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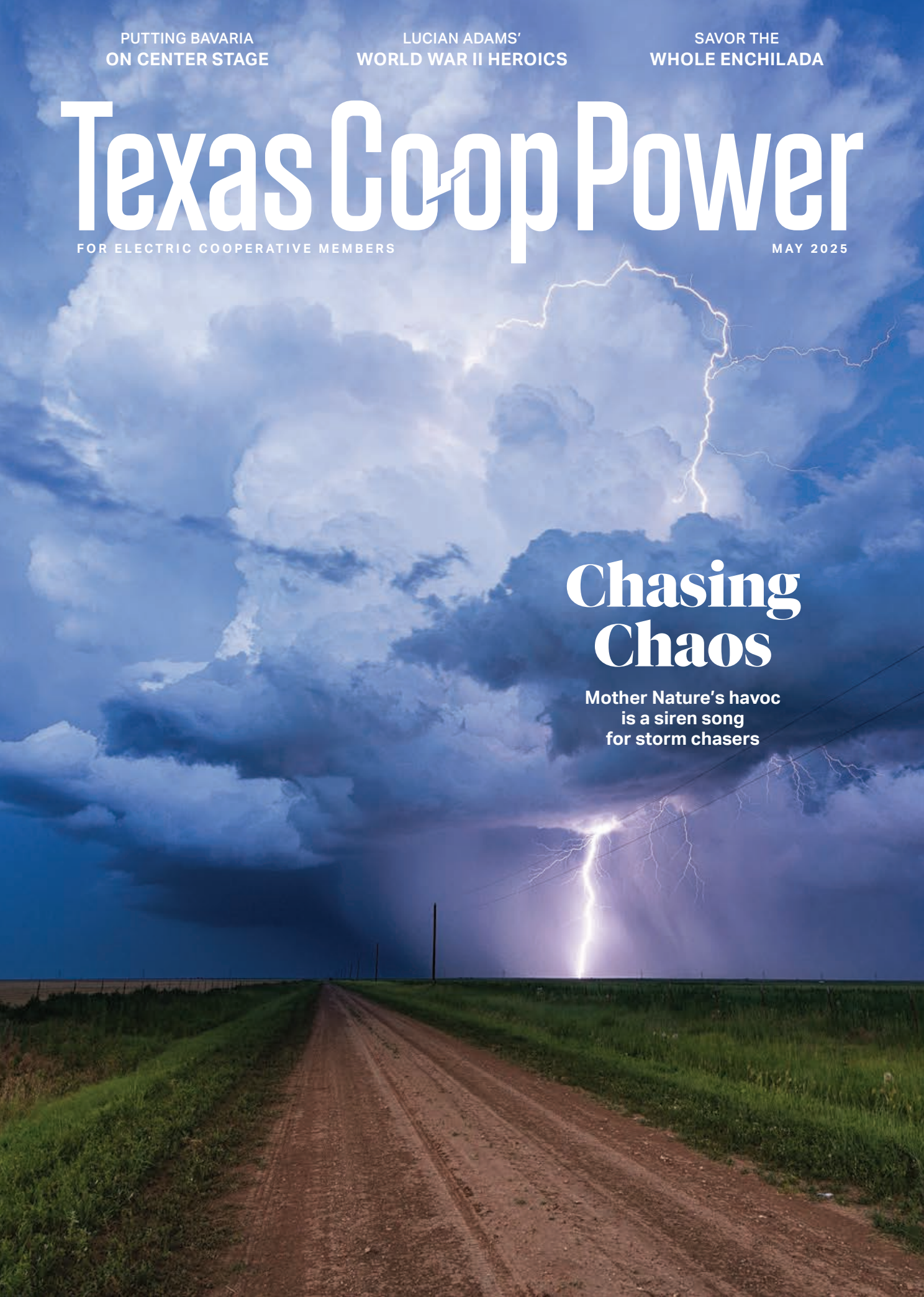
Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

MAY 2025

Chasing Chaos

Mother Nature's havoc
is a siren song
for storm chasers



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May 2025



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06 Twisted Approach

Storm chasers go to great and dangerous lengths for thrills and scientific research.

By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Bavaria, By Way of Texas

Yodeling takes this German back home, even after decades of running a restaurant and entertaining in tiny Walburg.

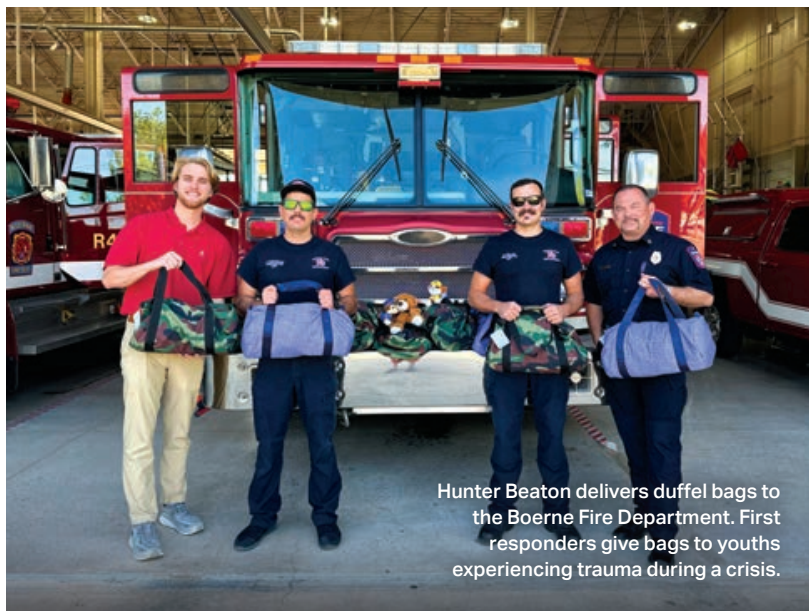
Story and photo by Erich Schlegel

ON THE COVER
Supercells like this one near Claude trigger an adrenaline rush for storm chasers.
Photo by Jenny Brown

ABOVE
Ronny Tippelt and the Walburg Boys entertain in the Bavarian style.
Photo by Erich Schlegel

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A Case Study in Compassion



Hunter Beaton delivers duffel bags to the Boerne Fire Department. First responders give bags to youths experiencing trauma during a crisis.

NATIONAL FOSTER CARE DAY is the first Tuesday in May—May 6 this year.

For Hunter Beaton, every day is foster care day. Beaton, disturbed that foster children showed up at adoptive homes carrying all their possessions in trash bags, used his 2016 Eagle Scout project to offer some measure of dignity for them.

He raised \$10,000 and filled 100 duffel bags to give to Texas foster kids.

When requests for duffels kept pouring in, Beaton knew he found his lifelong mission. He started the nonprofit Day 1 Bags, which has since delivered 224,000 bags in 47 states and drove 2023 legislation in Texas requiring the state to maintain a supply of proper luggage for foster youths.

