

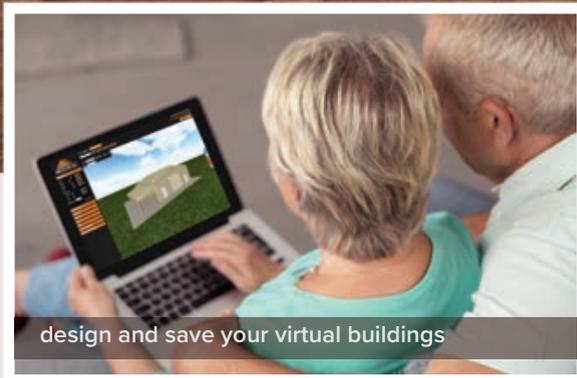
TEXAS CO-OP POWER



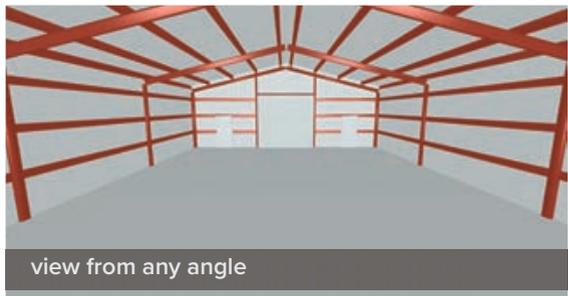
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Dance halls revolve around community





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The dance floor at Twin Sisters welcomes couples from all generations.

FEATURE

8 Hail the Halls Texas dance halls in Co-op Country stand as monuments to history and community.

Story by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers | Photos by Dave Shafer

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NEXT MONTH

Texas: A Blues State *Widespread influences created 'a sort of international blues, a United Nations gumbo of sounds.'*



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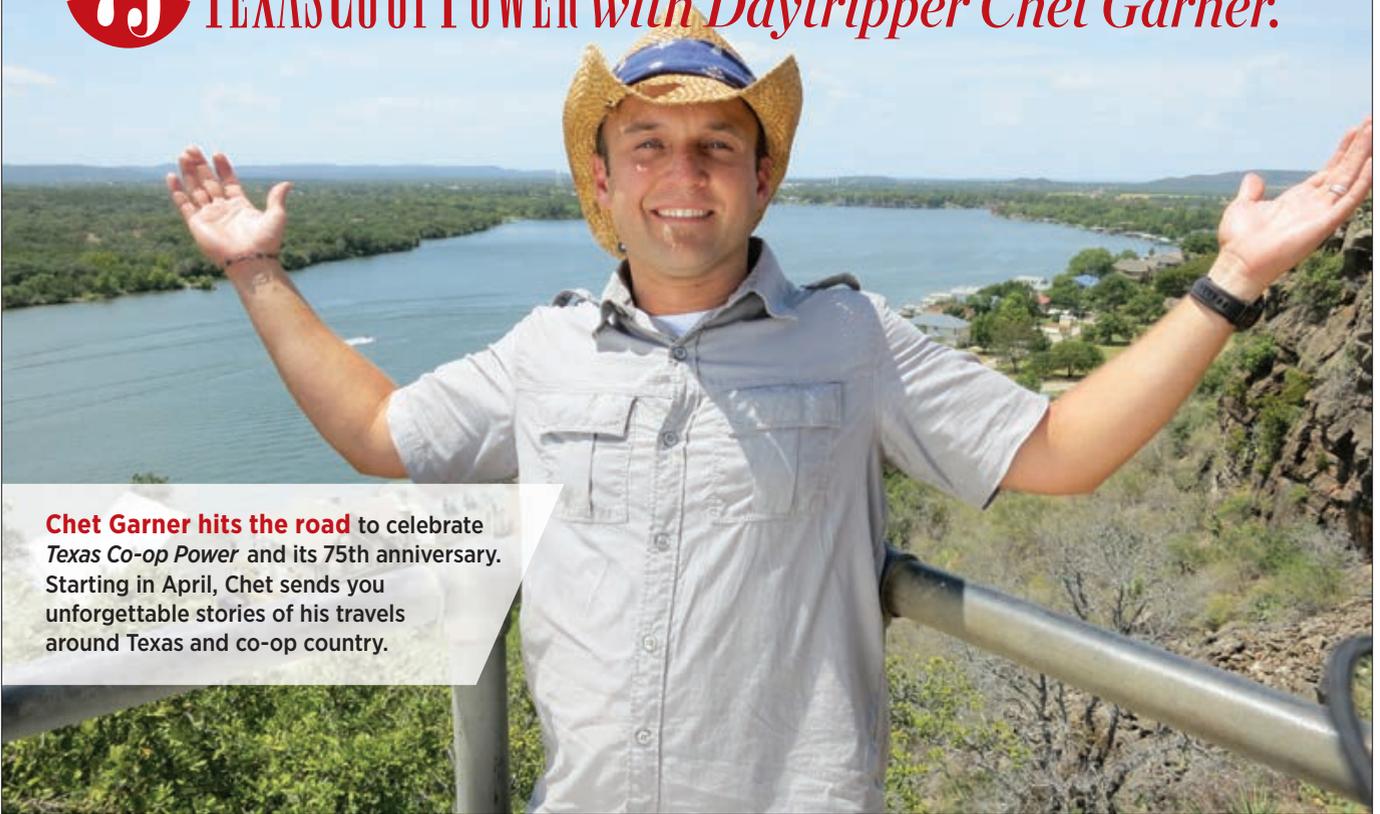
DANCE HALL: DAVE SHAFER. GUITAR: VERESHCHAGIN DMITRY | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

ON THE COVER Michael McGowan and Elizabeth Yevich enjoy an evening at Twin Sisters Dance Hall outside Blanco. Photo by Dave Shafer

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER *with Daytripper Chet Garner.*



Chet Garner hits the road to celebrate *Texas Co-op Power* and its 75th anniversary. Starting in April, Chet sends you unforgettable stories of his travels around Texas and co-op country.

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Remembering Veterans

It was good to read about the programs across Texas remembering veterans [*Circle of Life*, November 2018].

People's attitudes have changed since the late 1960s and early '70s. Being a Vietnam veteran, I remember being called baby killer, cursed at and spat upon. It's good to see the changes.

DAVE SWALLOW | SAN MARCOS
PEDERNALES EC

Beauty of a Song

Pretty Paper [November 2018] brought tears to my eyes.

My folks took me to downtown Texarkana each Saturday, and there was a man with no legs selling pencils. He sat on a "car dolly" with wheels.

Later on, I learned he took his three children to school each day as they walked, pushing his dolly with two wooden blocks.

