

COTTON GINS TRANSFORM
THE LANDSCAPE

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COLORADO PRIDE

CHET BRAVES
THE GHOST ROAD

Texas Coop Power

FOR TRI-COUNTY EC MEMBERS

JULY 2022

Texas' Best Bird

Kreuz Market
serves up superb
barbecued chicken

**TRI-COUNTY
EC NEWS**

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July 2022



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Prized Fibers

Cotton gins still turn sweat and tears into a treasured commodity.

Story and photos by Julia Robinson

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Because Kreuz Market has perfected the once-scorned barbecued bird.

*By Joe Nick Patoski
Photos by Wyatt McSpadden*

ON THE COVER

Chicken that pitmaster Roy Perez describes this way: "Simple. With love."
Photo by Wyatt McSpadden

ABOVE

Jerry Harris inspects raw cotton at King Mesa Gin.
Photo by Julia Robinson

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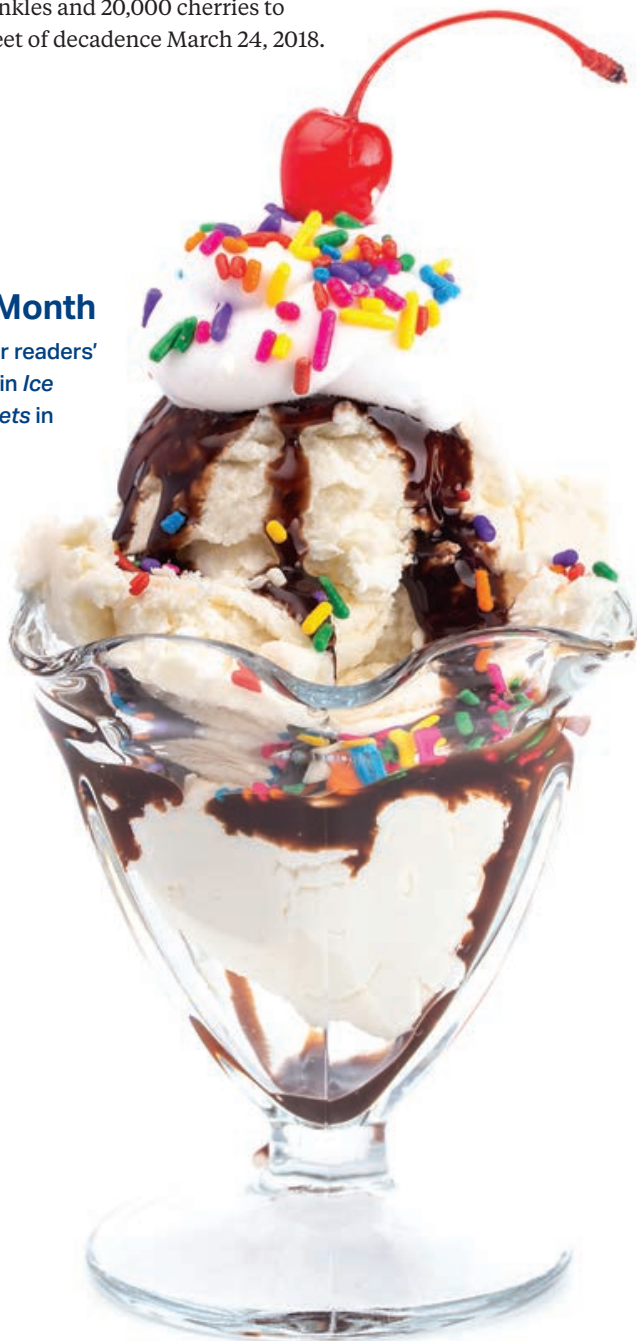
THE WORLD'S LONGEST ice cream sundae—more than 15 football fields long—was concocted four years ago in College Station.

The creators at the Spirit of Texas Festival used 500 gallons of H-E-B Texans Tackle Crackle ice cream, 2,000 cans of whipped cream, 300 gallons of chocolate and strawberry syrup, 25 pounds of sprinkles and 20,000 cherries to assemble 4,549 feet of decadence March 24, 2018.

July

National Ice Cream Month

Celebrate with our readers' recipes, featured in *Ice Creams and Sorbets* in July 2021.



WORKING FROM HOME?

Save electricity by unplugging your least-used devices—printers and scanners—when you don't need them.

Your electric cooperative is in the people business; it just happens to sell power. The less you use, the more you'll save.



Dig This

Texas Co-op Power readers ... well, they rock.

One reader, inspired by an October 2021 story, donated \$20,000 to a research program in South Texas.

Learning Rocks featured a Shumla Archaeological Research and Education Center program, above, involving high school students in Comstock. The donation will help Shumla purchase a camera with accessories, scaffolding to help students photograph rock art and tablets for data entry.



TCP Contests and More

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HQ TX

Texas is home to 53 Fortune 500 companies, the most in the nation.

News Flash

LIGHTNING OVER TEXAS reached a long way, though not to the ground.

A storm April 29, 2020, produced a bolt that stretched a record 477 miles, from Southeast Texas to Mississippi. Scientists used satellite technology to confirm the record in February.

Also this year, Flatonia, a small town about halfway between Houston and San Antonio, was announced as the lightning capital of the U.S. Vaisala, a weather measurement and analysis company, determined that Flatonia received 1,043 lightning events per square mile in 2021—more than any other city in the country.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I FEEL
PATRIOTIC
WHEN ...

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: **Three words that brighten my day are ...**

I love you.

SANDRA BOWEN
BIG COUNTRY EC
HAWLEY

Ice cold beer.

STEPHEN SEWELL
PEDERNALES EC
KEMPNER

I've got this. (A nice young man ahead of me in line at 7-Eleven this morning decided to pay for my juice and coffee.)

LINDA RIDEOUT
VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read Currents online.



A Deep Dive

“What a fascinating story about a fascinating aspect of our state. I was amazed to learn such a unique place exists in the Lone Star State.”

DONALD HAHN
HAMILTON COUNTY EC
HICO

Hope Lives On

To find that the photo of the Wantland family was taken inside what was the old Hope Lutheran Church of Buckholts really took my breath away [*'A Little Source of Joy,'* May 2022].

Our family were members of Hope Lutheran, and our daughter's wedding was the last one before the old church was hauled off to the pasture of the man who purchased it to use as a barn. The building was later cut into several pieces and moved to Round Top to be restored and used as a children's library.

Lamerle Zajicek
Lucas

I love Ms. Dolly, not only for her music [*'A Little Source of Joy,'* May 2022]. She has done so much for the community she grew up in.

SHERRI CONSTABLE
VIA FACEBOOK



ERICH SCHLEGEL

It Takes the Cake

The Texas Praline Sheet Cake featured in March was one of the most amazing cakes I've ever made. It was a big hit on our Easter table.

I've made several of the recipes featured in the magazine over the years and really liked them all, but this cake takes the cake.

Cindi Boyd
Medina EC
Freer

A Great Mix

I love your magazine. I am always surprised at how much you get into so few pages. And it's a great mix of heartfelt stories, usable information, wonderful recipes and beautiful pictures. You represent our state well.

Anita Askew
Pedernales EC
Wimberley

Along Those Lines

As a child in the 1940s and '50s, we would travel between Vernon and Amarillo. There were always hundreds of scissor-tailed flycatchers on the electric lines [*Scissortail Signals,* April 2022]. My favorite bird. I love them.

Penny Haulman
Via Facebook

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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

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

Texas Co-op Power

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER Volume 79, Number 1 (USPS 540-560). *Texas Co-op Power* is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC). Periodical postage paid at Austin, TX, and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 75 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power's* website is TexasCoopPower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or email editor@TexasCoopPower.com.

SUBSCRIPTIONS Subscription price is \$4.44 per year for individual members of subscribing cooperatives and is paid from equity accruing to the member. If you are not a member of a subscribing cooperative, you can purchase an annual subscription at the nonmember rate of \$7.50. Individual copies and back issues for the previous 12 months are available for \$3 each.

