▶ Makes about 24 cookies.

Adapted from *The Magnolia Bakery Cookbook: Old-Fashioned Recipes From New York's Sweetest Bakery* by Jennifer Appel and Allysa Torey (Simon & Schuster, 1999)

Peanut Butter Chocolate Cupcakes

RITA H. ADDICKS | FAYETTE EC

Addicks suggests refrigerating these cupcakes to help set the buttery frosting and create a fudgy texture.

FILLING

- 3 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup creamy peanut butter
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon 2% milk

BATTER

- 2 cups sugar
- 1¾ cups flour
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup 2% milk
- ½ cup canola oil
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

FROSTING

- ⅓ cup butter, softened
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 6 tablespoons cocoa
- 3 tablespoons 2% milk, or more for texture

1. FILLING: In a small bowl, beat cream cheese, peanut butter, sugar and milk until smooth, then refrigerate while you make the batter.

2. BATTER: In a large bowl, combine sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder, salt and baking soda. In another bowl, whisk the eggs, water, milk, oil and vanilla. Stir the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients until just moistened. (Batter will be thin.)

3. Fill paper-lined cupcake tins with half the batter. Drop a generous teaspoon (or a scant tablespoon for jumbo tins) of peanut butter filling into the center of each, then cover with remaining batter.

4. Bake 25–30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center of cake comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes on a wire rack, then remove from pan and cool completely on wire rack.

5. FROSTING: In a large bowl, whisk together butter, powdered sugar, cocoa and milk until smooth. Frost cupcakes and serve immediately or store in the refrigerator

until you're ready to serve. ▶ Makes 24 regular cupcakes (or 12 jumbo cupcakes).

COOK'S TIP The peanut butter filling is easier to work with if it chills for at least 30 minutes beforehand. For a deeper flavor, consider substituting strong, room-temperature coffee for the water.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Cheesecake Bars

MARJORIE GRUNEWALD | FAYETTE EC

These bars are a snap to assemble and deliver a perfect blend of creamy filling, chocolate-and-peanut butter goodness and graham cracker crust. They're best enjoyed cold.

2½ cups graham cracker crumbs
¾ cup (1½ sticks) butter, melted
¾ cup sugar, divided use
5 ounces milk chocolate morsels, divided use
5 ounces peanut butter morsels, divided use
2 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened

¼ cup flour
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
4 eggs

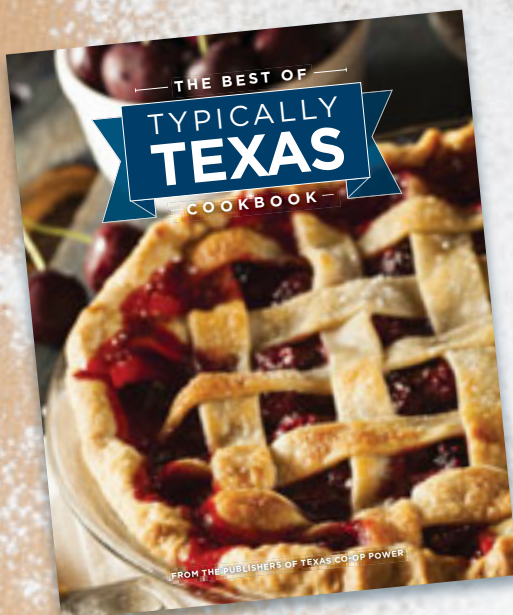
1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Combine graham cracker crumbs, melted butter and ¼ cup sugar in a medium bowl. Reserve 1 cup of crumb mixture for topping, and press the remaining mixture evenly into the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Combine chocolate and peanut butter morsels then sprinkle ¾ cup over crust.

2. Beat together remaining sugar, cream cheese, flour and vanilla in large mixing bowl until smooth. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until smooth.

3. Pour the batter over the crust and morsels. Sprinkle with reserved crumb topping and remaining morsels, and bake 25–30 minutes or until set. Cool completely on wire rack, then refrigerate until well-chilled. ▶ Makes about 24 bars.