Beaton said in 2018, when we first wrote about the Bandera Electric Cooperative member, after his parents adopted three foster children, “They had all their possessions in a black trash bag. How awful is that? I decided to find a way to say, ‘No, no kid deserves this.’”

To help Beaton in his mission, go to day1bags.org.



Cinco Celebrations

Cinco de Mayo has become a day to commemorate Mexican culture and heritage in the U.S., where it is more celebrated than in Mexico. May 5, 1862, is when the Mexican army defeated invading French forces at the Battle of Puebla. Outside of that city, the day doesn't get much attention in Mexico.

The big celebrations south of the border come on *Diez y Seis*, when Mexicans mark their independence from Spain, on September 16, 1810.



TCP Contests and More

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RECOMMENDED READING

From our archives: In May 2005 we took readers to Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, where endangered and threatened species have found safe haven since 1984. Download the issue at TexasCoopPower.com.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I blush whenever ...

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 March prompt: **Making my bed every morning is ...**

What keeps me from climbing back into it.

MARSHA MOORE
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GRANBURY

Means I've made it through another night, saw another sunrise. Hope I get to make my bed tomorrow.

KENNY COGBURN
CECA
COMANCHE COUNTY

Totally useless since, at 76, I need a nap every day.

CAROLYN SUE HAMMONS
SOUTH PLAINS EC
LUBBOCK

A ritual that started as a requirement and is now a source of happiness.

MARK W. OWEN
BLUEBONNET EC
ELGIN

Visit our website to see more responses.

MARCH 2025 Home of the Brave

“Brig. Gen. George ‘Bud’ Day made me to want to be a pilot growing up, but I did not have the eyesight for it.”

ARTHUR RICHARD TROELL III
VIA FACEBOOK



ROBERT SEALE

Unforgettable Honor

As an Army lieutenant, I was charged with researching and commissioning a series of paintings showing the actions of the Medal of Honor recipients from South Carolina [*Home of the Brave*, March 2025]. It was my privilege to talk directly with some of the honorees or with their families. It was an honor I won't forget.

Ed Rowland
CECA
Eastland

Return of the Bluebonnets

Nanny's Blessing [March 2025] struck me, as the same miracle happened to me. Our ranch was destroyed by the Eastland Complex Fire three years ago. By a divine hand, bluebonnets returned where the house once stood the following year when there were none for at least 15 years.

Bill Dakin
CECA
Eastland County



SARAH FERONE

Sancho's Long Reach

I enjoyed the J. Frank Dobie tale of the tamale-loving longhorn [*Sancho's Long Road*, March 2025]. It took me back to my childhood when Walt Disney took the story and made it an episode of his long-running Sunday night TV show. It was about Texas, so I had to watch it.

Michael Bolton
CoServ
Little Elm

Dancing Memories

I would like to see an article about polka and waltz music/dancing/bands being handed down through the generations [*It's Hip To Be a Square*, February 2025].

These bands play at church picnics, festivals, old dance halls—you name it—almost the whole year in south Central Texas. I learned to dance to Joe Patek in Shiner.

Del Jean (Leck) Bauer
GVEC
La Vernia

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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

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

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER Volume 81, Number 11 (USPS 540-560). *Texas Co-op Power* is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives. Periodical postage paid at Austin, TX, and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 76 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power's* website is TexasCoopPower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or email editor@TexasCoopPower.com.

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Storm chasers go to great and dangerous lengths for thrills and scientific research



COURTESY CHELSEA BURNETT

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

Nearly everyone has their passion. Some people love to garden, hike or travel. Others play video games, dance or volunteer.

Chelsea Burnett chases storms. Her unusual passion surfaced at age 2 in the late 1980s, when, upon hearing thunder, she'd rush to a window and search the skies.

"As I got older, I watched the Weather Channel and local weather updates," recalls Burnett, who lives in Little Elm, north of Dallas. "I had weather calendars, and I'd cut out newspaper articles about weather in the region. I also had a weather radio alarm clock that played local forecasts."

Today, Burnett, a member of CoServ, makes a living from weather-related work. So does her husband, Adam Lucio. Their mutual passion led them to become storm chasers—a term for professional and amateur weather watchers who pursue tornadoes, hurricanes and other severe weather.

Why? Some want to see their first tornado. Many crave the adrenaline rush. Others photograph storms for spectacular images, scientific research or news coverage. And these days, social media, mobile devices and even tour groups are making it easier than ever to find and share stunning storms despite extreme risks.



COURTESY ERIC BURNS

Twisted



Approach

OPPOSITE A storm cell produces lightning beyond a church in Gainesville.

ABOVE A Tornadoic Expeditions tour in April 2021 came across a rare weather phenomenon in Lockett: a tornado alongside a rainbow.



COURTESY ERIK BURNS



COURTESY CARRIE CUNNINGHAM

ABOVE A Tornadic Expeditions tour pursued this supercell for 125 miles across West Texas, from Spur to Tuscola.

LEFT Tim Marshall and Carrie Cunningham met in 2010 chasing storms for the Vortex2 research project.

“The first people I see coming into a disaster area are the power crews. It’s amazing how many of them get ready and are there once law enforcement clears the roads.”

Modern-day chasers follow in the wake of David Hoadley, considered to be the father of storm chasing. In 1956, he photographed the aftermath of a severe thunderstorm in his hometown of Bismarck, North Dakota. His fascination led him to drive after and document storms using his own forecast maps. From 1977 to 1986, he published *Storm Track* magazine for the growing chaser community.

At 86, Hoadley, who lives in Falls Church, Virginia, still chases.

“It’s a challenge,” he says. “I enjoy intersecting storms and getting pictures. I just do what I like to do.”

Some words of warning: Chasing is dangerous, sometimes deadly. And even despite the best of safety precautions, accidents happen. In June 2013, three veteran chasers were killed by a tornado near Oklahoma City. Other chasers have died in car crashes while on the road.

In 1996, daring risk-takers came to life when *Twister* tore into theaters nationwide. The disaster film—which inspired a generation of weather scientists—stars Helen Hunt and the late Bill Paxton as storm chasers trying to release data-gathering sensors into a tornado in hopes of improving early warning systems.

The same goal returns in *Twisters*, the action-packed 2024 sequel that features scientists and chasers going up against tornadoes in the social media era using more sophisticated technology.

Tim Marshall of Flower Mound, in the Metroplex, Hoadley’s protégé, started storm chasing in 1978. In those days, he’d stop at pay phones to call the National Weather Service for radar updates. Then he and his partner would take off for a location where a storm might intensify. Or not.

“In the ’70s and ’80s, the odds of catching a tornado were 1 in 20 times when you went out,” says Marshall, who has seen hundreds of twisters. “Now it’s 1 in 8 or 10. It’s still more miss than anything, but the odds are better because of our technology.”