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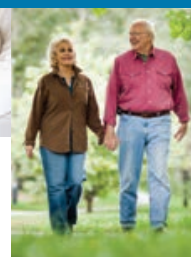


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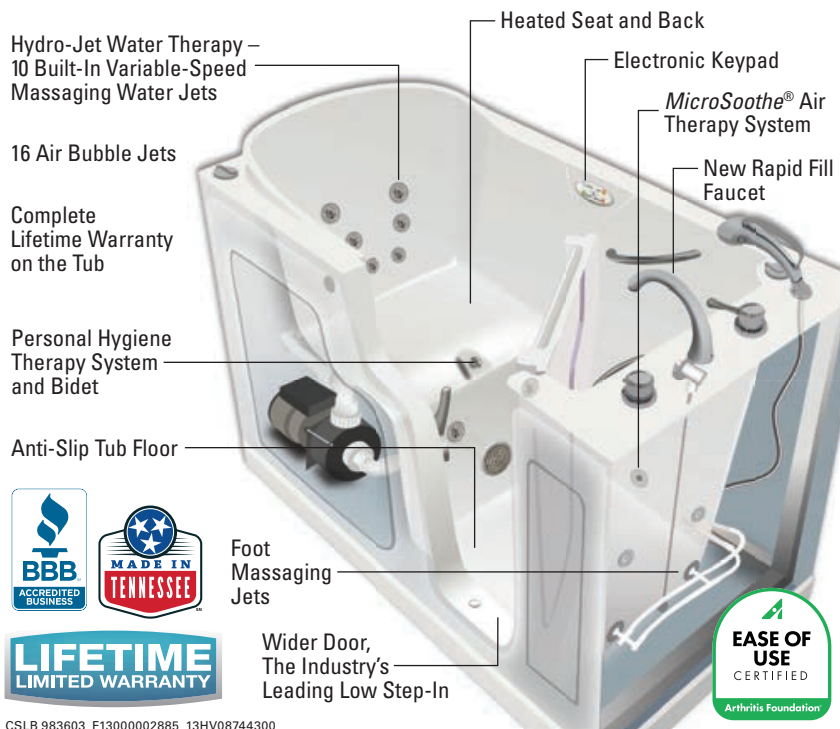
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Texas' cotton gins have turned more sweat and tears into lint than

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JULIA ROBINSON

At times the fabric of Texas' economy has been 100% cotton. The availability of cotton products, though, belies a complicated transformation.

"Blood, sweat and tears," says Kirk Tidwell, a cotton farmer in Lamesa, about halfway between Lubbock and Midland. "There's a lot of tears sometimes."

"There's just so much risk; we don't know from the day we plant it if it's ever going to make it to harvest or not," says Tidwell, who also serves on the board of directors at Lyntegar Electric Cooperative. "We may lose it to a hail-storm or a sandstorm or an early freeze. We're always just hopeful."

That cotton-hope blend—formed by a lot of hard work and a little luck—has not frayed much over two centuries. Times are still tough for cotton farmers, but cotton gins are still going. Texas had 4,300 gins in 1900; 185 operate today,

according to the Texas Cotton Ginners' Association.

"I would guess half of those are on the way out," says Jerry Harris, general manager of King Mesa Gin in Lamesa.

"As the number of gins go down, the number of bales ginned stays the same or goes up," Harris says as 18-wheelers pull onto scales with round bales bound in colorful plastic. "There used to be a gin every 6 miles because that's as far as people wanted to carry their crop, but now people will come hundreds of miles with a crop."

Spanish missionaries were the first to raise cotton in Texas. By 1821, Anglo colonists turned to the crop in earnest, reaping profits and building an industry by relying on the labor of enslaved people. Cotton drove the state's economy until the 20th century. Today it thrives in several areas of the state, and the South Plains region around Lubbock, where Tidwell farms, devotes more land to growing cotton than any other part of the world—as much as 3 million acres some years. Irrigation and easy weed control make

F I B E R S =



any other state for 150 years—and they're still innovating

growing cotton there more productive than in other parts of the state.

Starting at Odessa and going north up the Panhandle, the soil turns reddish brown as fields of cotton spread beneath the pump jacks and wind turbines that dominate the horizon. It's a geography of vast spaces—"so flat that your dog can run away, and you'll still see him a week later," a Texas congressman once said—and the white bolls in tidy rows are set off dramatically against unblemished blue skies.

Since 1850, Texas has led the nation in cotton production, tallying 8 million bales in 2021, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Every one of those bales is processed at a cotton gin, where bolls move through machines that separate the embedded seeds, which are about the size of a grain of rice, from the prized fiber, which is called lint. Cotton production at this scale is possible only because of the gins that dot the state.



TOP The South Plains region around Lubbock devotes more land to growing cotton than any other part of the world. **ABOVE** A handful of cotton seed left over after the ginning process.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Kirk Tidwell raises cotton on 6,500 acres in Lamesa. An 1833 hand-operated cotton gin. Jerry Harris runs King Mesa Gin in Lamesa. Curtis Stewart, manager at Spade Co-op Gin northwest of Lubbock, catches cotton seeds as they fall through a gin's spinning blades.

The largest gin in the world, Adobe Walls Gin in Spearman, about 35 miles from the Oklahoma border, produces 300,000 bales per year. Operations were much smaller during fall and winter harvests generations ago, when cotton gins became gathering places where farmers socialized and shared news while waiting their turn to have their crops baled. Those days could be stressful.

"There was a lot riding on the processing and selling of your cotton," says Andrew Torget, a University of North Texas professor and author of *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800–1850*. "This is an industry where you basically have one payday. The emotional tenor of that was tremendous. How much profit you had, what you could buy your kids or couldn't for the coming year—all these things got concentrated in this one location and this one experience for farmers.

"Today we like to look back with a sort of bucolic romanticism about things that are unfamiliar to us, but I think we forget the terrors and the fears and the helplessness that sometimes accompany those experiences."

Still, gins greatly eased much of the anxiety of cotton farming, which in the early days of our state was only possible because of labor by enslaved people. It takes 10 hours for one person to remove enough seeds by hand to get 1 pound of lint. "Cotton has this problem that the seeds are stuck inside this prison of fibers," Torget says. "How you get those out is a real bottleneck because doing it by hand means you can't do it at scale."

Early gins used hand-cranked stone or iron rollers to separate the seeds from the fiber and could process 5 pounds of lint per day. In 1794, Eli Whitney designed a machine, a cylinder with spikes that pulled lint clean from the seed as it was cranked, that increased production to 50 pounds per day.

Two years later, Henry Ogden Holmes patented a design that increased the output to thousands of pounds per day with a set of spinning saw teeth on a circular steel blade that pulled lint from seeds in a continuous motion. This design



Since 1850, Texas has led the nation in cotton production, tallying 8 million bales in 2021.

year. In 1915 it pressed nearly 1,000 bales.

“We would have been serving 60 farmers in a really good day,” says Tynan Shadle, the museum’s programs coordinator and a member of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative.

Teams and wagons full of cotton would wait their turn—first come, first served—in the yard. Some farmers camped out the night before; some would unload in the morning and return in the afternoon with another load.

The gin featured pneumatic tubes that inhaled the raw cotton and blew it through the entire ginning process, an innovation that came from Robert Munger of nearby Ruttersville. The system is still used today in gins around the world.

Nothing from cotton was wasted in those days. Seed was separated from the lint and delivered back into the farmer’s wagon to plant for the next year. Sometimes the gin bought it to use as livestock feed or to press into oil.

The Burton gin continued operations until 1974, when it closed its doors after producing only seven bales that year. Lint cleaning, feed milling and other services had kept the facility going longer than most, but its time had come.

“We’ve seen boll weevil infestations lead to crop failures, two world wars taking men off the farms, and then the GI Bill, which gave those returning men better opportunities,” Shadle says. “We saw a mass exodus from farms.

“Cotton was just not able to make enough money, and so it was more profitable to switch back to cattle. Not too long after that, they began finding natural gas in the area, too.”

A community group formed a nonprofit and began restoring the Burton Farmers Gin in 1990. It’s the oldest operating cotton gin in the U.S. and is a Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Out in Lamesa, King Mesa Gin, which operates around the clock at times to keep up with the 7 tons of raw cotton delivered several times a day by truck, is the only gin in the U.S. to offer DNA tracing to its producers, ensuring the same cotton that’s sent overseas for manufacturing is the same cotton in the finished product on store shelves.

In 2019, Texas growers were responsible for three-quarters of all American organic cotton, which is grown using more sustainable practices. “Where you’re sitting right now is in a hundred-mile circle of the most organic cotton grown in the U.S.,” says Harris, a member of Lyntegar EC.

For Tidwell, becoming part owner of King Mesa just made sense for ensuring his livelihood.

“We went in together as a community to keep the gin in the community, under our control and to do it the way we’ve always done it,” he explains from his knee-high cotton field. “I only get paid once a year, and this is my payday right here.” ■

is still used in modern cotton ginning. Gin designs and innovations proliferated across the South, and daisy chains of gins began to be operated by animal and water power.

Visitors to the Texas Cotton Gin Museum in Burton, halfway between Austin and Houston, can see some of this history up close, including an open stand that reveals 80 saw blades that spin vertically through metal ribs. A group of local German farmers sold \$50 shares, raising \$10,000 to build the Burton Farmers Gin in 1913. The gin fired up for the first time August 3, 1914, and produced 82 bales that



Roy Perez, general manager and head pitmaster at Kreuz Market in Lockhart.

WHY'D THE CHICKEN CROSS THE PIT?

Because Kreuz Market has perfected the once-scorned barbecued bird

THE **poor barbecued chicken.**

The holy trinity of Texas barbecue consists of beef brisket, pork ribs and sausage. Other meats pulled from pits around these parts include prime rib, pork chops and giant beef.