MARIE FREEMAN | SIMMS
BOWIE-CASS EC



Horses and People

Winston Churchill said, "There is nothing so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse." Texas wouldn't exist as we know it except for horses and longhorn cattle [*The Healing Power of Horses*, December 2018], so I hope most Texans would still share Churchill's sentiment.

TOM GUINN | WESLACO | NUECES EC

Leonard Brothers, and some of my most cherished memories are of time spent there with Mother and Daddy.

MELISSA PEGRAM | VIA FACEBOOK

I love this song. Never knew who wrote it. Thanks for this lovely story.

KAREN LOMBARDO | VIA FACEBOOK

I love hearing "behind the song" stories. What a story of perseverance!

SUZANNE MORGAN LOUDAMY | VIA FACEBOOK

Such a beautiful story. I do so wish the man would have known the song was written about him. I shopped at Leonard's all my life, and I never saw him.

PAT FLETCHER GARCIA | VIA FACEBOOK

In the song, he was portrayed as a poor outcast because of his weak legs. I love the fact he was a strong, resourceful man able to provide for his family with pride and dignity.

PAULA OWENS | VIA FACEBOOK

Texas and World War I

I was delighted to read Gene Fowler's article *World War I at the Doorstep of Texas* [November 2018]. Far too few native and new Texans are aware of these and other important events in our history.

MARIAN LILES | KINGSLAND
PEDERNALES EC

Pleasant Memory

I was pleasantly surprised to see the picture of Bob's Oil Well [*Abandoned Buildings*, Focus on Texas, November 2018]. As a youngster growing up in Plainview in the 1940s, when we were traveling through Matador, we would always stop so we could see all the rattlesnakes Bob had in the station. I still go through Matador from time to time and remember those days.

CARL BONDS | WHITNEY
HILCO EC

Mammoth Discovery

I found a vertebral bone in 1958 when squirrel hunting on a creek east of Clifton. It was about 10

inches long and 5 inches wide. A big chunk of white bone. I was going to Baylor University at the time and brought it to the Strecker Museum. They studied it and told me it was a mammoth vertebral body, probably a young mammoth. I read Martha Deeringer's *Waco's Mystery Mammoths* [November 2018] with interest.

RONALD T. STANLEY | LINDALE
WOOD COUNTY EC

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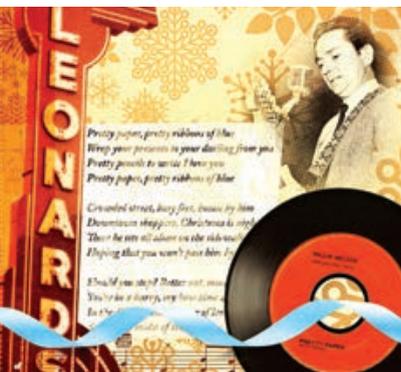
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   **Texas Co-op Power**



I remember the man Willie Nelson wrote this song about. I saw him many, many times in front of Leonard Brothers, along with the blind couple who sang hymns close by him. We shopped regularly at

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HAPPENINGS

A Chapter in La Bahia's History

Texas history is securely anchored to the Texas Revolution, fought 1835–36, but less noted is Mexico's 1812–13 push to wrest Texas from Spanish control.

Historians will re-enact in **GOLIAD** an encampment depicting the 1812 siege of Presidio La Bahia as part of **UNDER THE GREEN FLAG, FEBRUARY 23–24**.

A Mexican force led by Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara and Augustus William Magee, advancing under an emerald green banner and with U.S. support, took the fort from the Spanish in November 1812 and held it until February 1813.

The revolution was crushed August 18, 1813, in the Battle of Medina.

INFO ▶ (361) 645-3752



WEB EXTRAS
▶ Find more happenings online.

HISTORY LESSON

WILEY UPRISING

Police were sent to Wiley College on February 24, 1969, in response to student demonstrations on the East Texas campus. The demonstrations helped integrate public facilities in Marshall.

WORTH REPEATING

“Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history.”

—**CARTER G. WOODSON**, who on February 7, 1926, initiated National Negro Week, now Black History Month

◀ LOOKING BACK AT SPORTS THIS MONTH



TEXAS AND TEXANS have left indelible marks on golf courses, fields, arenas and racetracks since *Texas Co-op Power* first landed in mailboxes in July 1944, including:

1940s

1945 Golfer Byron Nelson of Waxahachie wins 11 consecutive PGA tournaments, a record that still stands.

1948 The Girl's Rodeo Association is formed in San Angelo. Now called the Women's Professional Rodeo Association, it's the oldest of its kind anywhere.



1950s

1954 Duke Washington of Washington State University is the first African-American to play in a football game at the University of Texas.

1955 Jockey Willie Shoemaker of Fabens wins the first of his 11 Triple Crown races as he rides Swaps to victory at the Kentucky Derby.



1960s

1960 The Houston Oilers win the first American Football League championship. They repeated in 1961.

1963 The Texas Longhorns and coach Darrell Royal win the school's first football national championship.

1966 Texas Western plays an all-black starting lineup against all-white Kentucky in the NCAA men's basketball championship game, winning 72-65.



Mark Stubbs works the ropes as David McDowell climbs the pole.

CO-OP PEOPLE

Eye-Opening Experience

MARK STUBBS, general manager at Farmers Electric Cooperative, ventured far afield last October when he temporarily became a lineman, teaming up with two of the best in the state to compete at the International Lineman's Rodeo in Kansas.

"I learned some things that I did not know," Stubbs says.

David McDowell and Danny Moss, who together have won the senior division five times at the Texas Lineman's Rodeo, needed somebody 50 or older for the international competition. They took a chance on Stubbs, their boss.

Stubbs took a chance that his 30 years behind a desk wouldn't belie his fitness for the rigors of line work.

Starting in late August, Stubbs rose at 5:30 a.m. many mornings to practice with McDowell and Moss, whose task was to turn Stubbs into a serviceable groundman for the timed competition.

Stubbs' job was to hoist tools and equipment up to the other two on the pole.

"It really is a brotherhood," Stubbs says. "I was honored to get a glimpse into that."

The trio finished in sixth place out of 11 teams in Kansas, and Stubbs already is talking about improving on that this year.

ALMANAC



150 YEARS AGO: *Harper's Weekly* publishes a cartoon of Uncle Sam with chin whiskers—the first time he appeared this way—February 6, 1869.

BY THE NUMBERS

390,000,000

February 22 is National Skip the Straw Day. Americans use an estimated 390 million plastic straws daily. Put them end to end and they'd circle the Earth nearly twice. At least one Texas company is doing its part to reduce disposable plastic straw waste: Alamo Drafthouse Cinema recently switched to corn-based biodegradable straws at all its locations.

LOOKING AHEAD TO POLITICS NEXT MONTH ▶

1970s

1972 The Dallas Cowboys win Super Bowl VI, the first for a Texas team.

1973 Tennis star Billie Jean King, 29, defeats Bobby Riggs, 55, in three sets at the Astrodome in a match billed as the Battle of the Sexes.