Marshall and Hoadley were among the six inaugural inductees to the National Storm Chaser Hall of Fame in February. Professionally, Marshall, a CoServ member, has worked since 1983 as a meteorologist and forensics engineer. As part of his job, he assesses damaged buildings after catastrophic weather events.

“Before a storm, power crews prestige their trucks,” he says. “So the first people I see coming into a disaster area are the power crews. It’s amazing how many of them get ready and are there once law enforcement clears the roads.”

Most chasers carry first-aid supplies in case they’re the

first on the scene of a disaster.

Carrie Cunningham of Boerne, near San Antonio, met Marshall in 2010 when she volunteered with Vortex2, which was the largest tornado research project of its kind. As a driver, she was among a team of more than 100 scientists and crew members, with 40 support vehicles and 10 mobile radars, who raced after supercell thunderstorms for six weeks across seven Midwestern states.

On June 10, 2010, she witnessed her first tornado with Marshall near Denver. Every season since, she and her husband, Doug, have chased with Marshall. When forecasts and weather models predict risky conditions, the couple pack up and head north.

“We call them ‘chase-cations,’” says Carrie Cunningham, a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative. “It’s not always about seeing a tornado. I just love to drive, visit the small towns, eat in cafés and meet new people. For me, it’s spiritual being with the storms and nature.”

Then there’s the tradition among the community of eating a steak after a sighting.

Myths Busted

MYTH: Areas near mountains, cities and rivers are safe from tornadoes. **FACT:** Twisters can go up mountains, through cities and across rivers, like the 1925 tri-state tornado, which crossed the Mississippi and Wabash rivers and killed nearly 700.

MYTH: Open windows in your house during a tornado to equalize pressure. **FACT:** Do not do this! Your house will not explode, and opening windows will only let in powerful winds. Seek shelter in an interior room.

MYTH: If you’re on the highway with a tornado approaching, find an underpass. **FACT:** As the opening scene of *Twisters* showed, this is a dangerous myth. High-speed flying debris is channeled through underpasses, where winds move at incredible speeds. If a tornado is imminent, seek a ditch, and duck and cover.

Source: National Weather Service



COURTESY ERIK BURNS

“Some of our family think we’re crazy,” she says. “A lot of friends are fascinated, and some say they’d love to go with us.”

For more casual storm adventure seekers, chasing tours can be booked through many companies in Texas and beyond. That is, if they’re not booked up, thanks to renewed interest inspired by *Twisters*.

For example, Tornadic Expeditions completely sold out for 2025 tours by the end of 2024, and 2026 will fill soon. Erik Burns, a Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative member who lives in Whitesboro, near the Oklahoma border, launched the niche business in 2015.

“On a seven-day tour, we cover about 2,500 miles,” says Burns, who met his Australian wife, Emma, on one of his 2019 excursions. “Our tours are laid-back and personable. We only put four guests in a van, so everyone’s got a window seat.”

The U.S. experiences more tornadoes than any other country—about 1,150 per year, which is about five times what Europe will see in a year. And 2024 was the second-worst tornado season on record in the U.S., with more than 1,735 confirmed twisters, including 169 in Texas—more than any other state. On average in the U.S., 73 people die in tornadoes per year.

Burns and his chaser guides conduct five- to 10-day trips from April into July across Tornado Alley, a twister-prone area that roughly spans north from Texas up to Nebraska and South Dakota. Tours may also venture into neighboring states, depending on weather. Guests travel in vans equipped with Wi-Fi, cameras and laptops loaded with radar and satellite-tracking software.

Since 2018, Ray Myers of Plano has been on three Tornadic Expedition tours. He’s also accompanied Burns on numerous

Early Eyes on the Sky

Some of America’s Founding Fathers were avid weather watchers. Thomas Jefferson bought a thermometer while in Philadelphia for the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. He noted that the high temperature there July 4, 1776, was 76. He also owned one of the only barometers in the colonies. George Washington also made regular weather notes. The last weather entry in his diary was made the day before he died.

Source: National Weather Service

solo trips. On April 23, 2021, the two witnessed five tornadoes near Lockett, west of Wichita Falls, including twin tornadoes and one that spiraled next to a rainbow. What was his reaction to seeing his first?

“I said, ‘Oh, look at that! Oh, look at that—look at that—look at that!’ ” recalls Myers. “There are just no words. You are witnessing one of the most powerful things in nature. Some people go speechless. Some cry.”

Storm chasing has even joined the collegiate world. Since 2020, the department of atmospheric sciences at Texas A&M University has offered a spring course called convective storms field studies. Students are trained on how to storm chase, forecast tornadoes and conduct field research.

“There are just no words. You are witnessing one of the most powerful things in nature. Some people go speechless. Some cry.”



COURTESY CHRIS NOWOTARSKI



COURTESY ERIK BURNS

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE A Tornadoic Expeditions tour watched this twister in Hawley stay on the ground for 24 minutes. Texas A&M University students studying atmospheric sciences launch balloons for National Weather Service research. A Tornadoic Expeditions tour poses with a tornado in 2022 in Crowell.

“Then for two weeks in May, we go out storm chasing,” says Chris Nowotarski, an associate professor. “The students take turns forecasting and navigating where they think there will be storms in the Great Plains. They also launch weather balloons and send the data to the National Weather Service.”

After graduation, “our meteorology majors go on to become forecasters for the National Weather Service, private forecasting companies or aviation companies that need weather forecasts,” Nowotarski says. “Some go into grad school to do research related to severe weather or other weather. Some go into television.”

Schooled or not, storm chasers provide information that advances scientific understanding of weather.

“Many amateur storm chasers are more focused on collecting photography and videos of tornadoes, which may be less useful in improving our understanding and prediction,” Nowotarski says. “But these chasers report tornadoes to the National Weather Service. These reports are critical to developing an accurate record and climatology of tornadoes that can be used for future studies.”

Although she has no meteorology degree, Chelsea Burnett has years of hands-on training and experience. She’s a tour guide for Tornadoic Expeditions and a public speaker with Storm Science, which conducts educational weather programs. She’s also a member of Girls Who Chase, an online group that encourages and connects women who want to storm chase, and is a chaser and speaker with Texas Storm Chasers.

In her chasing career, Burnett has gone after 70 twisters (and three hurricanes). But—like all storm chasers—she’ll never forget her first. On the night of December 26, 2015, she was standing outside a gas station near Red Oak, south of Dallas, when power flashes and lightning illuminated the sky—and a tornado.

“I couldn’t believe I was seeing one,” she recalls. “It was the most incredible moment of my life! You’re eye to eye with one of Mother Nature’s most raw processes. To see a tornado come together truly is a spiritual moment.” ■



Bavaria, By Way of Texas

Yodeling takes this German back home, even after decades of running a restaurant and entertaining in tiny Walburg

Take Exit 268 off Interstate 35, head east on FM 972, make a pair of 90-degree jogs past mobile homes and rolling farmland, and suddenly you're in Germany. Well, the German settlement of Walburg, formerly known as Concordia.