Barbecued yardbird? Not so much. Even the generic turkey breast gets more 'cue love.

Traditionally, slow-smoked chicken has been regarded as too tricky to cook consistently, the end product either undercooked with too much red visible or overcooked to a dryness rivaling jerky.

Chicken, it would seem, is meant to be fried, roasted on a rotisserie or grilled in the Mexican style of the El Pollo Loco and Pollo Regio franchises.

For the past 10 years, however, the best barbecued chicken in Texas has been turned out quietly, as something of an afterthought—an almost under-the-counter thing—in one of the most obvious places on Earth: Kreuz Market in Lockhart, one of the temples of Texas barbecue.

Moist and tender, every morsel packs savory-sweet smoked flavor, enveloped by deep-bronzed skin that's crispy, not greasy.

Full disclosure: "Best barbecue" is a loaded phrase, I know. But that's how my friend Wyatt McSpadden described the whole chicken wrapped in butcher paper he brought me when I was bedridden following a hospital stay last year. I didn't open the sack until about three hours after he left. When I did, bells rang and the lights started flashing.

Chicken!

I was part of the original *Texas Monthly* barbecue team for the magazine's top-50 barbecue joints ranking in 1997 and 2003. Barbecued chicken was never part of the discussion on either top-50 quest.

McSpadden photographed some of the top-50 locations, and today he's known as one of the foremost photographers

of Texas barbecue, capturing pitmasters including Austin's Aaron Franklin and Lexington's Tootsie Tomanetz and sampling their esteemed meats.

I met him at Kreuz Market to gauge his assessment, and now I'm willing to stick my neck out and declare it's the best.

Roy Perez chuckles when he hears that.

He says he started tinkering with yardbirds 10 years ago, after noting a number of customers—typically first-timers—asking about chicken. "It wasn't on the menu for years," he says. "We got tired of people asking, 'You got chicken?' and 'You ain't got chicken?' In my head, I went, 'You want chicken? We got Golden Chick, Chicken Express, all these chicken places.'"

But those are fried, not slow-smoked.

"There's something about barbecued chicken that's different," he says. "It just came to me: 'Can I do chicken?' I thought: Let's throw it on there and mess with it, see how it turns out."

As general manager and head pitmaster at Kreuz and with 35 years' experience, the mutton-chopped Perez is renowned for turning out top-shelf brisket as well as exceptional pork ribs, dino beef ribs and sausage.

But a hands-on approach to minding the pit and trial and error led him to consistently turn out slow-smoked birds that are moist and flavorful throughout. His favorite part? "I've always liked the thigh," he says. "We're old-school. As you can see, I'm sitting here keeping my eyes on this fire instead of sitting in an office somewhere."

Perez says he learned the pitmaster trade from Rick Schmidt, one of the owners at Kreuz Market when he started, back in 1987. Chicken takes as much skill as any of the cuts that Kreuz is known for.

"You've got to stay on it, take care of it," Perez says. "Keep an eye on it, twist on the leg to see if it's still tender and still needs more cooking. It's all visual. We don't use thermometers."

Still, most barbecue pit bosses don't share his respect for the craft.

"These guys laugh when we're cooking the chicken," Perez



CHOICE CHICKEN

We asked electric cooperative employees where they get their barbecued bird. Here are a few of their favorite spots.

Mimsy's Craft Barbecue, Crockett
Lockhart Smokehouse, Dallas
Iceman's BBQ, Edgewood
Stiky Ribz, Forney
Bar-B-Que To-Go, Ganado
Heavy's Bar-B-Que, Hondo
Back Porch BBQ & Grill, La Grange
Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que, Llano
The Smoking Oak, Mercedes
Mack's Split Rail BBQ, Mineola
Judge Hunt's BBQ, Quitman
Hickory Roots BBQ, Terrell

Slow-smoked chicken
at Kreuz Market.

Roy Perez's method emphasizes simplicity: about two hours of cooking time at about 300 degrees.

says. "I'll say, 'Those are ready.' 'No, they're not!' I'll say 'OK, get a thermometer so we can check the internal temperature.' Sure enough, they'll poke it and say, 'How did you do that?'"

"With my years of experience, I don't need nothing to tell me this is done or this is not done. You got to make sure how it all comes out because people travel from all over. Even the locals—you don't want to let them down."

His method emphasizes simplicity: about two hours of cooking time at about 300 degrees.

"Put it in the back, let it cook slowly. When you know it's ready, take it off, put it in a container with the lid to keep the moisture in," Perez says. "It's such a little piece of meat; you have to keep an eye on it. You can't walk away like you can with a brisket."

The wood that provides the heat in Perez's pit is post oak. The seasoning, he says, "is no secret: just salt and pepper, a little cayenne, chili powder—same way we do our brisket." But timing is everything. "You can't sell it too early. If it's got blood in there, people might get sick. You can't sell it too late."

Kreuz was famous for not providing barbecue sauce as a condiment; the establishment has never used sauce in the cooking process, no matter the meat.

"It's cheating," Perez says. "It's a quick way out. Here we've

always been, 'Don't put nothing on it. Eat it, try it before you start covering it up with sauce.' Simple. With love. Everything else will take care of itself."

This is barbecue I can eat almost every day.

Hipster barbecue fetishists in search of the exotic tend to bypass the bird. Perez says it's because most young folks don't have the time or patience to slow-smoke chicken.

"They don't want to cook something that you have to babysit," he says. "They want to throw on a big brisket, a big clod, big rack of ribs, ring of sausage, pork chops. Then you get a little chicken—'Man, I don't want to sit here all day—it's hot!'"

Only one of Kreuz Market's eight pits accommodates chicken. The other pits, where briskets are cooking at 700 degrees, are too hot. Chicken sales have steadily increased, Perez says, despite a determined lack of emphasis on the product.

"We don't cook much of it," he says. "We're not known for chicken. The old people who have been coming for years don't order chicken. They don't want something new or different. They're set in their ways."

For the rest of us though, there's a whole other reason for making a barbecue pilgrimage to Lockhart: Roy Perez's barbecued chicken. ■

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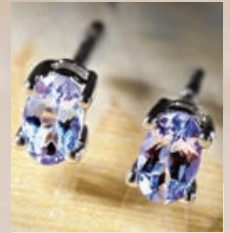


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with your purchase of the Sunburst Tanzanite Ring

African Gem Cutter Makes \$2,689,000 Mistake... Will You?

This story breaks my heart every time. Allegedly, just two years after the discovery of tanzanite in 1967, a Maasai tribesman knocked on the door of a gem cutter's office in Nairobi. The Maasai had brought along an enormous chunk of tanzanite and he was looking to sell. His asking price? Fifty dollars. But the gem cutter was suspicious and assumed that a stone so large could only be glass. The cutter told the tribesman, no thanks, and sent him on his way. Huge mistake. It turns out that the gem was genuine and would have easily dwarfed the world's largest cut tanzanite at the time. Based on common pricing, that "chunk" could have been worth close to \$3,000,000! The tanzanite gem cutter missed his chance to hit the jeweler's jackpot ... and make history. Would you have made the same mistake then? Will you make it today?

In the decades since its discovery, tanzanite has become one of the world's most coveted gemstones. Found in only one remote place on Earth (in Tanzania's Merelani Hills, in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro), the precious purple stone is 1,000 times rarer than diamonds. Luxury retailers have been quick to sound the alarm, warning that supplies of tanzanite will not last forever. And in this case, they're right. Once the last purple gem is pulled from the Earth, that's it. No more tanzanite. Most believe that we only have a twenty year supply left, which is why it's so amazing for us to offer this incredible price break. Some retailers along Fifth Avenue are more than happy to charge you outrageous prices for this rarity.

Not Stauer. Staying true to our contrarian nature, we've decided to lower the price of one of the world's rarest and most popular gemstones.

This stunning two-total carat Sunburst Tanzanite Ring features marquise-cut gems set dramatically in gorgeous sterling silver. Each facet sparkles with the distinct violet-blue hue of the precious stones. But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include these tanzanite studs **FREE** with your purchase of the ring — a \$99 value!

Limited Availability. We only have ~~1200~~, 954 left for this ad only. Of course, your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. If you are not completely aglow with the Sunburst Tanzanite Ring, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price. But, please don't wait, our supply is dropping rapidly.

Jewelry Specifications:

- 2 ctw genuine tanzanite set in .925 sterling silver setting; whole sizes 5–10

Sunburst Tanzanite Ring (2 ctw) ~~\$349~~ \$79* + S&P **Save \$270**
Plus FREE Tanzanite Studs (½ ctw) with your purchase of the Sunburst Tanzanite Ring — **a \$99 value!**

**Special price only for customers using the offer code.*

1-800-333-2045

Your Offer Code: TZR664-12

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The Invention of the Year

The world's lightest and most portable mobility device

Once in a lifetime, a product comes along that truly moves people. Introducing the future of battery-powered personal transportation . . . **The Zinger.**

Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven't been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who's developed one of the world's most popular products created a completely new breakthrough . . . a personal electric vehicle. It's called the **Zinger**, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

"What my wife especially loves is it gives her back feelings of safety and independence which has given a real boost to her confidence and happiness! Thank You!"