1980s



1984 Sprinter and long jumper Carl Lewis from the University of Houston wins four gold medals at the Olympics in Los Angeles. In all, the four-time Olympian won nine golds.

1990s

1991 Refugio's Nolan Ryan, pitching for the Texas Rangers, records his seventh and final career no-hitter, a major-league record.

1995 Brownfield and Texas Tech star Sheryl Swoopes becomes the first female basketball player to be honored with an eponymous shoe, the Nike Air Swoopes.



1999 The Dallas Stars win the Stanley Cup.

2000s

2013 Simone Biles of Spring wins her first world title. She goes on to become the most decorated gymnast in American history—with 25 combined Olympic and world championship medals.

2014 Leta Andrews retires at Granbury High School with 1,416 career wins, more than any other U.S. high school basketball coach.

2017 The Houston Astros win the World Series.



TEXAS DANCE HALLS STAND AS MONUMENTS TO HISTORY AND COMMUNITY

HAIL *the* HALLS

Imagine this scene in a Texas dance hall:

A band belts out a tune while couples of all ages spin one another around a hardwood floor. Some steal kisses or show off fancy twirls. A little girl, balanced atop her granddaddy's boots, sways in time. Kids knee-high to a grasshopper race around the floor, and no one fusses. At rustic tables, friends and families chat, sip drinks and wave at dancers gliding past. A short reach away, babies and toddlers snooze on blankets spread across the floor.

The folksy scene could describe a dance hosted last month at Anhalt Hall in Spring Branch or one held in the 1890s at Braun Hall in northwest San Antonio.

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS | PHOTOS BY DAVE SHAFER



Dancers can two-step and twirl all evening the first Saturday of every month at Twin Sisters Dance Hall near Blanco.



**Each distinct, the buildings had one common feature:
AN EXPANSIVE WOODEN FLOOR THAT WELCOMED FAMILIES.**

“Dance halls are magical because their culture hasn’t changed since the 1870s, when the first ones were built,” says Patrick Sparks, a structural engineer and historic preservationist based in San Antonio. “Dancing’s as fundamental to Texas as the Alamo, cowboys, longhorns and oil.”

More than 1,000 dance halls built by German, Czech, Polish and a few Swiss immigrants once dotted parts of Texas. In the mid-19th century, the weary newcomers stepped off ships in Texas ports, most often Galveston or Indianola, on their way to settle as far west as the Hill Country.

Living conditions were harsh, and yet these isolated settlers worked hard to establish their unique way of life. To provide their friends and neighbors a place to meet, discuss business, share barbecue dinners and dance, they constructed spacious halls. Each building incorporated the skills of its artisan community, reflecting its customs and musical tastes. Architecture varied from simple, metal-sided barns with window flaps, such as those of Kendalia Halle, to round halls with a center support column, such as Bellville Turnverein Pavilion.

As meeting places, the buildings served the primary interests of their founders. Progress (*fortschritt*) and shooting club (*schützen verein*) members built the whitewashed Nordheim Shooting Club Dance Hall. German businessmen built an ornate dancing pavilion called the Garten Verein (garden club) for Galve-

ston’s German community. Near Burton, one of many German gymnastic clubs (*turn vereins*) built the La Bahia Turn Verein Hall. A German singing society (*gesangverein*) founded the Millheim Harmonic Harmonie Verein Hall in Sealy.

Texas music legend Johnny Bush and his band bid farewell to dancers at Quihi Gun Club and Dance Hall.

In Czech communities, polka dancers kept floors hopping at halls built by two fraternal orders: the SPJST (Fayetteville’s SPJST Hall No. 1) and KJT (Ammannsville’s



German immigrant and rancher Max Krueger built Twin Sisters Dance Hall as a dance pavilion and community center in the mid-1870s.

her 80s, still oversees Sunday night dances on the second floor.

Each distinct, the buildings had one common feature: an expansive wooden floor that welcomed families. “Then and now, that’s what makes a true Texas dance hall,” says Deb Fleming, executive director of Texas Dance Hall Preservation in Austin. “Its largest architectural feature must be the dance floor, and it must also allow children, unlike a saloon or honky tonk.”

Fleming, a San Antonio native who did not grow up around Texas dance halls, discovered her ancestral roots because of one. In 2007, she visited Panna Maria, considered the nation’s oldest Polish settlement, established in 1854, to research the community’s historic hall. At the visitors center, a local woman with a laptop offered to print out Fleming’s genealogy. Her family tree traced back to Johann Rzeppa, Flemings’ great-great-grandfather and one of Panna Maria’s original settlers.

“I had no idea about our family’s connection to Panna Maria,” says Fleming, a Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative member. “Neither did my father. The experience made me wonder how many other Texans have their own family connection to a Texas dance hall and don’t even know it.”

Thanks to dance halls, Texas music is known worldwide. Without them, those early brass, string and accordion bands wouldn’t have birthed such genres as western swing, country or conjunto. Eventually, several bands made a good living, traveling from one dance hall to the next. Bob Wills, Willie Nelson, Hank Wilson and Ray Benson are among those who got their starts in dance halls.

Fewer than 400 halls survive in Texas. Of those, about 25 percent stand abandoned, such as Gillespie County’s Cherry Springs Dance Hall, where Elvis Presley, Nat King Cole and Patsy Cline performed. Or they’re used for storage.

In 2008, Preservation Texas collectively identified all Texas dance halls as endangered places

KJT Hall). Most of the other halls were built by religious or agricultural organizations, and individuals built a few. One example is Sefcik Hall in Seaton, a two-story clapboard building built in 1923 by Tom Sefcik. His daughter Alice Sefcik Sulak, now in