The Williamson County community, about 40 miles north of Austin, was founded in 1881 by Henry Doering, a German immigrant. The following year, Doering opened the Hy. Doering Co. mercantile store. Doering eventually changed the name of the community from Concordia to Walburg, his German birthplace.

Today, instead of groceries, dry goods and hardware, the shelves of the former general store are now filled with more than 200 beer steins.

Iconic flags of Bavaria hang from the high ceiling, with matching blue and white tablecloths in the dining room. Of course, there's a cooler full of imported German beer. And opposite the buffet table and kitchen is a stage where Ronny Tippelt and his band, the Walburg Boys, play Friday and Saturday nights. Tippelt is also co-owner of the venue, which is now called Walburg German Restaurant & Biergarten.

Tippelt, founder of the band, was born in Munich. He learned to yodel at the age of 7 from his "vocal hero," Franzl Lang, a world-renowned *Jodlerkönig*, or Yodel King. Lang was an expert in Bavarian alpine yodeling.

Humans have yodeled for tens of thousands of years, mostly for calling livestock, but across Switzerland and Bavaria (a state in southern Germany), the calls began to be incorporated into songs, accompanied by accordion, in the 19th century.

Some Native American cultures yodeled, Liz Tracy writes in *No Depression* magazine. Then cowboys picked up on the custom. "The yodel is used as a call to herds across lonely landscapes; the pastoral, solitary life of cowboys made them a prime conduit for the yodel," Tracy writes.

Ronny Tippelt, a music-maker in Walburg, has been yodeling since he was 7.

By age 12, Tippelt was learning accordion. At 16, he won a Bavarian yodeling competition in Munich. By then, he had started a musical group called the Lerchenauer Baum with some friends and had been playing Oktoberfest in Munich—the largest and oldest such German festival in the world.

In 1982, Tippelt was 23 when his band was at Oktoberfest. "After the show, I went over to a table of cute American ladies, and I ended up marrying one of them," Tippelt says. "She was a Braniff Airlines flight attendant from Austin, Texas."

They moved to Texas that year, and though the marriage didn't last, Tippelt stayed. He opened his restaurant a few years later. "I just thought Texas was the Wild West," Tippelt says. "I figured out pretty quickly that it wasn't like the movies."

He started a duo called the Bavarian Boys. They're now a five-piece band featuring, in addition to accordion and yodeling, a keyboard, guitar, saxophone, bass, fiddle and drums.

When he performs, Tippelt wears traditional lederhosen with beautifully embroidered scrolls stitched in and a T-shirt with the Bayern—the German name for Bavaria—state coat of arms. He plays a chromatic accordion with keys like a piano.

He typically sings in German, flowing smoothly from German lyrics into yodeling and back. "When I play and yodel," Tippelt says, "I feel pride in representing my homeland. People get to hear a true German music style."

Another Texas musician who plays in the Bavarian style is Alan Walling, leader of Metroplex band AlpenMusikanten, a friend of Tippelt's and a self-taught yodeler.

"I met Ronny at a Fredericksburg German festival in 1990," Walling says. "He's a fantastic yodeler in the Bavarian style. The best yodeler in Texas and perhaps in the United States."

In 2019, Walling and Tippelt organized their own festival, Walburg Fest, which became an annual event over Labor Day weekend.

About 35 years ago, the boys were playing one of the stages at Austin's former Aqua Fest. Tippelt came up to the headliner and introduced himself. "Hello, I'm Ronny Tippelt from Germany. Who are you?" he said.

"Well, I'm George Strait from Texas," answered the famous country singer.

Ronny Tippelt from Texas now covers a handful of Strait's songs, with *Amarillo By Morning* being a favorite.

And that isn't his only foray into the country realm. He's especially proud to sing Merle Haggard's sentimental hit *Silver Wings*. Tippelt ends it with his signature yodeling. ■

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want to undertake? Most manufacturers will send you installation instructions before purchase to determine whether the product will meet your needs.

Is this a job you can do completely by yourself? If you do need assistance, what skill level is required of your assistant? If you need a professional subcontractor, do you have access to a skilled labor pool?

Are you familiar with local building codes and permit requirements? Some jurisdictions require that certain work be completed by a licensed and bonded professional to meet code. It's best to check these requirements before beginning work on the project.

Do you have a plan if the project goes awry? Most contractors are wary about taking on a botched DIY job.

Is it safe for you to do this project? If you're not familiar with roofing or don't have fall protection restraints, you may not want to venture into a roofing job. Similarly, if you know nothing about electricity—leave it to the professionals.

Some jobs can be fatal if not performed correctly. Your health and

safety should be the primary concern. Never enter into a DIY project that would jeopardize either.

Will you be able to obtain the materials you need? Who will be your source of supply? Will they deliver?

If you're attempting to do-it-yourself for financial reasons, have you looked at all of your costs, including the cost of materials, your time and the tools you need to purchase? If you are new to the DIY game, you may also want to look at the cost to correct any mistakes you may make—i.e., the damage factor. Will it still be a cost-saving venture?

If you're trying DIY for the satisfaction of a job well done, can you ensure that the job will be well done? If it doesn't come out right, how will you feel? Will you be able to afford to redo any unsatisfactory work?

The experts at NARI suggest that if you answered yes to eight or more of these questions, you might be in good shape to attempt a DIY project.

But before you run for the nearest hardware store, revisit the questions you marked no and carefully consider the potential problems you will face if you proceed with the project. Hiring a professional might be your best choice. ■

To DIY or Not To DIY

WITH THE POPULARITY OF home remodeling TV shows, a do-it-yourself project might sound appealing. But how can a homeowner be sure that taking on a DIY kitchen or other remodeling project is a good idea? The National Association of the Remodeling Industry suggests considering these questions when determining if you want to tackle the project yourself.

Do you enjoy physical work?

Are you persistent and patient?

Do you have reliable work habits—meaning that once the project is started, will it get finished?

Do you have all the tools needed and, more importantly, the skills required to do the job?

Will you be able to achieve the level of quality needed for this project?

Do you have the time that will be required to complete the project? Always double or triple the time estimate for a DIY project, unless you're highly skilled and familiar with that particular project.

Is it OK if the project remains unfinished for a period of time?

Are you prepared to handle the kind of stress this project will create in your family relationships?

Do you know all the steps involved in the project?

Have you received any installation instructions from the manufacturer to determine whether this is a project you still

Need a New Appliance?

May is a great time to buy

THIS YEAR, TEXAS' ANNUAL Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday is May 24–26. During this three-day weekend, ending on Memorial Day, sales taxes are not charged on a variety of energy-efficient appliances and products. There is no limit on the number of qualifying items you can buy, and you do not need to give the seller an exemption certificate to buy items tax free.