—Kent C., California

The first thing you'll notice about the **Zinger** is its unique look. It doesn't look like a scooter. Its sleek, lightweight yet durable frame is made with aircraft grade aluminum so it weighs only 47.2 lbs. It features one-touch folding and unfolding – when folded it can be wheeled around like a suitcase and fits easily into a backseat or trunk. Then, there are the steering levers. They enable the **Zinger** to move



Available in Green, Black and Blue (shown)

forward, backward, turn on a dime and even pull right up to



The Zinger folds to a mere 10 inches.

a table or desk. With its compact yet powerful motor it can go up to 6 miles an hour and its rechargeable battery can go up to 8 miles on a single charge. With its low center of gravity and inflatable tires it can handle rugged terrain and is virtually tip-proof. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life.



Now available in a Joystick model
(Zoomer Chair)



Joystick can be mounted on the right or left side for rider's comfort

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zinger

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Please mention code 117324 when ordering.

mobility | sleep | comfort | safety

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journey
HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

The Zinger and Zoomer Chairs are personal electric vehicles and are not medical devices nor wheelchairs. They are not intended for medical purposes to provide mobility to persons restricted to a sitting position. They are not covered by Medicare nor Medicaid. © 2022 Journey Health and Lifestyle



85246



**DARRYL
SCHRIVER**

PRESIDENT/
CHIEF
EXECUTIVE
OFFICER

Power Costs Continue to Increase

AS PRESIDENT/CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, I do my best to take care of you, our member-owners, and our employees who work hard to take care of you. Currently, we are trudging through difficult times. The cost of natural gas, just like other resources and commodities, continues to rise leading to higher power costs.

Our member service team has fielded questions from you over the phone and through email. We are on your side and understand the predicament. While the rise is out of our control, we are doing everything we can to keep you informed.

PCRF CHANGES

Tri-County Electric Cooperative uses a mechanism called PCRF (Power Cost Recovery Factor) to recover the actual cost of wholesale power and transmission services billed to us from our wholesale power supplier, Brazos Electric Power Cooperative (Brazos). Beginning with your June billing statement, the PCRF increased from \$.04/kWh to \$.075/kWh (i.e. 4.0 cents per kWh to 7.5 cents per kWh).

REASON BEHIND THE INCREASE

Tri-County Electric Co-op passes the cost of wholesale power and transmission charges on to you at our cost, without a markup. Over the last several months wholesale power costs have increased substantially across the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) grid and therefore, we must increase the PCRF in order to recover the costs billed to us by Brazos. The main driver of the increased costs in Texas, and across the nation, is the drastic increase in the price of natural gas. As you may know, natural gas is the primary fuel used by generators operating in ERCOT. To put things into perspective, in June 2021, natural gas sold for just over \$3.00 per MMBtu and just one year later, June 2022, prices for a similar contract were over \$8.50 per MMBtu. 4203400002

UNDERSTANDING YOUR BILL

Most residential member bills have a single line item, or a “bundled” electric charge, that includes a kWh Charge, a Monthly Service Charge and a Power Cost Recovery Factor (PCRF) Charge. This can be found on your bill as the “Electric Charge” line item, and you can view your kWh use in the “Electric Use” chart under your service address information.

The kWh Charge includes \$.048971/kWh of base power costs. In order to calculate the complete cost of wholesale generation and transmission, you need to add the base power costs (\$.048971) plus the PCRF (\$.075) and multiply that number by your total kWh used during your billing period.

To sum it up, the base power cost rate plus the entire PCRF rate—approximately 75% of your bill—go directly to Brazos. The only money that stays with Tri-County Electric Co-op to operate and maintain the co-op comes from the Monthly Service Charge and the remainder of the kWh charge, approximately 25% of your overall bill. Learn more about your bill at tcctexas.com/my-bill.

Tri-County Electric Co-op is here for you. If you have questions related to your bill, please contact our member services team by phone or email. ■



Unplug To Cool Off and Beat the Peak

BY ANNIE WATSON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

WE'RE IN THE THICK OF IT. Summer's heat is near its peak, school's out, vacations are underway, and the Fourth of July is here again. As you plan celebrations, travel or simply go about enjoying the rest of the season, take a cue from the holiday and declare independence from needlessly high electric bills. 800614071

Here are a few simple, low-tech ways to rein in midsummer energy costs:

- ▶ Run the washer and dishwasher only when each appliance is full, and beat the peak by not using either between 3 and 7 p.m.
- ▶ Use a clothesline or dryer rack to air-dry laundry. Your clothes will stay in better shape longer, and you'll cut out an energy hog entirely.
- ▶ Set your thermostat to 78 degrees when you're home and turn on ceiling fans in occupied rooms to add to the cooling effect. Run the blades counterclockwise to create a cooling downdraft and turn off the fan when you leave the room.
- ▶ Use countertop appliances to make dinner without turning on the oven. Better yet, make a salad with a combination of fresh and pantry ingredients. Start with greens and add cucumber, avocado, canned black beans or chickpeas, sunflower seeds, dried fruit, or whatever you have on hand for a satisfying meal that doesn't require cooking.
- ▶ Take a break from devices and screens and get outside after dinner—after the heat relents just a little. Not only are you reducing your electric use, but you are engaging in a digital detox. Take a walk, water plants, say hello to a neighbor, or just enjoy the sunset and nature with a cool drink.

While you're outside, consider some areas around your home that might benefit from energy-wise landscaping. Providing shade for an outdoor air conditioning unit can increase its efficiency, and planting deciduous trees on the east, south and west sides of your home will create shade in the summer while still allowing sunshine in the winter. You might also see some opportunities to plant trees to shade windows now; as they mature, they'll shade your home's walls and roof.

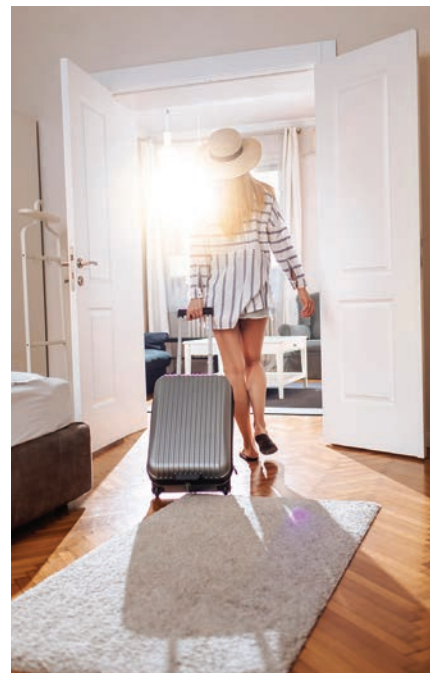
Once you're back inside, unwind with a cool treat from the freezer and a tech-free activity like a board game or book. The long light and lazy days of this time of year are fleeting, so make the most of them. ■

Protect Your Home While You're Away

GOING ON VACATION? There are a few things you should do around your home before you leave:

Arrange for a friend to monitor your house. This might mean just a daily visual check or giving them the key so they can do a walk-through.

- ▶ Put the mail on hold. Go online and have the Postal Service hold your mail until you're back. Or if a trusted friend is making a daily visit, they can put your mail or other deliveries in your house.
- ▶ Turn off the house water supply to prevent leaks that could damage your home. But leave the yard water supply on and arrange for lawn and garden watering.
- ▶ Set timers for lights. Make your house look occupied while you're gone by setting various lights (and maybe a radio) with timers. This is an easy, inexpensive way to keep burglars away.
- ▶ Set the thermostat, lock doors and windows, and set alarms. ■





What Is an Annual Meeting?

TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP is gearing up for the 83rd Annual Meeting of the Members. Getting an invitation for the annual meeting might not get your heart racing with excitement to participate, but the yearly event is like a birthday party for your co-op—with fun, giveaways, informational updates and more.

At the annual meeting, you can expect updates about your cooperative. You'll hear from co-op officials about things like our financial health, upcoming activities and a look at the future of the co-op.

In addition to conducting the business of the co-op, members can participate in the director election.

The co-op's founders knew that keeping members connected and informed was important to the success of the co-op and made holding annual meetings a requirement. That foresight has helped sustain electric cooperatives for more than seven decades.

The co-op's annual meeting is a time to celebrate your ownership in the cooperative, learn about electricity, and enjoy a party with family and friends. So when your invitation comes on your September *Texas Co-op Power*, be sure to mark your calendar.

We hope you can join us! ■

New Utility Scams Capitalize on COVID

BY ANNIE WATSON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

A SPATE OF SCAMS is targeting utility consumers, as fraudsters alter their strategies and seek to capitalize on vulnerabilities created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members need to stay vigilant because scammers have adapted their tactics over the past two years to exploit consumer vulnerabilities and changes in habits created by the pandemic.