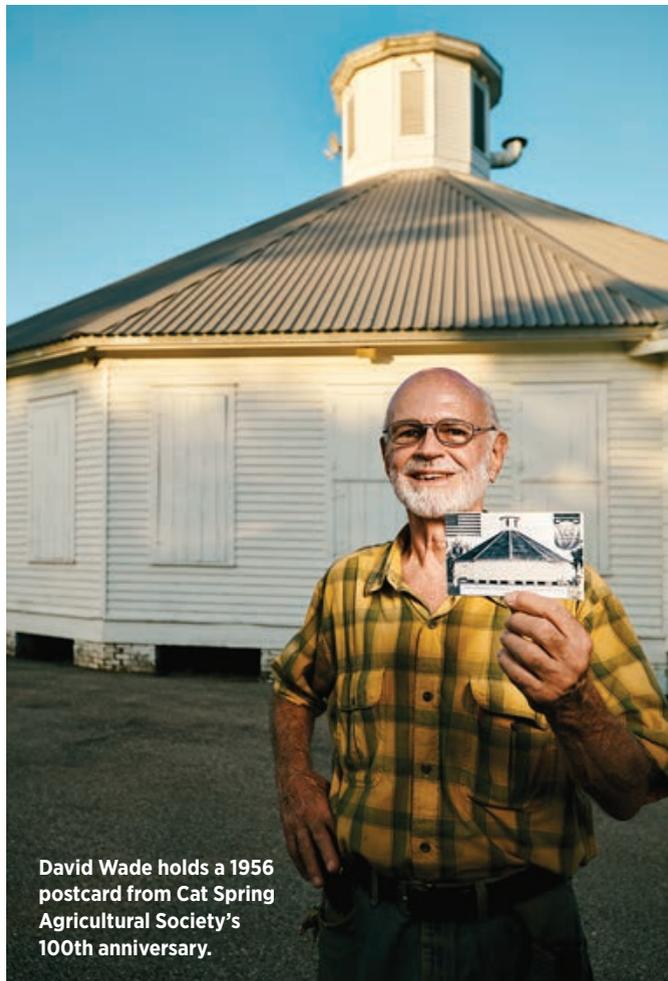
worthy of protection as architectural, historical and cultural landmarks. The nonprofit advocacy group cited neglect, suburban development, highway projects, shrinking grassroots support and lack of public awareness as threats to dance hall survival.

The designation came a year after Sparks, along with historic preservationist Stephanie McDougal and the late Texas music historian Steve Dean, founded the nonprofit Texas Dance Hall Preservation. Since its start, the volunteer group has worked to inventory existing halls, spread the word about their historical importance and partner with owners to keep them afloat.

Dean’s advocacy for dance halls ran deep. In 2014, he asked via social media whether someone could make a documentary about them. Filmmaker Erik McCowan of Rosanky responded.

“First we visited the Round Top Schützen Verein’s annual shooting competition that’s been held every year since 1873,” recalls McCowan, a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member. “That’s when I realized the history of these places runs much deeper than I thought. After Steve and I saw what was left of New Bern Helvetia Hall near Taylor, I knew I had to make a film.”

More than three years in the making, *Dance Hall Days* shares the down-home stories of 56 classic halls. Some stand forgotten, such as Cistern Hall in Cistern and Kreutzberg Shooting Club



David Wade holds a 1956 postcard from Cat Spring Agricultural Society’s 100th anniversary.

Dance Halls and Electric Co-ops

Only two Texas dance halls host live music nearly every day. Built in 1878, **Gruene Hall** in New Braunfels stands as one of the state’s oldest dance halls. The iconic **Luckenbach Dance Hall**, immortalized by singer Waylon Jennings, draws visitors from around the world.

After Medina EC formed in 1938, one of its first customers was the **Quihi Gun Club and Dance Hall**. “The co-op put electricity in the dance hall to show farmers how it worked,” says Clyde Muennink, club secretary-treasurer.

San Bernard EC approved the **Cat Spring Agricultural Society** as a member in March 1941, says David Wade, society treasurer. “The society paid \$115.39 to have the building wired for electricity,” he says. “In 2007, matching grants helped us pay \$85,000 to have everything rewired.”

In 2015, Bluebonnet EC awarded the **Kovar Osveta SPJST Lodge #38** a \$17,500 capital grant to fund hall renovations.



A dancer who came all the way from California on a dance hall tour looks over photos at Quihi Gun Club and Dance Hall.

Hall near Boerne. Fire destroyed several, including the Fredericksburg Social Turn Verein Hall in 2016 (members voted to rebuild). Siblings restored their family's Park Hall (now called Hruska's at Park) near Fayetteville, and Renck Hall in Warrenton hosts antique sales. But dancing still ranks No. 1 at many others, including the Albert Dance Hall in Albert and Schroeder Hall in Goliad.

Throughout the 82-minute film, Dean steps in and out of halls, sharing his hopes and wisdom. Sadly, he died April 28, 2018, the day after *Dance Hall Days* won Best Texas Film at the Hill Country Film Festival in Fredericksburg.

Rich stories captured by McCowan's film abound within the walls of Texas dance halls. "These places live and breathe the stories of Texas," Fleming says. "They're melting pots of our state's culture. Every time we lose one, we lose a piece of Texas history."

Twin Sisters Dance Hall

BLANCO | SERVED BY PEDERNALES EC

Fewer than a dozen couples two-stepped across the hardwood floor one summer night in 2015. Jo Nell Haas, watching from her perch by an open door, thought back to monthly dances when crowds jammed the checkerboard tinsided Twin Sisters Dance Hall.

German immigrant and rancher Max Krueger built the hall, 7 miles south of Blanco, as a dance pavilion and community center in the mid-1870s. Severe drought later forced Krueger to sell the building. Subsequent owner Henry Bruemmer Jr. sold the hall and surrounding land in 1918 for \$5 to Twin Sisters Hall Club, a nonprofit group that still runs the facility.

Through the years, countless families have gathered at Twin

Sisters, once the site of a German community named for a pair of nearby hills. In the 1970s, Haas met her husband, Joe, on the oak floor. Like many other couples, they taught their children how to dance there, and their families celebrated weddings beneath its arched blue ceiling.

Recent attendance at dances, however, had waned to the point where Haas, club president, considered closing the doors. She knew the night's ticket sales would barely pay the band. Frustrated, Haas slipped outside that night in 2015 and tapped a familiar number into her cellphone.

On the other end, Steve Dean picked up. He listened as Haas unloaded her worries. Then his passion for historic halls took hold. "Keep your head up," he yelled. "Don't give up! I'll rob a bank if I have to, to keep Twin Sisters open. But don't you shut those doors!"

Three summers later, Haas reflects back on that night. "I thought we'd have to shut down," she says, seated at one of Twin Sisters' wooden tables. "But then the TDHP showed us how to up our marketing and book bands that are more popular."

Nowadays, big crowds turn out for Twin Sisters' monthly first Saturday dances. Hall rentals for weddings, proms, parties and reunions have boosted revenues. In March 2018, the club replaced Twin Sisters' leaky metal roof with money from fundraisers and grants, including a community grant awarded by Pedernales EC.

"Twin Sisters Dance Hall has always been about family and community," Haas says. "All of us volunteers work hard to continue that tradition."

Twin Sisters Dance Hall, 6720 Highway 281 S., Blanco, 78606; (830) 833-5773; twinsistershall@gmail.com; twinsistersdancehall.com.

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to see a map of 130 dance halls still in use. Plus, enjoy a slideshow of the halls featured here.