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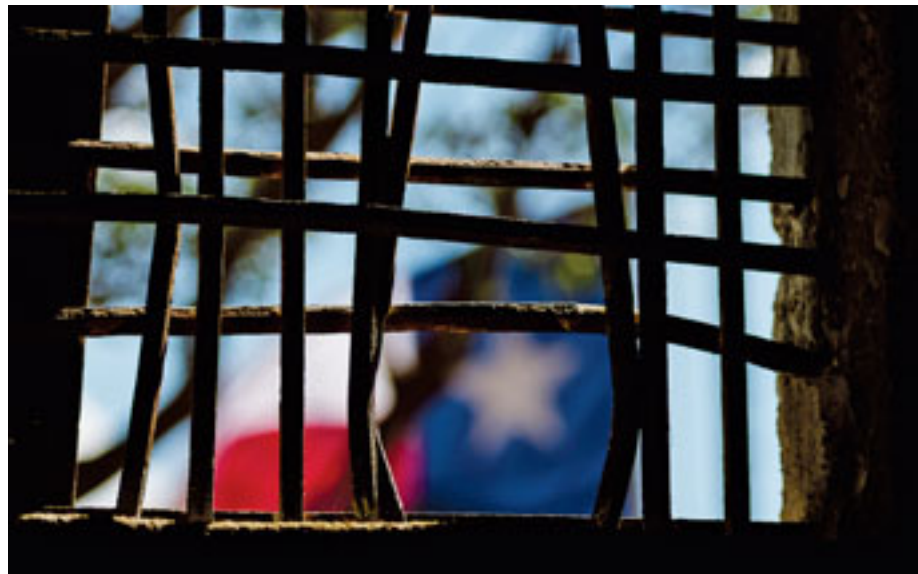
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▲ **BUDDY PARK**, Pedernales EC: The original jailhouse of Flatonia, dating to 1890

▼ **HELDEN HOIERMAN**, Trinity Valley EC: "The Texas flag in the background is to be a metaphor for the vast, open and free land of Texas that is just out of reach" of the jail in Roysce City.



▲ **CHARLIE PRESLAR**, Comanche EC: The Old Jail Museum was Gonzales' jailhouse, which had gallows in full view of the prisoners.

▶ **LISA GRIFFIS**, Mid-South Synergy: An old jail in Leon County, now in restoration



▲ **RAMON SAN LUIS**, Pedernales EC: Abandoned Kent County Jail in Clairmont, built in 1895

UPCOMING CONTESTS

JUNE TRACTORS	DUE FEBRUARY 10
JULY OPPOSITES	DUE MARCH 10
AUGUST SCHOOL'S OUT	DUE APRIL 10

All entries must include name, address, daytime phone and co-op affiliation, plus the contest topic and a brief description of your photo.

ONLINE: Submit highest-resolution digital images at TexasCoopPower.com/contests. **MAIL:** Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We do not accept entries via email. We regret that *Texas Co-op Power* cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.

Pick of the Month Hug-In and Valentine's Ball

Luckenbach February 9-10
(830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

Two nights of country music at the Gillespie County dance hall kick off with the 43rd annual Hug-In dance, featuring Jesse Dayton. Gary P. Nunn takes the stage for the Valentine's Ball, which draws 400-500 people, including a group from Pennsylvania that shows up every year.



GUITAR: SUPACHITA KRERKAIWAN | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM. PUPPYUP: NATURE DOG PHOTOGRAPHY | COURTESY PUPPYUP. CZECH DANCING: KOJIN | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

February

8

Port Arthur [8-11] Mardi Gras Southeast Texas, (409) 721-8717, mardigrasportarthur.com

9

Burnet [9-10] Highland Lakes Quilt Festival, (830) 693-2173, hlqguild.blogspot.com

10

Beaumont Symphony of Southeast Texas: *The Elegance of Elgar*, (409) 892-2257, sost.org

Big Spring Symphony: Winter Wonderland Concert, (432) 263-8235, visitbigspring.com