The increased use of technology paired with concerns about the economy have created a breeding ground for scams, according to Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS).

Numbers from the Federal Trade Commission show that consumer fraud in general spiked during the past two years. 8002703601

In 2021, about a quarter of all reported fraud losses stemmed from scams originating on social media. Those scams resulted in \$770 million in total losses, which is an 18-fold increase from 2017, according to the agency's latest Consumer Protection Data Spotlight report.

SOMOS, the entity that manages toll-free numbers in the U.S., tracks when those numbers are used fraudulently. They often work with UUAS to combat scams, and their collaboration has shut down more than 12,000 phone numbers since 2017.

If you receive a suspicious message out of the ordinary—whether a phone call, text, social media message or email—regarding your electric cooperative account, please contact Tri-County Electric Cooperative immediately. Members can always verify their account status online through the member portal or TCEC Connect. ■

Save the Date!

Tri-County Electric Cooperative's 83rd Annual Meeting of the Members is Tuesday, October 4.

Watch your Texas Co-op Power magazine for more Annual Meeting details.

2022 Annual Meeting and Election

BY ANNIE WATSON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

AT TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, member-owners have the opportunity to get involved in the business of the utility by voting in the election and joining us for the annual meeting. Each member carries the same vote as all other members, regardless of the amount of services delivered or consumed. One member, one vote – that is the co-op way. Additionally, you have the opportunity to elect the entire board of directors regardless of the district in which you reside. Director candidates are nominated from within their district but are elected by the membership as a whole each year at annual meeting.

Below, you will see the director districts up for election this year and the candidates approved by the Committee on Nominations and Qualifications. Incumbents are **Steve Harris** (district 5), **Larry Miller** (district 7) and **Max Waddell** (district 9). These candidates currently sit on the board of directors and are seeking reelection. **Mike Hall** (district 5) and **Sommer Portwood** (district 7) are nomination candidates. Each of the candidates submitted their application packets by the deadline and were ratified by the committee to be placed on the election ballot. Candidate biographies will be published next month in the August *Texas Co-op Power* magazine. 800889705

The 2022 election ballot will be mailed to members in early September on the *Texas Co-op Power* magazine. Members will have the choice to vote electronically using the credentials on their ballot or vote by mail. Tri-County Electric Co-op partnered with Survey and Ballot Systems to conduct the election.

Voting is one of the most significant principles in the cooperative business model. I encourage you to exercise your right as a Tri-County Electric Co-op member by participating in this year’s election. ■

District 5



**STEVE
HARRIS**

INCUMBENT



**MIKE
HALL**

NOMINATION
CANDIDATE

District 7



**LARRY
MILLER**

INCUMBENT



**SOMMER
PORTWOOD**

NOMINATION
CANDIDATE

District 9



**MAX
WADDELL**

INCUMBENT

Meet the Candidates

Join us virtually at 6:30 p.m.
on Thursday, August 18, for the
candidate forum.

Additional details, including
information on how to
participate, will be in the August
Texas Co-op Power.



SHANA BROCK | SHANAPHOTOGRAPHY@GMAIL.COM

‘Last of the Miller Creek Cowgirls’ leaves a legacy in Baylor County

BY BOB BUCKEL, COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE

THEY SAY OLD COWBOYS never die – they just ride off into the sunset.

The same holds true for cowgirls.

Betty Lynn Styles was 88 when she passed away on Feb. 5, 2022. The middle child of seven, she grew up on a ranch and followed her daddy around like a shadow until she was as comfortable on a horse as she was on her feet. She went to Texas Tech, where she studied animal husbandry and was often the only woman in her classes. She earned fame as a barrel racer and escorted decorated WWII veteran Audie Murphy at the head of Tech’s rodeo parade in 1953. 800917112

When she came home, she worked Fridays at the Seymour Livestock Auction and began a 10-year courtship with the youngest sheriff in Texas. On Flag Day in 1963, she and Wesley Styles got married.

Betty Lynn cooked for the jail, and the food was so good many

inmates preferred to serve their time rather than post bail. In 1969, Wesley became a Texas Ranger and they moved to Huntsville, where he served in Company A. Betty kept books for the Huntsville Livestock Auction. When Wesley retired from the Rangers in 1989, they returned to Seymour, and he put in three years as investigator for the Baylor County District Attorney’s office.

Betty went back to ranching – but in truth, she’d never really quit. It was who she was.

“She loved ranch life, cattle, horses, rodeos, parades, and grand entries,” her obituary said. “A skilled horsewoman, she was the happiest horseback riding.”

It was also well-known that she carried a pistol, and was a crack shot. Her legend includes several stories about shooting rattlesnakes right between the eyes.

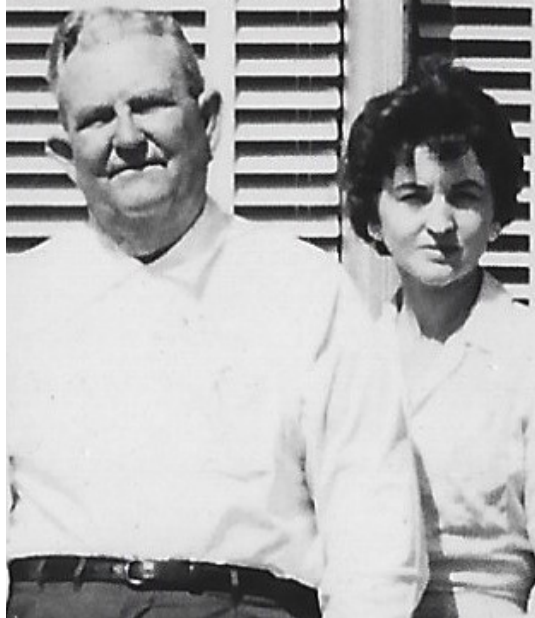
“I’m sure she started carrying that pistol when she and Wesley

OPPOSITE: "Miss Betty" could estimate the pay-weight of cattle just by looking at them.

LEFT: In an early 1960s B-K Electric Co-op photo, Betty stood with longtime general manager Tom Craddock.

RIGHT: In her young days, Betty Lynn Stout was a perennial rodeo queen.

BELOW: Betty's silhouette is unmistakable as she drives among the cattle.



married," her sister, Trixie, said. "I actually never saw it, but I always knew she had it."

Trixie said she regretted not getting in the obituary that Betty carried a .38.

"The pistol weighed almost as much as she did," her sister laughed.

PRE-CO-OP POWER

Betty Lynn had just turned seven when her family got electricity, in December 1940, at their ranch on Miller Creek, southwest of Seymour. Lowe and Alice Stout's place was one of those named in an article in the Baylor County *Banner* detailing the route of the first rural power line – big news after years of work to extend power outside of Seymour.

The line was not built by a co-op, but by Baylor Electric Co. – a nonprofit set up by Seymour's leaders to get around a judge's ruling that cities could not build lines beyond their city limits. B-K Electric Cooperative was incorporated in June 1941 and began building its own system, working in cooperation with the city and Baylor Electric to avoid duplication. In 1945, at the REA's urging, Baylor Electric merged with the co-op. Fifty-three years later, B-K became part of Tri-County Electric Cooperative. 800731953

Back in the 1950s and '60s, in addition to her Friday job at the livestock auction, Betty worked for about 12 years in the office of B-K Electric Co-op. Tom Craddock, who managed the co-op from its beginning until his death in 1974, was a longtime family friend. Harry Portwood, a neighbor, was one of the co-op's original directors along with Charlie Porter, who served as a pallbearer when Betty's father died in 1961.

"Betty Lynn was big on electric power," Trixie said. "When she went to work at B-K they told her right off that Daddy had never, ever, been late paying a bill. I had heard Daddy say that was the best money he could spend. He liked writing a check to B-K Electric."

Trixie pointed out that the family did not have phone service until 1963 – but they'd had electricity all her life.

CATTLEWOMAN

In 2001, Betty needed a little help at roundup time, so she called on Sergio Nuñez.

"I was living in Megargel, working for a man, and he was her friend," Nuñez said. "I met her, and she asked me for help shipping her cattle."

He talked to his boss, well-known rancher Red Livingston. When he mentioned Betty's name, Livingston said, "You go help that lady anytime she calls you." He even offered to pay Nuñez – but Betty Lynn wouldn't hear of it. She wrote him a check, then took a picture of it so she could prove to Livingston that she'd paid him.

"After that, anytime she needed some help she'd call me up and say, 'We're going to ship some cattle. You need to find some cowboys.'" Nuñez said. "So that was my job."

Trixie said Betty loved everything about ranching and ranch life, especially working cattle: receiving, branding, feeding, watering, doctoring and shipping. She had an uncanny ability to estimate the pay-weight of a steer, and her knowledge of the industry was formidable. 800791143

Seymour photographer Shana Brock said it was a joy just to listen. "She explained things to people," she said. "There was so much in that farming and ranching community – if you just listened, you'd learn the most random, insightful things. It really was amazing the wisdom she passed on."