**Bob Wills, Willie Nelson, Hank Wilson and Ray Benson
ARE AMONG THOSE WHO GOT THEIR STARTS IN DANCE HALLS.**

Cat Spring Agricultural Society Hall

CAT SPRING | SERVED BY SAN BERNARD EC

Many of the German and Czech immigrants who settled Cat Spring in the 1850s had education but no farming know-how. They joined together in 1856 as the Agricultural Society of Austin County, later renamed for Cat Spring. The men met regularly to trade information and acquire garden seeds. They and their families tended fruit orchards, canned vegetables, compared fences and experimented with growing tea and coffee.

“We were the first extension service before Texas A&M University,” says David Wade, Cat Spring Agricultural Society treasurer and a San Bernard EC member. “The U.S. Patent Office would send seeds to the society for testing, and members reported back on how they performed.”

In 1902, German carpenter Joachim Hintz built the group’s 12-sided, white-clapboard social center, the largest of the three round halls he built in Austin County, including the Bellville Turnverein Pavilion and Peters-Hacienda Community Hall in Sealy. During dances, couples proceed counterclockwise on the pine floor around the center pole, which supports the beamed ceiling.

In addition to public dances, the hall hosts weddings, anniversaries and events for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, the Texas

Farm Bureau and other ag groups.

Approximately 200 society members pay \$10 annual dues. Up until the 1950s, minutes were recorded in German. Even though women always were involved in the organization’s affairs, they were allowed to join the society just over a decade ago.

“I serve as secretary, and my brother Malcolm Dittert is president,” says Marilyn Nelson, a San Bernard EC member. “Before him, our father, grandfather and great-grandfather were presidents, too. I’ve gone to the hall all my life. While my parents danced, we kids would sleep on pallets under benches, on tables and in the kitchen.”

Since 1856, families have come together for the society’s annual June Fest. The activity-packed evening includes a barbecue supper, live auction, petting zoo and a free dance. “Traditionally, June Fest was held the first Sunday of June,” Nelson says. “But we had to change it to Saturday to make it more convenient for people who travel.

“It’s hard to keep the community involved with the hall and agricultural society,” she adds. “We’re trying to keep it all going. We’ve got to.”

Cat Spring Agricultural Society Hall, 13035 Hall Road, Cat Spring, 78933; (979) 865-2540; catspringagsociety.org.

Folks have gathered at the site of Quihi Gun Club and Dance Hall in Medina County since 1890.

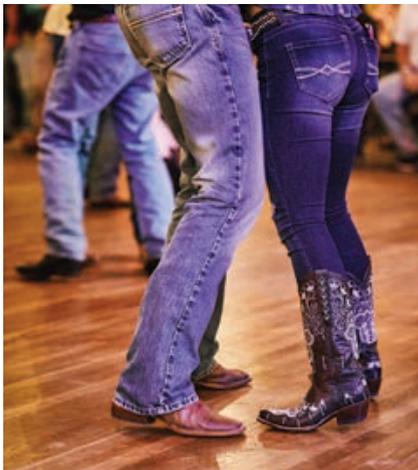
The spacious interior of the 12-sided dance hall in Cat Spring.

Quihi Gun Club and Dance Hall

QUIHI | SERVED BY MEDINA EC

On a horse-themed calendar, third-grader Savannah Grohman marks birthdays and upcoming dances at the Quihi Gun Club and Dance Hall. “She’s been going there all her life,” says mom Jackie Grohman, a Medina EC member. “Sometimes, Savannah helps her grandparents stock sodas and water. Or she and I dance together in a corner.”

Family traditions keep alive country western dances at the tin-sided hall, set on cedar posts among live oaks near Quihi Creek in Medina County. Folks have gathered at the same place since 1890, when German



Fayette’s Frolicking

Fayette EC is believed to be the electric co-op with the most historic dance halls in its service area, including:

- Ammannville KJT Hall, Ammannville
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- Hruska’s at Park, Fayetteville
- Round Top Schützen Verein, Round Top
- Swiss Alp Hall, Swiss Alp

settlers founded the Quihi Schützen Verein for community protection against frontier-era threats. These days, Quihi Gun Club members, who number about 600, still meet regularly to hone their rifle skills and compete in annual shoots.

“Until 1950, you had to speak and read German in order to become a member,” says Clyde Muennink, club secretary-treasurer and Savannah’s grandfather. “We require that members be men at least 21 years old and have lived in Medina County for one year. Since 1890, our club has had a burial fund. When a

member passes, we each give a dollar toward burial costs.”

Floods washed away the hall a few times. In the 1960s, the group enlarged the building and set it on 5-foot posts. In a May 2010 flood, 2 feet of water got inside. By the next weekend, members had it cleaned up for a party for a family that had no place else to go.

“I’ve been going to the hall since I was a week old,” says Muennink, a Medina EC member who’s managed the place where he met his wife, Kathy, for 27 years. “My parents met and married there. So did my wife’s. My mother still dances at the hall, and she’s in her 90s. We all grew up there. It’s like home to us. Maybe because it is.”

Quihi Gun Club and Dance Hall, County Road 4517, Hondo, 78861; (830) 426-2859; quihidancehall.com.

As a teen, writer **Sheryl Smith-Rodgers** of Blanco two-stepped at Robstown Community Hall, which is served by Nueces EC.



Actual size is 40.6 mm

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**MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER ALAN LESLEY**

NOW, AS ALWAYS, IT'S A GOOD TIME TO BE A MEMBER OF AN electric cooperative.

Not only are co-ops locally owned and controlled—by you, the members—they are locally run to serve your needs.

While many Texas electricity customers pay their power bills to companies that answer to faraway stockholders who demand a healthy profit every quarter, local members call the shots for electric co-ops.

Co-ops aren't under pressure to keep rates high enough to generate big dividends for investors. Instead, we keep rates as low as we can while providing high-quality service.

Comanche Electric Cooperative invests money earned in excess of operating costs back into the co-op and eventually returns the excess, known as margins, to members in the form of capital credits.

And unlike the boards of investor-owned utilities who must consider Wall Street profit pressures, your co-op's directors, who are fellow members, have only one thing in mind: keeping the lights on while keeping costs down. That is what's so great about co-ops. If you don't like the direction your cooperative is taking, you have the power to change its leadership through democratic means.

You may know the history of the electric cooperative movement, how eight decades ago, rural citizens banded together to bring the conveniences of electricity to their communities when investor-owned utilities would not extend service. The associations they formed, on the same democratic principles as this great nation, are as strong and relevant today as they were then.

Co-op leadership shares the concerns that you,

the members, have. You can stop by, give us a call or send us an email and be assured that someone here is listening.

As locally owned and operated businesses, electric co-ops have a firsthand understanding of the people they serve. Cooperative management and employees share the same values and have the same community pride because it is our community, too. We act like neighbors because we are neighbors.

And that's the cooperative difference.