Henderson Mardi Gras Gumbo Cook-Off, (903) 657-6551, visithenderson.tx.com

La Grange Valentine's Dinner & Concert, 1-888-785-4500, czechtexas.org

Spring PuppyUp, (281) 636-1436, puppyupwalk.org/spring

Fredericksburg [10-11] Texas Hill Country Home & Design Show, (830) 469-2381, hillcountryhomeshow.net

February 10
Spring
PuppyUp



12

Tyler Million Dollar Quartet, (903) 566-7424, www.cowancenter.org

13

Beaumont Taste of the Triangle, 1-800-782-3081, beaumontcvb.com

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15

The Woodlands [15-19] Inspire Film Festival, (281) 705-1623, inspirefilmfest.com

17

Denison Celebrate With the Presidents, (903) 465-8908, visiteisenhowerbirthplace.com

Pine Springs Pioneer Prosperity, (915) 828-3251, nps.gov/gumo

22

Kerrville *Old, New, Borrowed and Blue*, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

Lufkin Dailey & Vincent, (936) 633-0349, thepines.visitlufkin.com

23

Beaumont Travis Tritt, (409) 838-3435, beaumontcvb.com

24

Arlington Iron Cowboy, (817) 332-2972, pbr.com

Corpus Christi South Texas Polkafest, (361) 215-9163, chssouthtexas.org

Crockett The Guess Who, (936) 544-4276, pwfaa.org

26

San Angelo Yamato: The Drummers of Japan, (325) 284-3825, sanangelopac.org

March

1

Waco Stars Over Texas Jamboree, (254) 755-7257

2

Lake Jackson Turtle Island Quartet, (979) 230-3156, brazosport.edu/clarion



February 24
Corpus Christi
South Texas Polkafest

Austin [2-3] BBQ Austin, (512) 919-3000, rodeoaustin.com

Dallas [2-4] North Texas Irish Festival, (214) 821-4173, ntif.org

3

Clifton Bosque Animal Rescue Kennels Gala 2018, (254) 675-7712, barkrescue.org

Round Top Quaternaglia Guitar Quartet with James Dick, (979) 249-3129, festivalhill.org

San Saba A Night at the Museum, (325) 372-8807, sansabamuseum.org

Lago Vista [3-4] 27th Annual La Primavera Race, (512) 267-7952, lagovista.org

Washington [3-4] Texas Independence Day Celebration, (936) 878-2214, wheretexasbecametexas.com

6

Crockett *The Great Gatsby*, (936) 544-4276, pwfaa.org

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

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Standing Tall Once Again

Hotel Settles, revived and modernized, casts glow upon downtown Big Spring

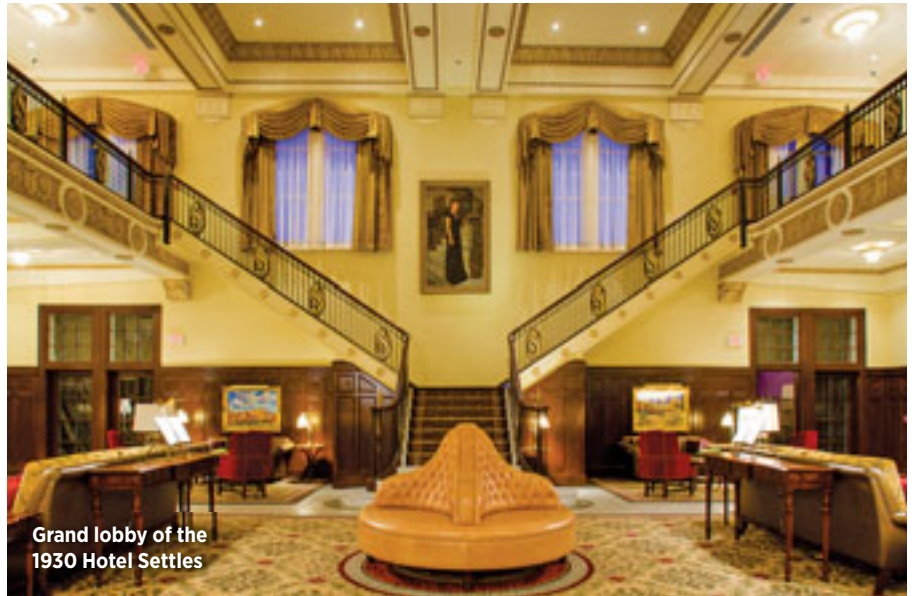
BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