Nuñez said working cattle for Miss Betty almost always involved food – usually brisket – and what he described as "the best beans in the world." She would often call him to come by and get some. "She was just like my mom," he said.

Along with cooking, Betty enjoyed drinking coffee with her



SHANA BROCK | SHANAPHOTOGRAPHY@GMAIL.COM

friends at the Rock Inn Café, where in 2005 the television show “Texas Country Reporter” filmed an episode that featured their most famous customer.

“I think she had on a purple shirt, and she went trotting right in there for her coffee,” Trixie said. “It was exciting to see Betty Lynn on TV.”

EVERYONE’S FAVORITE AUNT

Wesley and Betty Lynn did not have children, but she had 25 nieces and nephews and showered them with affection, food and attention. Niece Molly Urbanczyk remembers going to Huntsville with her cousin Wendy and staying a week with Aunt Betty and Uncle Wesley during the summers. Other nieces and nephews praised her cooking and recalled generous gifts at birthdays and Christmas.

Shana Brock’s dad had been one of Betty’s coffee-drinking buddies at the Rock Inn. After he passed, Shana took up the friendship.

“She was just such a sweetheart,” Brock said. “My kids, every Christmas she would give them a \$2 bill in a bank envelope, or she would get silver dollars, things like that. She would give any kid she knew stuff like that. She remembered them.”

In 2018, Betty invited Shana to ride around with her as they shipped cattle.

“She asked if I wanted to come along,” Brock said. “I’m a photographer, so I was like, ‘Heck, yeah!’ She was just so excited about being there and being a part of it.”

That day yielded some of the photographs that accompany this article.

Betty dressed the part: white shirts, starched and creased Wranglers, beautiful boots, leather belts and shiny buckles. She was a cowgirl from head to toe. 800612201

Nuñez vividly remembered her last grand entry.

“She said, ‘I need you to catch me a horse for the Seymour rodeo. I’m going to ride in the rodeo parade one more time.’” he said.

“So I got her horse and saddled him up.”

By that time, he said, she weighed less than 90 pounds. He helped her into the saddle, and she rode through town and into the arena.

“Then we came back, and she got off and said, ‘Okay, I’m done. That’s my last ride.’”

Three days after she died, a niece called Nunez and suggested he go to the courthouse. That’s when he learned she had deeded her house to him in her will.

“Like I said, she was like my mama,” Nuñez said. “Lot of people missing her here, for sure.” ■



Sergio Nuñez, on horseback, worked for Betty Lynn for more than 20 years.

Photo by Shana Brock

Tri-County Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

CONTACT US

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Darryl Schriver

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Text: OUTAGE to 25069

ABOUT TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP

Tri-County Electric Co-op owns and maintains more than 9,600 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 99,800 members in Archer, Baylor, Denton, Foard, Haskell, Hood, Jack, King, Knox, Palo Pinto, Parker, Stonewall, Tarrant, Throckmorton, Wilbarger, and Wise counties.

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Aledo
200 Bailey Ranch Road, Aledo 76008

Azle
600 NW Parkway, Azle 76020

Granbury
1623 Weatherford Highway, Granbury 76048

Keller
4900 Keller-Hicks Road, Fort Worth 76244

Seymour
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IT PAYS TO STAY INFORMED

Find your account number in pages 18-25 of *Texas Co-op Power*, and you will receive a \$20 credit on your electric bill. Simply contact one of the offices listed above and make them aware of your discovery!

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Peach Cobbler

BY EL PRITZ
SPRINGTOWN

- 1 stick butter, melted
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ tsp baking powder
- 1 cup milk
- 2 cans of peach pie filling

1. Melt butter in a 9 x 13 pan.
2. Mix flour, sugar, baking powder and milk together. Pour into butter. Pour pie filling over batter.
3. Bake at 350°F for 50-60 minutes, or until golden brown.
4. Enjoy!



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OUTAGE TEXTING

Text "OUTAGE"
to 25069
to report your outage

A close-up of a person's hand holding a black smartphone, with the thumb positioned over the screen as if about to text. The hand is wearing a black leather watch.

The logo for Tri-County Electric Co-op, featuring a stylized lightning bolt and the text "TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP INC." and "A Touchstone Energy Cooperative".

For more info: tcectexas.com/outage-texting

Tri-County Electric Co-op
Member Recipe Submission Form

MEMBER

CITY

EMAIL or PHONE NUMBER

RECIPE NAME

SUBMITTING YOUR RECIPE:

EMAIL: Please include the above information with your recipe and send to pr@tcectexas.com

ONLINE: tcectexas.com/recipe-submission

MAIL: Please detach and submit this form with your recipe and mail to:
Tri-County Electric Cooperative
Attn: Recipe Submission
200 Bailey Ranch Road
Alledo, Texas 76008

The logo for Tri-County Electric Co-op, featuring a stylized lightning bolt and the text "TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP INC." and "A Touchstone Energy Cooperative".

For the Man Who Gives Everything and Expects Nothing



If you're anything like my dad, you give your family everything. Your name, your time, your values — the people in your life know they can depend on you for practically anything. In exchange for imparting all of this energy and experience, you expect nothing in return.

The point? You deserve to treat yourself once in a while. You do so much for the people you care about. Now it's time to focus on you for just a few minutes. That's where the Men's Due Volta Watch comes in. This astonishing innovation provides a digital readout that's powered by a precise quartz engine, combining both analog and digital timekeeping.

Outfitted with a stopwatch, alarm, a.m./p.m. settings, and day, date and month complications, this timepiece stands out from the crowd. With its large face and handsome, masculine design, this watch is perfect for the back nine and the happy hour afterwards. Water-resistant up to 3 ATM, this timepiece won't wimp out if you have a run-in with a water hazard.

Other hybrid watches can sell for thousands of dollars, but because we've built more than 1 million watches, we know how to create real value. That's why we can offer this timepiece for just \$79! If you're not completely satisfied with this watch, return it for a full refund.

Act quickly! This one-of-a-kind watch has been one of our fastest sellers this year. Of our original run of 2,872, we only have 389 left for this ad! In the last couple of years there's been a watch shortage, but Stauer has got you covered. If you're the kind of man who gives everything and expects nothing in return, it's time to treat yourself.

Watch Specifications:

- Complications: stopwatch, alarm, a.m./p.m. settings, and day, date and month
- Precision movement chronograph
- Stainless steel caseback and crown
- Water-resistant to 3 ATM

Men's Due Volta Watch ~~\$399~~ **\$79*** + S&P **Save \$320**

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"This knife is beautiful!" — J., La Crescent, MN



It was a perfect late autumn day in the northern Rockies. Not a cloud in the sky, and just enough cool in the air to stir up nostalgic memories of my trip into the backwoods. This year, though, was different. I was going it solo. My two buddies, pleading work responsibilities, backed out at the last minute. So, armed with my trusty knife, I set out for adventure.

Well, what I found was a whole lot of trouble. As in 8 feet and 800-pounds of trouble in the form of a grizzly bear. Seems this grumpy fella was out looking for some adventure too. Mr. Grizzly saw me, stood up to his entire 8 feet of ferocity and let out a roar that made my blood turn to ice and my hair stand up. Unsnapping my leather sheath, I felt for my hefty, trusty knife and felt emboldened. I then showed the massive grizzly over 6 inches of 420 surgical grade stainless steel, raised my hands and yelled, "Whoa bear! Whoa bear!" I must have made my point, as he gave me an almost admiring grunt before turning tail and heading back into the woods.

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I was pretty shaken, but otherwise fine. Once the adrenaline high subsided, I decided I had some work to do back home too. That was more than enough adventure for one day.

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Make sure to act quickly. The Grizzly Hunting Knife has been such a hit that we're having trouble keeping it in stock. Our first release of more than 1,200 SOLD OUT in TWO DAYS! After months of waiting on our artisans, we've finally gotten some knives back in stock. Only 1,337 are available at this price, and half of them have already sold!

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Colorado's Texas Bridge

The Royal Gorge Bridge, highest in America, was built and owned by Texans

BY W.F. STRONG

BRIDGES ARE MEASURED in three ways: longest, tallest and highest. In Texas, the Fred Hartman Bridge across the Houston Ship Channel boasts the longest span at 1,250 feet and is the tallest at 440 feet. But it's not the highest. That honor goes to the aptly named Pecos High Bridge, where the deck is an astounding 273 feet above the Pecos River—nearly a football field straight up.

The highest bridge in America is the Royal Gorge Bridge—just shy of 1,000 feet high. It's in Colorado. But without Texas, it might not exist at all.

The Royal Gorge Bridge was the dream of Lon P. Piper of San Antonio. They say he stood on the edge of the gorge in 1928

and imagined laying a bridge across it. He had already built a bridge across the Rio Grande into Mexico.

The Royal Gorge would be different though. It would be a bridge to nowhere, one that would exist purely to give tourists heart-stopping views they couldn't get anywhere else in the world.