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Classroom Grants Awarded to Teachers



Jill Bennett is the grades K-6 dyslexia instructor at Moran Independent School District, which struggles for state funding for its dyslexia program because it's such a small district with low enrollment. With the \$1,000 grant, the school will be able to purchase its own Scottish Rite Take Flight materials instead of having to borrow from larger schools. Moran ISD has approximately 25 students in grades K-6 who benefit from the dyslexia and reading intervention programs. Pictured are Danny Freeman, superintendent; Cotten Campbell and Electra McGough, sixth-graders; and Jill Bennett.



Dena Davis teaches a self-contained third-grade class at Comanche Independent School District. She will use her grant to purchase iPads and an e-reader to be used as research tools for practicing math facts, creating videos and recording fluency and as a means to stoke creativity and curiosity. Incorporating iPads into the program will provide students an opportunity for personalized and differentiated learning in a blended classroom, including students with dyslexia, gifted and talented students, and students that are below grade level, at grade level and high-level learners. As technology continues to be an important tool for our youngest generation, this grant will make it possible for students to access more resources than traditional books provide.

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Comanche Electric Cooperative Association members have once again blessed local schools with grants through Operation Round-Up. Through the program, CECA members volunteer to round up their monthly electric bills to fund grants that go to a variety of good causes in our community. Our classroom grant program is one of many initiatives that benefit from this wonderful opportunity. Congratulations to these teachers on being chosen to receive a grant.



Jeffrey Roemisch teaches biology, human anatomy and information technology at De Leon High School. His grant will be used to purchase a 3D printer and online design software (TinkerCAD) to fabricate an organism for his biology students and a diseased human organ for his human anatomy class, and the setup will provide an integral piece of computing technology to use in his IT instruction. Students will begin their projects in February.



Becky Nelson, of Mullin Independent School District, was awarded a grant for her grades 4-7 science class. Their goal is to build a schoolwide vegetable and butterfly garden. The elementary students will be team taught by pairing with a high school student. They will learn how to plant and plot a garden area, analyze soil needs, till and prepare the lot, and care for and harvest the crops. These gardening activities will incorporate numerous science-related Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills in all grade levels. Pictured are Rene Robinson, eighth-grade and high school science; Becky Nelson; and Bud West, CECA Operation Round-Up board member.

FIRST-TIME LOGIN INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Contact a CECA Member Service Representative at 1-800-915-2533 for temporary login credentials.*
- 2. Using the temporary user ID and password, sign in to your account and change both fields to codes that you can easily remember.*
- 3. Log in to your account to pay your bill, check your usage, set alerts and reminders, and much more! It's that easy!*

ICE SKATING, TEXAS-STYLE!



BY SHIRLEY KIDD DUKES

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY KIDD DUKES
AND AMY CARROLL OF
ROOT AND ROAM CREATIVE STUDIO

“So many people just stepped up. That’s what Comanche does. We see it over and over and over again. Individuals and businesses just step up. It allows a lot of things to happen that would never happen.”

—Kristi Taylor



Clint Tunnell, Jan Wilkerson and Kristi Taylor pass out skates and work the rink.

HERE IN OUR PART OF TEXAS, ICE AND SNOW ARE extremely rare. Especially rare is a freeze hard enough for ice skating. So when three community members began talking about building an ice skating rink in Comanche, it came as no surprise that their plan was met with a bit of skepticism.

The idea was the brainchild of Kristi Taylor, who first shared her vision with Clint Tunnell. The two discovered they both had the same idea. Tunnell then took the idea to Jan Wilkerson, who makes annual trips to the Metroplex for a family ice skating outing. Wilkerson was immediately on board with their vision of a local rink. The three formed a passionate group that quickly turned dream into reality.

They got to work in January 2018. Ideas were tossed around for a few months, and by summer, the trio had decided forming a nonprofit foundation would help them create the rink. With the help of one of Wilkerson’s family members, Tomorrow’s Memories Foundation was established, and the group soon headed to the drawing board for the next phase of the project: fundraising.

“We just felt like that if this project was something people thought Comanche wanted, the funds would be there quick,” Tunnell said. Within a few weeks, they had raised \$30,000—enough to purchase the rink, all other necessary materials and supplies, rent, and insurance for the first opening.

It became clear that the three had one major thing in common: perfectionism. They all agreed that their vision included much more than just a rink. The name, Tomorrow’s Memories, has a very nostalgic feel, so they decided

on a nostalgic backdrop to complement the name.

In December, the rink’s skate checkout center was set against a backdrop reminiscent of a Hallmark Christmas movie, complete with beautiful wreaths, a Christmas tree and a donor wall highlighting contributors’ generosity. The rink itself was adorned with strings of lights draped from the ceiling. Opening the two large garage doors brings the outdoors inside while maintaining some protection from the elements. “People come in and go ‘Wow, this is kind of neat!’” Tunnell said. “And we think ‘Wow, that is what we wanted to hear!’”

“You always hear in Comanche, there’s nothing for kids to do,” Tunnell said. “Well, whose fault is that? That’s why small towns die because there’s nothing to hold them here. So, give them a reason to come back, or give them a reason not to leave. My hope for the foundation is to lead by example, to be successful, do a project, doing it for the right reasons and motivate other people.”

Each member of the foundation puts in approximately three hours per day, either at the rink or working behind the scenes. Maintenance has been relatively simple—the rink is swept each day and an enhancer is applied every few days.

The rink is not actual ice, but a synthetic product that skates much like real ice. Synthetic ice is a solid polymer designed for ice skates’ metal blades. When skating on natural ice, the skate blade increases the temperature of the top layers of the ice, melting it to produce a small amount of water that reduces drag and causes the blade to glide on top of the ice. On synthetic ice rinks, liquid



Ice skating is neither age- nor gender-specific, as evidenced by these photos. All ages take to the ice for a little family fun.

surface enhancements reduce drag on the blade over the surface. Wilkerson, who has skated on numerous rinks around Texas, says she can't tell a lot of difference between synthetic ice and the real thing. "To me it's about the same," she said. "You just don't get wet when you fall down."

The rink is constructed with 30 interlocking panels, much like a jigsaw puzzle, that were delivered on two pallets weighing 2,750 pounds. Each panel weighs 75 pounds. Assembling the rink took approximately 2.5 hours. Creating the ambiance, however, took much longer.

The rink holds only 25 skaters, so skating is broken into 30-minute sessions. "If we don't have a full rink, we let them stay on the ice," Wilkerson said. "We only implement the sessions when we have skaters waiting." The founders purchased 65 skates to start with and, so far, have not had any issues with sizes. However, they are already tossing around the idea of ordering more of the most popular sizes for next year. They would also like to enlarge the rink but would have to find a new location to accomplish that, they said.