These Energy Star-labeled items qualify for the sales tax exemption:

Air conditioners (priced at \$6,000 or less)	Clothes washers
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Incandescent and fluorescent light bulbs	Dehumidifiers

These items do not qualify and are taxable even if they are Energy Star labeled:

Attic fans	Freezers	Stoves
Beverage chillers	Heat pumps	Water heaters
Clothes dryers	Kegeators	Wine refrigerators

During the holiday you can buy qualifying Energy Star products in store, online or by phone, mail, custom order or any other means. The sale of the item must take place during the specific period. The purchase date is determined by when payment is actually completed (i.e., a credit card charge is processed).

Delivery, shipping and handling charges are taxable. Charges for installing free-standing items are considered part of the item's sales price. If the item you buy is not taxable, then these charges are not taxable. However, for items with a sales price cap, installation fees may be taxable if the total goes above the cap.

For more information, visit comptroller.texas.gov or call 1-800-252-5555. ■



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Tackle Outdoor Chores Safely

TRIMMING TREES AND tall bushes can take a deadly turn if electricity is involved. Never trim a tree that has grown into a power line. Metal and wood can transmit electricity to your body if you come into contact with a live wire.

Contact your electric cooperative to determine how the tree can be safely trimmed.

Here are more tips to help keep your lawn chores safe.

- ▶ Before digging or landscaping, call 811 to check for underground utility lines. It's free—and the law.
- ▶ Never trim trees, cut the lawn or work in the garden during bad weather. Wet and windy conditions can cause slips and falls. Go inside immediately if you see lightning.
- ▶ Electric tools and trimmers should be plugged into outlets protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters. Never use tools in the rain or when the ground is wet.
- ▶ Don't work alone, in case of an accident. Hire a professional if you doubt your ability to safely complete the job. ■



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A Cautioning Voice

Sean Carter's powerful message speaks volumes to young people across Texas

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS • PHOTOS BY DAVE SHAFER

SEAN CARTER CAN'T talk, walk or stand on his own. Yet that hasn't stopped him from sharing his wise words of warning and hope. Since 2007, he and his mother, Jenny Carter, have testified against drinking and driving in front of more than 475,000 people across Texas.

His message—typed into an iPad and spoken by a masculine synthetic voice—is simple: “Think of me, and save yourself.”

Normal life for Sean abruptly ended 20 years ago—March 27, 2005. He was 22, a fun-loving and focused young man with a brilliant smile.

He grew up in rural Grayson County, north of the Metroplex. At S&S Consolidated High School, Sean earned top grades, played sports and showed pigs as an FFA member.

Sean went on to complete an associate degree. On the side, he modeled in Dallas and later New York City so he could pay his way through college. He planned to get his bachelor's degree and continue on to law school.

Then Sean's plans unexpectedly derailed.

He doesn't remember what happened that rainy night before Easter Sunday. But he has been told that he climbed into the passenger seat of a pickup driven by a drunk friend. The two had been barhopping in Wichita Falls, where Sean attended Midwestern State University.

Five minutes from Sean's apartment, the friend lost control of the steering wheel. The truck spun and slammed into a tree, pinning Sean in his seat. The collision shattered his body's entire right side.

The driver was unhurt and later pleaded guilty to felony intoxication assault. Sean, who lay in a coma for 39 days in a hospital, was left with a severe diffuse axonal injury, which occurs when the whole brain is shaken and torn from nerves within the skull. Sean also sustained numerous other serious injuries, including a ruptured bladder, collapsed right lung and internal lacerations.

That night, his mother's life changed forever too.

Jenny gave up her career as a regional billing coordinator for a national physician management company to care for her son. (Sean's parents were divorced when the accident happened, and his father died in 2012.)

Two years later, Sean, who isn't paralyzed, regained limited use of his arms and hands. To accomplish

that much, he endured 20 surgeries and many hours of physical therapy.

Today Sean walks short distances using a reverse posterior walker, a four-wheeled frame that he pulls behind him. He needs help from his mother with basic tasks but can take care of himself at their home in El Lago, southeast of Houston.

Using an iPad, Sean learned how to speak via the TouchChat app. In 2007, Mothers Against Drunk Driving invited Sean and Jenny to share their story with first-time DWI offenders.

They've been on the road ever since. In 2010, they founded When Sean Speaks, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing drunken driving and showing the real-life consequences.

In 2013, Sean and Jenny joined Watch UR BAC, an alcohol awareness program sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. (BAC refers to blood alcohol concentration, a measure of a person's intoxication.) The program funds their appearances at schools and church and service groups.

“From the very beginning, Sean has touched hearts,” Jenny says. “After he speaks, people rush to him and cry. They say they've never thought about consequences like his.”

Over the years, Sean has received many emails too. “You guys came to my school when I was in junior high,” one student wrote. “Now I'm in college. Sean inspires me. I think of his story often. Thank you for the work that you do.”

His strong faith and will to impact others keep Sean moving forward. He works out every day at home and twice a week goes to the University of Houston-Clear Lake for supervised exercise. He's also a member of his church's leadership team.

Today, at age 42, Sean doesn't dwell on what-ifs or compare himself to others.

“Life happens to everyone,” he says via his keyboard. “You can't live in a bubble to stay safe. Bad things might happen even if you're not doing anything wrong. What defines you as a person is how you respond to those things.

“I can't go back in time to change what happened,” adds Sean, flashing one of his brilliant smiles. “All I can do is look to the future.” ■





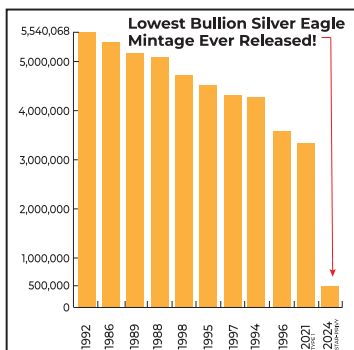
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Staff Sgt. Lucian Adams of Port Arthur receives the Medal of Honor from Lt. Gen. Alexander Patch.

Beyond the Call

Lucian Adams dedicated his life to his comrades in arms

BY CHUCK LYONS

IN 1994, A 6-mile stretch of Interstate 37, between I-410 and I-10, was named in honor of Lucian Adams. Maybe you've seen signs for the freeway, in southeast San Antonio, and wondered who he is.

Adams was one of 12 children born into a Mexican American family in Port Arthur, near Beaumont, along the coast. Twenty-two years later, like a Gulf wind, Adams tore through a French wood and earned a Medal of Honor.

"I never had any fear," Adams said years afterward. "And you do things so automatically because of the training that you had in the States that you don't take time to think how serious, you know, the predicaments you get into are sometimes. And before you know it, you're in it to your head and you just have to fight

your way out."