Within two years it was done—at a cost of \$350,000, or more than \$6.2 million today. When it was finished, Piper owned the highest bridge in the world, and it would remain so for 72 years.

Piper hired bridge engineer George Cole of Houston to design the Royal Gorge Bridge and to serve as the general contractor. With 80 workers, they com-

pleted the project in seven months without a fatality or any serious injuries.

As I learned about the bridge's history, I couldn't help but notice its national character. It was a bridge built by Texans in Colorado spanning the Arkansas River with Oregon timber for the deck. Cole went on to design and build a railroad that would take brave riders to the bottom of the gorge at a 45-degree angle. Now there are gondolas far above the gorge for those who want to go higher still and zip lines for those who can't get enough tachycardia in their lives.

In 1947, Piper sold the bridge to another Texan, Clint Murchison Sr., who bought it sight unseen as an investment and strangely never traveled there to walk across his magnificent possession. Instead, Murchison set up the Royal Gorge Bridge Co. and managed the Colorado property from Dallas. When he died, the bridge was passed on to his sons, Clint Murchison Jr. (you remember him—he founded and owned the Dallas Cowboys for 25 years) and John Murchison. When John died, his wife, Lucille, inherited the bridge, and they say she just loved it, traveling often to see it.

For the past 21 years, Texan Mike Bandera has served as the Royal Gorge Bridge's general manager of operations. But today, the bridge—after nearly 100 years—has Colorado ownership. After Lucille Murchison passed it on to her grandchildren, they sold it a few years ago to nearby Cañon City.

So I'd like to say this to Colorado, about the world-class bridge we envisioned, financed, built and managed for you all those years: You're welcome. ■

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



Stone Fruits

This season of abundance offers a variety of delectable options

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

When summer hits, I know I'm not the only one looking forward to that first bite of a juicy peach. My family loads up on stone fruits, making sure to have enough to cover our snack cravings and to enjoy in sweet and savory recipes. In this curry, fresh nectarines take the place of the dried fruits more commonly used. You can peel the nectarines if you like; I keep the skins intact to let them bubble away into the sauce.



Chicken Nectarine Curry

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs
2 teaspoons salt, divided use
½ teaspoon pepper, divided use
1 onion, halved and thinly sliced
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
2 teaspoons cumin
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon ground coriander
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
⅛ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
1 cup chicken broth
4 nectarines, pitted and sliced
½ cup chopped fresh parsley, divided use
2 cups cooked couscous
¼ cup roughly chopped pistachios (optional)

1. In a large straight-sided skillet with a lid, add oil and heat over medium-high. Season the chicken on both sides with half of the salt and pepper, then add to the hot skillet. Cook until browned on both sides, about 12 minutes total. Remove from pan and set aside on a plate.

2. Reduce heat to medium and add onion. Sauté until slightly softened, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and ginger and cook another 30 seconds. Stir in remaining salt, pepper and spices, and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.

3. Add a small amount of chicken broth to deglaze the pan, scraping the bottom, then pour in remaining broth. Return chicken to the pan with any accumulated juices. Scatter nectarine slices over the top.

4. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for about 25 minutes. Remove lid and stir occasionally. Once chicken is tender, simmer uncovered for 5 minutes to thicken sauce. Stir in half the parsley and serve over couscous, with remaining parsley and pistachios for garnish.

SERVES 4

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Peach Barbecue Sauce.



Apricot Scones

JANET EAKINS
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC

These tender scones, a perfect way to feature dried apricots, are wonderful straight out of the oven but also keep well, so you can enjoy them multiple days in a row.

2½ cups flour
½ cup plus 2 teaspoons sugar, divided use
2 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cold and cut into pieces
1 cup finely chopped dried apricots
1 cup plus 1½ tablespoons heavy cream, divided use, plus more as needed

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment.
2. In a large bowl, combine flour, ½ cup sugar, baking powder and salt. Using a pastry blender or two knives, cut butter into flour mixture until crumbly and butter is evenly blended. Add apricots, stirring to mix well. Add 1 cup cream, stirring just until dry ingredients are moistened. If mixture looks too dry, stir in more cream, 1 tablespoon at a time, until dough is equally moistened and coming together.
3. On a lightly floured surface, scoop out dough and knead gently just to bring it together. Pat dough into an 8- to 9-inch circle and cut into 8 equal wedges. Place on baking sheet slightly separated, brush with remaining 1½ tablespoons cream and sprinkle with remaining sugar. Bake 20 minutes or until browned.

SERVES 8

MORE RECIPES >

\$500 WINNER

Peach Cream Cheese Danish

MARY MITCHELL
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC



Easy to make and bursting with peaches, this braided danish makes for an elegant presentation on the brunch or dessert table. Swap in your favorite fresh or canned fruits and serve as is or with ice cream on the side.

SERVES 6



FILLING

6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
¼ cup sugar
1 egg yolk, at room temperature
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon lemon juice
Pinch of salt

PASTRY

Flour, for dusting
1 sheet puff pastry, thawed
1 can (15 ounces) sliced peaches, drained and sliced into bite-size pieces
1 egg
1 tablespoon water
1–2 tablespoons coarse sugar

GLAZE

⅓ cup powdered sugar
1½ teaspoons milk

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. **FILLING** In a bowl, beat together cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add egg yolk, vanilla, lemon juice and salt and beat together until well blended.
3. **PASTRY** Lightly dust a sheet of parchment with flour and roll out puff pastry, flattening creases if needed. Set onto a rimmed baking sheet. Spread cream cheese mixture down the middle of the pastry lengthwise, leaving a 1-inch border at the top and bottom. Spoon diced peaches onto the cream cheese mixture.
4. Use kitchen shears or a paring knife to cut an equal number of 1-inch strips diagonally down both sides of the pastry, leaving ½ inch between the filling and the start of each cut. Braid the pastry strips by folding them into the middle, alternating from side to side.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together egg and water and brush over pastry. Sprinkle with coarse sugar. Bake 25–30 minutes or until pastry is golden brown. Let cool to room temperature.
6. **GLAZE** In a small bowl, whisk together powdered sugar and milk until smooth, then drizzle glaze over the pastry and let set or serve immediately.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

FINGER FOODS DUE JULY 10

Bite-size foods are perfect for holiday gatherings, tailgating or just hanging out. Submit your recipes on our website by July 10 for a chance to win \$500.





Easy Cherry Pie

POLLY BELT
COSERV

Instead of a bottom crust, this pie features a buttery crumble topping that bakes into the filling. Make sure to keep the syrup separate from the pie until ready to serve so the topping stays delightfully crisp.

1 can (14.5 ounces) sour or tart pitted cherries
1 cup plus 1 tablespoon flour, divided

use
1½ cups sugar, divided use
½ cup chopped pecans
1 teaspoon baking powder
¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon salt
1 egg
¾ cup (1½ sticks) butter, melted

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and set a rimmed baking sheet on the lower rack to catch any spilled juices.

2. Drain the juice from the cherries into a small saucepan and reserve. Pour the cherries into the bottom of an ungreased 9-inch pie dish.

3. In a medium bowl, combine 1 cup flour, 1 cup sugar, pecans, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Using a fork, mix in egg until mixture is evenly moist and crumbly. Spread evenly over the cherries. Pour the melted butter over the crumble topping, coating it completely.

4. Bake 40 minutes, until browned. Let pie cool while you make the sauce.

5. To make the sauce, whisk together

remaining flour and sugar. Place reserved saucepan of juice over medium heat, whisking in sugar mixture. Cook until slightly thickened, then remove from heat (sauce will thicken more as it cools).

6. Serve slices of pie with spoonfuls of warm sauce over the top.

SERVES 6-8

TCP You'll find hundreds more recipes featuring these and other stone fruits on our website. Most of them are from the kitchens of *Texas Co-op Power* readers just like you.



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Creeping Along

I was brave enough to visit the eerie Ghost Road. How about you?

BY CHET GARNER

I VIVIDLY REMEMBER the first time I set out to see the Saratoga lights. My mom loaded up the family van with as many people as it could carry so we could experience a bona fide unsolved mystery.

Generations of locals say the lights are a periodic presence of unexplainable orbs and lights dancing up and down an old Big Thicket dirt road under a dark canopy of piney woods. My mom killed the headlights, and we crept along, holding our breath. My only comfort was that I was inside a locked car.

Bragg Road (aka Ghost Road) is a rite of passage in East Texas, between Beaumont and Livingston. It's only about 8 miles long, originally a railroad spur used during the East Texas oil boom. Legend holds this run through swampy land was full of danger, and crews suffered numerous casualties from accidents, malaria and other perils. Some say those killed never left the work site.

The tracks and ties were removed in the 1930s, leaving a very straight road that anyone with a healthy dose of Lone Star courage can drive to see if the ghostly orbs appear. Some say they change colors. Others say they dart back and forth, even coming toward vehicles at light speed.