HOTEL SETTLES RISES 15 STORIES ABOVE downtown Big Spring. Step through the glass doors, and the years fall away. Antique reproduction furnishings, dark paneling, floral tapestry rugs and crystal chandeliers adorn the open lobby. From the terrazzo floor, a double marble staircase topped with carpet runners splits and rises to the iron-railed mezzanine, embellished with golden “S” motifs. Big-band music in the background completes the 1930s ambiance.

Stories galore permeate the tan brick high-rise, once billed as the tallest building between Abilene and El Paso. Ranchers W.R. and Lillian Settles used their oil money to build the art deco hotel in 1930. For two years, the couple operated the ritzy hotel until oil prices plummeted, forcing them into bankruptcy. Subsequent owners managed the 150-room hotel, which housed a ballroom, men’s club, coffee shop and drug store. Such notables as President Herbert Hoover and Elliott Roosevelt, a son of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, stayed there.

The hotel’s boom years continued through the 1950s. Then passenger rail service ceased, a nearby Air Force base closed and Interstate 20 bypassed downtown. **Hotel Settles** closed in 1980. Owners sold everything they could. Vandals, weather and pigeons damaged the remains.

Enter Dallas businessman G. Brint Ryan, a Big Spring native who bought the run-down property in 2007 and spent \$30 million on renovations. Drawing from original blueprints and vintage photos, Ryan’s restoration team incorporated upgrades including a swimming pool, spa, meeting rooms and fitness center. Two wooden phone booths in the lobby are original. At the hotel’s relaunch in December 2013, its iconic rooftop sign flickered



Grand lobby of the 1930 Hotel Settles

back on, once again proclaiming “HOTEL SETTLES” in red neon letters.

Like many locals, Tiffany King grew up knowing Hotel Settles as an abandoned building with broken windows. Homeless people slept inside, she says. Now, King runs the immaculate front desk and escorts visitors on hotel tours. “We have older people who come and remember the hotel as it was when it was originally open,” she says. “They talk about weddings and high school proms that were held here.”

Thirteen Heritage Rooms on the third level reflect the 1930s floor plan, complete with original tile floors in the compact bathrooms. Modestly sized, the rooms come with traditional furnishings and lavish bedding.

Floors 4–13 were configured to accommodate five spacious suites each. For the night, my husband and I are staying in a Tower Room on the 13th floor. Our lofty corner windows overlook Big Spring to the south and eastward to Signal Peak, a distant mesa used as a landmark by early cattlemen.


For a few hours, we slip away to drive through the city’s **Comanche Trail Park** to see the namesake “big spring” that provided water for Native Americans and early set-

tlers. Today the spring flows artificially. Next, we explore nearby **Big Spring State Park**, a day-use getaway. From a limestone bluff, we take in panoramic views of Big Spring and surrounding landscape.

Before supper, we order drinks in the Pharmacy Bar and Parlor, named after the hotel’s original drugstore. At a cozy booth in Settles Grill, we relish our artfully grilled salmon and herb-roasted chicken. Later, we peek into the Grand Ballroom, opulently detailed with ornate gold molding, crystal chandeliers and replica 1930s wall fans. Such attention to detail earned the Settles listings on the National Register of Historic Places and Historic Hotels of America list.

Buoyed by the hotel’s rebirth, empty downtown storefronts have begun to fill. “We now have two new boutiques, a restaurant, furniture store and cigar bar,” says Hayley Lewis, a native who works as tourism coordinator at the Big Spring Visitors Bureau. “It’s going to take time, but, thanks to Hotel Settles, downtown will come back.”

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers, a member of Peder-nales EC, lives in Blanco.

 **WEB EXTRAS** ▶ Read this story on our website to learn more about the **Hotel Settles**.

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