During World War II, in October 1944, Staff Sgt. Adams' Army company was fighting to reconnect with the 3rd Battalion, 30th Infantry, which had become isolated in the Vosges Mountains near Saint-Dié-des-Vosges, in northeastern France. German machine-gun fire had killed three of Adams' men and wounded six others before his unit could even move 10 yards.

While the remaining men took cover, Adams grabbed a Browning automatic rifle and charged forward, dodging from tree to tree and firing from his hip as machine-gun fire and grenades hit the trees over his head.

"I didn't want to go down with any ammunition still on me," Adams told

The Dallas Morning News in 1993, "so I just kept firing."

In 10 minutes of intense fighting, Adams single-handedly killed nine Germans and silenced three machine gun nests, reconnecting with the isolated battalion and restoring an important supply line for the Allies.

On April 23, 1945, Adams was awarded a Medal of Honor—the highest military distinction awarded by the U.S.—joining 472 other Americans to earn the remarkable distinction during World War II.

Along with four other members of the 3rd Infantry Division, Adams received his award at ceremonies held in Nuremberg's Reichsparteitagsgelände (Reich Party Congress Grounds), which had been the scene of massive Nazi rallies before the war. The Allies had captured the grounds three days earlier.

A large cement swastika, symbol of the Nazi party, that was still on the stadium roof at the time of the presentation was covered with an American flag during the medal ceremony and destroyed with explosives shortly afterward.

Seven of Adams' brothers also fought in the war, but he was the only one to return with a Medal of Honor. He also received a Purple Heart, earned earlier in the war, when he was wounded neutralizing an enemy machine gun nest in Italy.

After the war, Adams dedicated himself to helping other veterans. He worked for the next 40 years as a representative for the Veterans Administration in San Antonio. Afterward, he worked as a VA consultant for U.S. Rep. Frank Tejeda (himself a veteran who also has a highway named in his honor).

Adams retired in 1986 and died in March 2003. He was buried with full military honors at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio. ■

The Whole Enchilada

So many flavors rolled into one savory dish

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

My morning enchiladas are comfort food to the max. This is my go-to recipe when hosting brunch, as I can whip up the sauce the day before and assemble them before guests arrive. Serve with a mimosa or coffee for a delicious start to your day.

Black Bean Breakfast Enchiladas

¼ cup plus 2 teaspoons vegetable oil, divided use
½ cup diced onion
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 can black beans (15 ounces)
1 cup water
2 teaspoons salt, divided use
2 teaspoons ground black pepper, divided use
8 corn tortillas
6 eggs
2½ cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese, divided use
Salsa, for serving
Cilantro, minced, for serving

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. In a skillet, heat 2 teaspoons oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook until light and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook 1 additional minute.
3. Transfer onions and garlic into a blender or food processor. Add black beans, water, 1 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon pepper. Blend until smooth. Return black bean sauce to skillet and keep warm.
4. Heat remaining ¼ cup oil in a second skillet over medium-high heat. Lightly fry each tortilla 5 seconds on each side and place on paper towels to drain. Reduce heat to medium and use the same skillet to prepare eggs.
5. Add eggs, remaining 1 teaspoon salt and remaining 1 teaspoon pepper. As eggs begin to set, use a spatula to gently pull the eggs across the skillet until thoroughly scrambled and cooked. Remove pan from heat.
6. To assemble the enchiladas, dip each tortilla in bean sauce, fill with egg, sprinkle with ¼ cup cheese, roll and place seam side down in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Repeat this process until all tortillas are rolled. Spoon the remaining sauce over rolled enchiladas and top with remaining ½ cup cheese. Bake 10 minutes. Serve warm with salsa and cilantro.

SERVES 4

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Chicken Enchilada Tostadas.





Butternut Squash and Black Bean Enchiladas

PENNY ATKINS
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

- 4 tablespoons olive oil**
- ½ cup diced white onion**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 butternut squash (3–4 pounds), peeled, seeds removed and diced**
- 1 can black beans (15 ounces), drained and rinsed**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 2 teaspoons seasoned salt**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- 12 corn tortillas**
- 1 can red enchilada sauce (15 ounces), divided use**
- 2 cups shredded Mexican-style cheese**
- 1 can sliced black olives (2.25 ounces), drained**
- 2 green onions, sliced diagonally, for garnish**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Cook onion and garlic until onions are translucent and fragrant.
3. Add butternut squash, cook 5 minutes, then reduce heat to simmer and cook an additional 10 minutes or until squash is tender and lightly browned. Stir in black beans, cumin, salt and pepper.
4. Place half the tortillas on a plate, cover with a damp paper towel, and microwave 30 seconds or until pliable. Repeat with remaining tortillas.
5. Spread ¼ cup enchilada sauce evenly on bottom of baking dish. Spoon ¼ cup squash and bean mixture onto center of each tortilla and roll up. Place seam side down in baking dish.
6. Pour remaining enchilada sauce evenly

\$500 WINNER

Shrimp Enchiladas

JANICE MERCK
PEDERNALES EC



Merck has been cooking up these enchiladas for over 30 years to rave reviews, and, baby, I get it! I absolutely loved these creamy shrimp enchiladas. The simplicity of the sauce in this coastal twist on classic enchiladas was so ... wow!



- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, divided use**
- 1 cup finely chopped onion**
- 1 cup chopped green chiles, drained**
- ¾ cup finely chopped green bell pepper**
- 3 teaspoons salt, divided use**
- 2 teaspoons ground white pepper, divided use**
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper, divided use**
- 4 teaspoons ground oregano, divided use**
- ½ teaspoon minced garlic**

- 3 cups heavy cream**
- 1 cup sour cream**
- 8 cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese, divided use**
- 2 pounds medium shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- ¾ cup finely chopped green onions**
- ½ cup vegetable oil**
- 20 corn tortillas**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, melt ½ cup butter. Add onion, chiles, bell pepper, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon white pepper, ½ teaspoon cayenne and 2 teaspoons oregano. Cook 10 minutes, stirring often. Add garlic and cook an additional minute.
3. Stir in heavy cream, bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer uncovered 10 minutes, stirring constantly.
4. Whisk in sour cream until sauce is smooth, then add 3 cups cheese, 1 cup at a time, whisking after each addition until all cheese melts. Remove from heat and set aside.
5. In a 4-quart saucepan over medium-high heat, melt the remaining ½ cup butter. Add shrimp, green onions and remaining seasonings—2 teaspoons salt, 1 teaspoon white pepper, ½ teaspoon cayenne and 2 teaspoons oregano. Cook about 5 minutes, until shrimp is fully cooked.
6. Stir in cream sauce, reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes. Remove from heat.
7. In a small skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Lightly fry each tortilla 2–3 seconds on each side and place on paper towels to drain.
8. Spoon ⅓ cup of shrimp mixture into the center of each tortilla. Roll and place seam side down in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Spoon remaining sauce over rolled tortillas and sprinkle with remaining 5 cups cheese.
9. Bake 10 minutes or until cheese melts.