Naysayers believe they're simply distant headlights, and scientists explain them as swamp gas. But nobody can explain everything that happens out there in the dark.

It took Mom over an hour to drive the entire length of Bragg Road. Every couple minutes she would yell, "Did you see that?" or "Whoa, that was beautiful." As soon as I looked, the light (or whatever it was) would be gone.

By the end, I didn't see a thing. But I did settle the fact that I was brave enough to travel the infamous Ghost Road. ■

ABOVE Chet discovers that what you don't see can be as frightening as what you do see on the Ghost Road.

TCP A dark lane with a chance of ghosts. What could go wrong? See Chet's video on our website to find out. Watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

JULY

08

Canton [8-9] Balloon Fest,
balloonfestcanton.com,
(903) 567-1849

**Lewisville [8-10] Texas
Art and Literary Festival,**
texasartandlitfest.com

09

**Galveston Bill Engvall
Farewell Tour,** thegrand.com,
(409) 765-1894

**Grapevine 1920s Ice
Cream Social at Nash
Farm,** 1-800-457-6338,
nashfarm.org

**Lampasas Toughest 10K
in Texas,** runsignup.com,
toughest10klampasas@
gmail.com

La Porte Cycling Saturday,
(281) 479-2431, thc.texas.gov

**Mason Roundup Festival
and Parade,** (325) 347-5758,
masontxcoc.com

**McDade Watermelon
Festival,** (512) 736-4302,
mcdadetexas.com

**Meridian Chisholm Trail
Roundup,** (254) 435-2381,
facebook.com/meridiantx

Palacios Poker in Palacios,
(361) 972-2615,
palacioschamber.com

**Palestine East Texas
Southern Soul Zydeco
and Blues Festival,**
(832) 892-1407, eventbrite.com

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

**Kerrville [9-10] Summer
Market,** 1-888-225-3427,
kerrvilletexascvb.com

Palestine [9, 16, 23, 30, Aug. 6] Farm & Flower Market, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

14

San Angelo [14–Sept. 11] Banjara Textiles From a Private Collection, (325) 653-3333, samfa.org

15

Ennis [15–16] Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County Quilt Show, (972) 878-4748, elliscountyquilters.com

Bastrop [15–17] Corvette Invasion, (512) 303-0558, corvetteinvasion.com

Laredo [15–17] International Sister Cities Festival, (956) 795-2200, visitlaredo.com

16

Paris Tour de Paris, (903) 784-2501, tourdeparis.org

Round Rock Colombian Fest ATX, (512) 903-8929, colombianfestatx.com

Fredericksburg [16–17] Night in Old Fredericksburg, (830) 997-2359, gillespiefair.com

Waco [16–17] Duel on the Brazos, (830) 385-3106, sdbaracing.com/schedule

19

Lubbock [19–23, 25–30] **Hamilton**, (806) 792-8339, visitlubbock.org

21

Waco [21–24] Deep in the Heart Film Festival, deepintheheartff.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP 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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Pick of the Month

Salt Lime & a Good Time

Comanche, July 23
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comanchechamber.org

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JULY EVENTS CONTINUED

22

Kyle Dive-in Movie: Lilo & Stitch, (512) 262-3939, cityofkyle.com

Lubbock Dwight Yoakam, (806) 792-8339, visitlubbock.org

Waxahachie [22-23] Metroplex Archaeological Society Indian Artifact Show, (469) 309-4040, waxahachie.com

Palestine [22-24, 29-31] The Little Mermaid, (903) 724-4385, visitpalestine.com

Victoria [22-24, 28-31] The Wizard of Oz, (361) 570-8587, theatrevictoria.org

Lockhart [22-24, 29-31, Aug. 5-6] Annie Get Your Gun, (512) 376-5653, mygbt.org

23

Bandera National Day of the American Cowboy, (830) 796-3045, banderacowboycapital.com

San Angelo National Cowboy Day, (325) 657-4444, fortconcho.com

28

Buffalo Gap [23-24] Tour de Gap, (325) 829-0617, tourdegap.com

Gonzales [23-24] Float Fest, floatfest.net

Salado [23, 30, Aug. 6], Salado Legends, (254) 308-2200, tablerock.org

Clute [28-30] Great Texas Mosquito Festival, (979) 265-8392, mosquitofestival.com

29

Fredericksburg [29-31] Hill Country Auto Swap Meet, (254) 751-7958, visitfredericksburgtx.com

Junction [29-31] Sizzler Disc Golf Tournament, (361) 549-5507, junctiontexas.com/disc-golf

San Angelo [29-Aug. 5] Wild West Fest, facebook.com/wildwestfestsanangelo

Stafford [29-31, Aug. 5-7, 12-14] The SpongeBob Musical, (713) 302-5329, inspirationstage.com

30

Bowie July Jam, (940) 872-6246, cityofbowietx.com

Lubbock An Evening With Journey, (806) 742-7362, visitlubbock.org

AUGUST

02

Bandera Cowboy Capital Opry, (830) 796-4969, banderatex.com

06

Camp Wood Nueces Canyon Old Settlers Reunion, (830) 597-6241, nuecescanyonchamber.org

Frankston Neches River Wilderness Race, (903) 245-9490, necheswildernessrace.com

Morning Glory

A new day is dawning in Co-op Country, and members have captured the magnificence, from dewy haze to warm sunshine. So fetch yourself a cup of coffee, and let's greet the sunup.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 DANNY VIVIAN
NUECES EC
"The sun rises over the breakers near Port Aransas."

2 BRIAN FOX
PEDERNALES EC
Sunrise over Caprock Canyons State Park.

3 CASSIE DE LEON
TRI-COUNTY EC
"Breakfast. Need I say more?"

4 MICHAEL HRISCHUK
TRINITY VALLEY EC
"Our backyard on a cool fall morning."



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TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more Morning Glory photos from readers.





Can't Top This

Finding more than just a sense of accomplishment on Guadalupe Peak

BY ANDY RHODES
PHOTO BY E. DAN KLEPPER

"HOW FAR AWAY is the peak?"

"Once you get to the really hard part, you're nearly there."

"Wait ... *this* isn't the really hard part?"

I was approaching the summit of Guadalupe Peak—or at least I thought I was—and glad to catch my breath while giving my rubbery legs a break. After encountering the descending hiker, I was momentarily discouraged but not daunted. My three-hour trek in far West Texas had so far been challenging but not overwhelming, and I wanted to carry my momentum all 8,751 feet up to the tallest natural point in the state.

The last eighth of a mile was indeed tricky—a couple sheer rock faces (I didn't look down) and large boulders to ascend—but it never felt dangerous. Finally, I took one giant step and came face to face

with a metal pyramid atop the peak.

But I also encountered something I hadn't expected: Surrounding the sculpture was a spontaneous community. About a dozen of us smiling hikers shared the rewarding accomplishment of having just summited Guadalupe Peak. Cheers of "You did it!" and "Welcome to the top of Texas!" erupted. We beamed with adrenaline and pride, knowing how much planning, commitment, resolve and stamina it took to conquer such a formidable foe.

I was also rewarded by the most spectacular 360-degree views I've ever seen in Texas. It was a perfect fall day—65 and sunny—so visibility was pristine. The sky was pure blue, a cheerful overstretched canvas. I took in multicolored ridges of mountains stretching for miles and miles beyond Guadalupe Mountains National Park.

I had started the day with a hearty breakfast and hit the trail in the cool shade. The first hour was tough, with tight switchbacks and steep ascents. I reminded myself I wasn't in a race and listened to my body's cues; when I felt weary, I'd stop for water or take a few bites of a protein bar. My trusty trekking poles helped me navigate the rocky trail and pivot up tough spots.

The second hour was easier—a large section of trees provided welcome shade, and I noticed more flora, including jade-colored desert scrub and small waxy succulents. The trail was well maintained and easy to navigate, which helped guide me through the final stretch.

By the end, my legs were fatigued, but that seemed a small price. I was excited about completing the quest. When the shiny obelisk entered my view, the smile on my face reflected the joy I felt in joining my new community.

At that moment, it felt like the top of the world. It just so happened that it actually was. ■



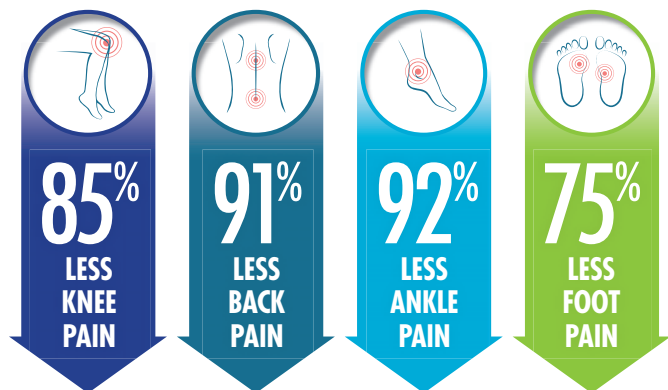
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