SERVES 10

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UPCOMING: TURKEY TIME DUE JUNE 10



CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >

RECIPES CONTINUED

over tortillas. Spread cheese evenly over enchiladas and top with black olives.

7. Bake 15–20 minutes, until heated through and cheese is melted. Remove from oven and sprinkle with green onions.

SERVES 6

Buffalo Ranch Chicken Enchiladas

CARLA MOON
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 tablespoon Cajun seasoning
- 2 tablespoons ranch seasoning, divided use
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1½ cups Buffalo sauce, divided use
- 1 package cream cheese (8 ounces), softened



- 2 cups shredded pepper jack cheese, divided use
- 1 whole cooked chicken, deboned and shredded
- 12 corn tortillas

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In a skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Cook onion and bell pepper until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add Cajun seasoning and 1 tablespoon ranch seasoning and stir.

3. Add stock and 1 cup Buffalo sauce. Reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes or until sauce is slightly thickened. Remove from heat and set aside.

4. In a large bowl, stir together cream cheese, remaining 1 tablespoon ranch seasoning, remaining ½ cup Buffalo sauce and 1 cup pepper jack. Stir well, then stir in shredded chicken.

5. Spread ¼ cup enchilada sauce in the bottom of the prepared baking dish. Place about ¼ cup of the chicken and cream cheese mixture in the center of each tortilla and roll. Place each rolled tortilla in the baking dish seam side down. Spoon remaining sauce over enchiladas. Top with remaining 1 cup pepper jack.

6. Cover dish with foil and bake 15 minutes. Uncover and bake about 15 more minutes or until cheese is bubbly and slightly browned on the edges.

SERVES 6

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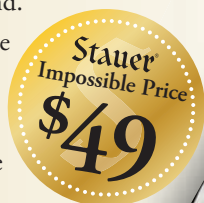
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

A Walk on the Wild Side

This ranch boasts cows and pigs—but also giraffes and kangaroos

BY CHET GARNER

HAVE YOU EVER wanted to dine with a giraffe? Swim with an otter? Hold a baby kangaroo? Of course you have! Blue Hills Ranch, a 150-acre wildlife sanctuary outside Waco, can make all your wildest dreams come true.

I was giddy as I pulled up to the farmhouse that now serves as the office for this exotic ranch. I walked in and felt like I had stepped into the office of Dr. Dolittle. Two St. Bernard dogs lay on the floor like giant rugs while a potbellied pig and kangaroo poked around the kitchen.

Owner Matt Lieberman explained how his ranch started as a wedding venue with a couple giraffes in the pasture to make for interesting photos. But he soon realized animals were much easier than brides—and much more fun. He started adding other species, including axis deer and zebras, and had soon built one of the most interesting interactive animal adventures in Texas.

My first experience was a leisurely drive through the ranch feeding the dozens of species that populate the hills. Let me say, there isn't anything much scarier (or slimier) than the tongue of a hungry Highland cow.

Next I headed for the hot tub, where I spent an hour swimming with resident otters Otto and Sweet Pea. I've never met more curious creatures and could have spent the entire afternoon feeding them bits of shrimp as they treated me like a human jungle gym.

When it was time for the grand finale, we grabbed a picnic basket and headed out for dinner with Blue, the giraffe. There are few better ways to enjoy a Texas sunset than with a 16-foot-tall giraffe sniffing your plate for grapes and crackers.

I've done a lot of amazing things in Texas, but this has to be one of the wildest of them all. ■

ABOVE Chet finds himself on friendly terms with a giraffe at Blue Hills Ranch.

TCP Watch the video on our website and see all Chet's Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

MAY

8

Abilene [8–11] Western Heritage Classic, (325) 677-4376, westernheritageclassic.com

9

Grand Prairie [9–11] Asian Heritage Fest, (972) 975-5100, asiatimesquare.com

10

Brenham 7 Bridges: The Ultimate Eagles Experience, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Corsicana Mimosas at the Market, (903) 654-4850, visitcorsicana.com

El Campo Crawfish & Gumbo Cook-Off, (979) 275-1600, eclostlagoon.com

Palestine Wiggy Thump Festival, 1-800-659-3484, visitpalestine.com

Winnsboro Max and Heather Stalling, (903) 342-0686, winnsborocenterforthearts.com

13

Fort Worth [13–18] MJ, (817) 212-4280, basshall.com

15

Luling Field Day, (830) 875-2438, lulingfoundation.org

Pasadena [15–18] Strawberry Festival, (281) 991-9500, strawberryfest.org

16

Columbus [16–17] Magnolia Days Festival, (979) 732-8385, magnoliadays.org



Pick of the Month

Texas Route 66 Festival

Amarillo, June 5-14

1-800-692-1338, visitamarillo.com

Ten fun-filled days along Texas' stretch of the iconic highway include classic car shows, live music, a cattle drive and parade, bus tours, and a rodeo dance. The grand finale June 14 features Elvis impersonators, a pinup pageant, corn dog eating contests and kids' activities.



STAY & PLAY IN GRAPEVINE!

GrapevineTexasUSA.com



17

El Campo Coletto Creek BBQ Association Cook-Off, (979) 275-1600, eclostlagoon.com

La Grange Bluff Schuetzen-Fest, (979) 968-5658, friendsofkbmh.org

Round Top Vanity Fur Fashion Show, (979) 966-0021, janssenanimalshelter.org



21

Winnsboro [21-July 19] Gary Bachers Memorial Art Exhibit & CJ Bachers, (903) 342-0686, winnsborocenterforthearts.com

22

Grapeland [22-24] Salmon Lake Park Gospel Bluegrass Festival, (936) 687-2594, slpbluegrass.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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

TEXAS AIR MUSEUM

AIRSHOW

JUNE 14, 2025

SLATON MUNICIPAL AIRPORT, SLATON, TX

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
(806) 779-7332
thetexasairmuseum.org

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JUNE 13-14 BEER COMPETITION
CRAFT BEER
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FOOD, WINE & MORE

JUNE 13 - TOUR - AWARDS - DINNER - MUSIC
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FREDERICKSBURG CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL

CRAFT HAPPENS
SPRECHEN SIE CRAFT

TICKETS:
www.fbcraftbeerfestival.com

MAY EVENTS CONTINUED

23

Fredericksburg [23-25]
Crawfish Festival,
fbgcrawfishfestival.com

Victoria [23-25] Memorial
Weekend Bash,
(361) 485-3116,
discovervictoriatexas.com

Granbury [23-26]
Memorial Day Weekend
Festival, (682) 936-4550,
granburysquare.com

24

Freeport [24-Aug. 13]
Shark Exhibit, (979) 233-
0066, [facebook.com/](https://facebook.com/freeportmuseum)
freeportmuseum

30

El Paso Downtown
Treasures, (915) 533-0048,
tomlea.com

31

Godley Christian Music
Fest, (817) 389-2287,
godleymethodist.org

JUNE
7

Corsicana The '77
Experience: Hits of 1977
Tribute, (903) 874-7792,
corsicanapalace.com

Fredericksburg Lucken-
bach School Open House,
(830) 685-3321,
historicschools.org

Waxahachie [7-8]
Gingerbread Trail Tour of
Homes, (469) 309-4040,
waxahachiecvb.com

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June

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TEXAS BLUEBERRY FESTIVAL

**start
planning!**

Nacogdoches
Texas Starts Here




Patterns

We marvel with these readers at the smooth repetition of human-made structures and the chaotic arrangements found in nature. While they may seem random at first, if we just step back, we see the big picture.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 SHARON BLUNT
COSERV

"Turkey tail mushrooms on a fallen log in Caddo Lake State Park."

2 MARK HOLLY
BANDERA EC

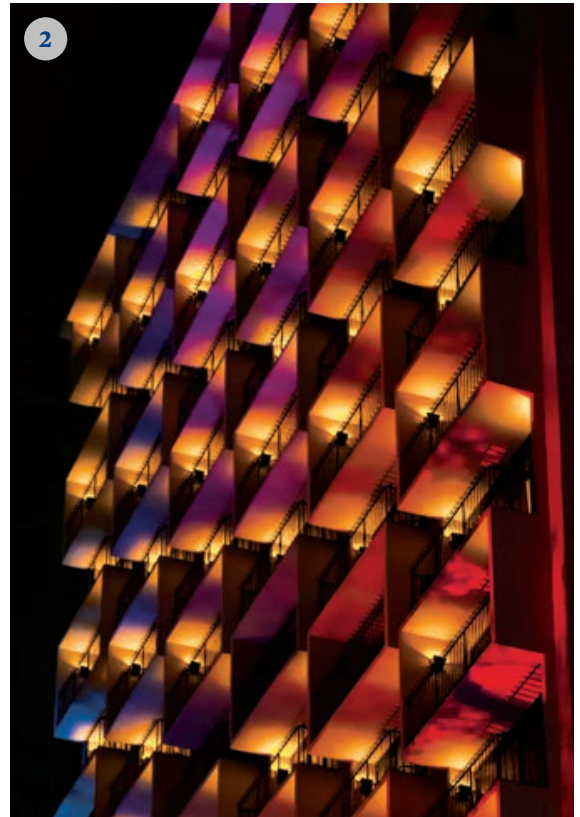
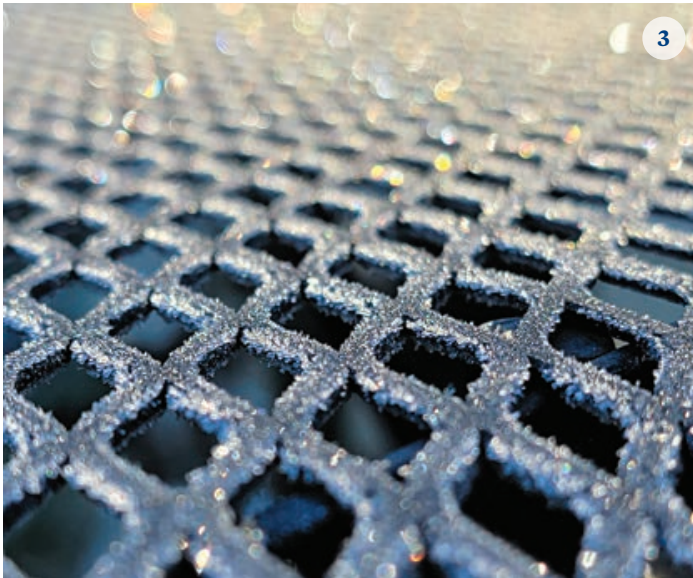
Hotel balconies along the San Antonio River Walk.

3 KATHY DUMAS
PEDERNALES EC

"I captured the morning sun sparkling off the frost on the grates of a patio table."

4 KEITH CUDDEBACK
PEDERNALES EC

Fallen leaves at Lost Maples State Natural Area.



Upcoming Contests

DUE MAY 10 Off-Road Adventures

DUE JUN 10 Heroes

DUE JUL 10 Abstract



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Patterns photos from readers.



Stepping Up

Our family tree branched out with Bobbin, at first a stranger

BY MARTHA DEERING
ILLUSTRATION BY
ANNA GODEASSI

WE CALLED OUR grandmother Bobbin. I'm not sure why. She was my mother's stepmother, acquired with some reluctance on Mother's part when her father remarried a few years after her own mother died of rheumatic heart disease.

By the time Bobbin came into her life, my mother was a tiny tyrant, used to having her father and a string of housekeepers kowtow to her every need.

To be fair, it must be hard to lose your mother at the tender age of 6, especially since Mother was not allowed to attend the funeral. No one explained to her what had happened.

Mother, a petite, lively tomboy with shining dark hair, and Bobbin could hardly have been more different. Bobbin was tall and willowy with long blond hair. As the wedding approached, she pored

over a box of family photos, trying to capture a past she had not shared.

There were problems, of course. They faced the task of consciously building the bridge of communication and love that typically develops naturally between parents and their children. My grandfather, superintendent of schools in a small Wisconsin town, could do little more than stand by and watch with love and understanding.

Bobbin's well-meaning friends offered unsolicited advice. Mother's playmates stood ready with sympathy. "Is she mean to you?" they asked. But most of the problems seemed to stem from worrying too much.

Admiration and love gradually grew. When Mother learned in her early teens that Bobbin was expecting, she rushed out to be the first to buy a present for the new arrival.

Years later, Mother shared this bit of advice with Bobbin, who was writing an article about stepmothers: "Tell them to be demonstrative about showing affection even if the child doesn't appear to want it. I used to pretend I didn't want to be hugged and kissed, but deep down I wanted it badly."

By the time Mother married and had a family of her own, none of us perceived a difference between our beloved Bobbin and other grandmothers. When she rode the train to Texas to visit us, she was entangled in so many loving arms, she couldn't move out of the way to allow other passengers to disembark.

She regularly trounced my brothers and me at Scrabble—no surprise since later in life she worked in Washington, D.C., as an editor at the national cathedral. As much as she loved us, she never let us win.

We lost her in her 80s when a young addict grabbed her purse as she walked home from church, slamming her onto the sidewalk. She only had \$20. If he had asked her, she would have gladly given it to him.

Bobbin's DNA did not match ours; she was a grandmother of the heart. ■

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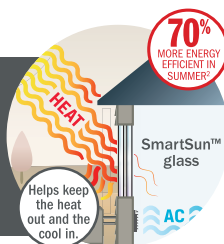
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