Children under the age of 18 who are residents of Comanche County skate for free. Adults pay \$5 admission, and kids from out of town pay \$3. "It's really fun to watch the families come together," Wilkerson said. "Having a good, clean activity is what we really wanted. That's why we made it free for the kids." So far, the rink builders have seen out-of-towners from as far away as Dallas, Lubbock, Midlothian, Gonzales and Brenham.

The skating rink's founders said they've never been stopped by any major obstacles. Everything fell into place, they said, proving this was the right thing to do and that it would be a successful venture—even in this tiny Texas town. The biggest surprise was how it all came together in such a short time, they said.

The rink was open for all of December, and the founders said they have high hopes of opening again during spring break. Check the Tomorrow's Memories Foundation/Christmas Skates Facebook page for details and hours. Donations can be sent to Tomorrow's Memories Foundation, P.O. Box 565, Comanche, TX 76442.

Special requests can be made by mail or through Facebook. Like the group's Facebook page to be one of the first to know of future dreams for Tomorrow's Memories!



"Watching them walk in and those kids just beaming from ear to ear, and it's so funny because they know it's going to hurt, they know they are going to fall, but they are beyond excited to be there," said Tunnell.

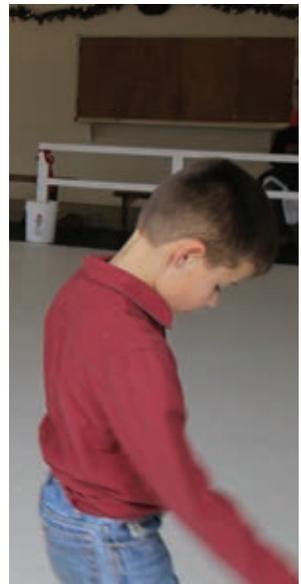
Above: Pepper and Rowdy Dukes spent much of their time on the floor but said they loved it nonetheless.

Below: Nonskating visitors generally wind up having just as good a time as the skaters—visiting with others, observing and enjoying the refreshment trailer.



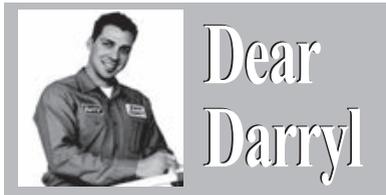


Left: The skating rink checkout and facade, built by Clint Tunnell, resembles the set of a Hallmark Christmas movie village.
Right: Who wouldn't love to have a picture taken on this romantic little bench surrounded by greenery and holly?



Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

DEAR DARRYL: My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

Clogged and Smelly – Austin , TX

DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY: As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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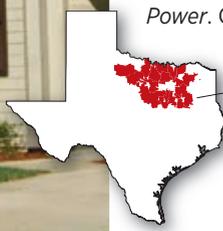
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SCHLITTERBAHN WATERPARKS AND RESORTS

The Bugs That Make You See Red

Aztecs and Europeans treasured the radiant hue produced by cochineals living on prickly pear cactuses

BY MARTHA DEERING

RED LIPS, RED FLAGS, RED LIGHTS, RED dresses, red sports cars.

The color catches our eye, accelerates our heartbeat and quickens our breath. It's the color of power, passion and excitement—and for centuries, a tiny insect that thrives in Texas, the American southwest and Mexico has produced the brightest, clearest reds. Extract from cochineal insects still colors foods, cosmetics and clothing throughout the world.

Before the Texas Revolution, Col. Juan Almonte noted that the cochineal crop, gathered twice yearly in Texas, was hauled to Laredo and shipped to agents of the British crown. They needed it to color their red coats. When the Lone Star flag was adopted in 1839, the red field was dyed with cochineals.

Cochineals belong to the scale family. The parasitic bugs are about one-third the size of a ladybug and feed on the spiny pads of prickly pear cactuses. A glance will tell you if cochineals have infested a cactus: The pads are covered with bits of white fluff. Females possess carminic acid, which is distasteful to ants and grubs that might otherwise find them delicious. It is also what creates her carmine, or red pigment.

Even though the insect appears white, crushing the female cochineal releases the dark red liquid. Aztecs discovered this and already were doing a land-office business in cochineals when Spain claimed the New World. Spanish ships soon carried dried cochineals to Europe alongside plundered silver and gold. Cochineal created more intense and permanent color than any previously known red pigments, so the dye was immediately in demand for silks, velvets and tapestries.

According to Amy Butler Greenfield,



author of *A Perfect Red*, artists Titian, Rubens, Van Dyck, Rembrandt and Van Gogh adopted cochineal red. As Mexicans skillfully cultivated the insects, they developed a new species, *Dactylopius coccus*, which was twice the size of wild cochineals and more profitable. In addition to producing striking scarlets and crimsons, cochineal also could be formulated to create shades of soft pink and rose that resisted fading.

Europeans also used cochineal powder to make cosmetics to stain their lips and cheeks. The vivid reds created an outstanding contrast to their pale faces, which they whitened with lead powder. Along

the way, medical uses became popular, and apothecaries concocted their own secret formulas, which they touted as antidepressants.

In spite of the

best efforts of pirates who tried to steal cochineals and establish farms in Europe, the temperamental little bug resisted transfer to new climes. Collected specimens died in cold, rain, heat and other environmental changes, as did the cactuses on which they thrived. A few of these early industrial pirates lost fortunes when their entire stolen crop of cochineal-infested cactus rotted in the holds of ships during the voyage to Europe.

When bright aniline dyes made from coal tar were developed in the 1850s and '60s, the cochineal industry took a hit. Today, the use of cochineals is approved by the Food and Drug Administration to produce a natural red color for fruit juices, gelatins, candies, shampoos, cosmetics, yogurt, maraschino cherries, popsicles, and even pink tequila and lemonade. Read the label. Does it say cochineal, carmine, carminic acid or Natural Red 4? Any way you say it, that means bug red.

Martha Deering, a member of Heart of Texas EC, lives near McGregor.

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to learn the deep secret to imperial purple coloring.

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Cozy Casseroles

CASSEROLES HAVE TIMELESS APPEAL for good reason. Most can be prepared with inexpensive ingredients, are easy to assemble and serve a crowd. Case in point: Lone Star Casserole, a hearty mix of beef and vegetables braised in creamy tomato sauce that appeared in the April 1965 *Texas Co-op Power*. The dish relies on round steak. To update the dish, I browned the meat in olive oil instead of shortening and replaced canned mushrooms with cremini. I couldn't resist adding a bit of smoky bacon and fresh herbs to make the results richer and more fragrant. As the original recipe suggests, serve the dish with noodles or rice.

PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR

Lone Star Casserole

- 2 pounds round steak, cubed
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 strips thick-cut bacon, diced
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 1 large onion, chopped
- ½ cup thinly sliced celery
- 10–12 cremini mushrooms, stemmed and sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh (or 1½ teaspoons dried) rosemary or thyme
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
2. Season the steak with salt and pepper. Heat the olive oil in a large, deep skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot and shimmering, add the steak and bacon and cook, stirring, until browned, about 7–9 minutes. Transfer the meat to a plate and set aside.
3. Add the carrots, onion, celery, mushrooms, garlic and fresh herbs to the skillet and cook, stirring, until

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

Retro Recipes

Cozy Casseroles

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

MARTHA JO WHITT | GUADALUPE VALLEY EC



This crowd pleaser was given to Whitt by her college roommate, Jane Caddel Brewer (a Pedernales EC member),

whose father, Charles

Caddel, served for decades as a director at San Patricio EC. This dish is a snap to assemble and hits all the comfort notes.

Jane's H-Bar-C Casserole

- 1½ pounds ground meat (beef or turkey)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and chopped
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 can (15 ounces) hominy, drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) chili (beans or no beans, as desired)
- 1 can (10.5 ounces) mushroom soup
- 1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chiles
- 1 pound Velveeta Mexican cheese
- Fritos (or other corn chips) for topping

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Combine the meat, onion and bell pepper in a large skillet over medium-high heat, season generously with salt and pepper, and cook until the meat is browned and the vegetables have softened. Add the hominy, chili, mushroom soup and green chiles to the meat mixture and simmer, stirring, until combined. Pour the mixture into a buttered 9-by-13-inch casserole and top with processed cheese (sliced, cubed or grated, as desired) and a layer of crushed Fritos. Bake 30–40 minutes, until bubbly. ▶ Serves 10–12.

\$100 Recipe Contest

July's recipe contest topic is **Cooking With Texas Gulf Shrimp**. We're casting a net for the state's tastiest shrimp dishes. What's yours? The deadline is **February 10**. Readers whose recipes are featured will receive a special *Texas Co-op Power* apron.

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

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

softened and golden. Return the meat to the skillet (and any juices), sprinkle with flour and stir until the ingredients are coated. Add the remaining ingredients, stir to combine and then pour into a buttered 9-by-13-inch casserole. Bake about 1½ hours, until the meat is tender. Serve warm, with noodles, rice or crusty bread. ▶ Serves 8.

Ranch Hand Chicken Casserole

ROBIN WANTLAND | LAMAR EC

"This is a great do-ahead casserole," Wantland says, and we agree—especially when you want to feed a hearty, satisfying dish to a crowd. You can use a store-bought roasted chicken or simmer your own and use the homemade stock. To intensify the flavor, serve this casserole with wedges of lime, your favorite hot sauce and freshly chopped cilantro.

- 1 whole cooked chicken
- 2 poblano peppers
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, minced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) corn, drained
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans
- 1 teaspoon cumin

Salt and pepper, to taste

- ¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup chicken stock, plus more for tortillas
- 12 corn tortillas
- 4 cups grated cheddar cheese (regular or sharp)

1. Remove meat from the chicken and set aside.
2. Roast the poblanos under a broiler or over a gas flame on a stovetop, turning them evenly as needed until blackened. Allow them to cool in a bowl covered with a dishcloth. Then peel, seed, stem and dice them and set aside.
3. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat and sauté the onion and garlic 3–5 minutes, until softened and fragrant. Add the corn, tomatoes, poblanos, black beans, cumin, and a sprinkling of salt and pepper;

sauté 1–2 minutes and then remove from heat.

4. In a separate saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat; add the flour and whisk until lightly browned and smooth. Gradually add the milk and chicken stock, stirring until the sauce is thick and smooth. Pour the sauce over the vegetables, stir to combine, and season to taste with additional salt and pepper.
5. Heat oven to 350 degrees and butter or apply cooking spray to a 9-by-13-inch casserole.
6. Dip tortillas in additional chicken stock to soften, then slice each tortilla into four strips. Place ⅓ of the tortilla strips in the bottom of the prepared dish and cover with half the chicken. Pour half of the vegetable mixture over the chicken and sprinkle half of the grated cheese. Place another ⅓ of the tortilla strips over the cheese, cover with the remaining chicken, then cover with the remaining vegetable mixture. Top with the remaining tortilla strips, sprinkle the remaining cheese and cover tightly with foil.
7. Bake the casserole 20 minutes, then remove the foil and bake another 20 minutes. ▶ Serves 8–10.

COOK'S TIP Add a smoky flavor by using diced fire-roasted tomatoes.

Gefüllter Kohl (Filled Cabbage Rolls)

BELINDA GRAMS | PEDERNALES EC

Cultures find comfort in various ways, and Grams avows the following dish as "a truly savory, truly authentic German casserole." The recipe traveled from northern Germany with her great-grandmother, Hattie Elsa Pfeiffer Keidel, and first appeared in the *PTA Fredericksburg Home Kitchen Cookbook* in 1916. Consider serving the hearty, meat-filled rolls with German-fried potatoes made with bacon, onion and green pepper.

CABBAGE ROLLS

- 1 small cabbage
- ½ pound ground beef
- ½ pound ground pork
- ½ cup breadcrumbs, softened with as much water as they will absorb
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tablespoons milk

Salt and pepper, to taste

2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, softened to room temperature

SAUCE

2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter

2 tablespoons flour

Salt and pepper, to taste

Pinch grated nutmeg

1 egg yolk

1. CABBAGE ROLLS: Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

2. Separate larger cabbage leaves; core and quarter smaller center. Place the leaves in boiling water 2–3 minutes, then remove from heat and let them stand 5–10 minutes (reserve liquid).

3. Rinse leaves in cold water and drain. Combine the beef and pork with the breadcrumbs, eggs, milk and seasonings.

4. Coat an 8-by-8-inch casserole with butter.

5. Place about ⅓ cup of meat mixture in the center of each cabbage leaf and wrap into a snug bundle; place the bundle

seam-side down in the casserole dish.

Repeat with remaining meat and cabbage leaves. Cover the dish with foil and bake 75 minutes. Remove foil and continue to bake 15–20 minutes, or until the cabbage is tender, basting occasionally with cooking juices. Invert the stuffed rolls onto a platter, reserving the liquid. Tent cabbage rolls with foil or place in oven at low heat to keep warm.

6. SAUCE: Melt the butter in a skillet. Add the flour and enough of the reserved liquid (cooking juices and cabbage water) to make a smooth sauce. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg; whisk in egg yolk and pour the mixture over the cabbage rolls. ▶ Serves 4.

COOK'S TIP To make a deconstructed version, layer cabbage leaves and the meat mixture in a buttered slow cooker and cook on high 4 hours.

WEB EXTRAS

▶ Read these recipes on our website to see the original Lone Star Casserole recipe from April 1965.

WANT THE CONSUMMATE CASSEROLE?

Choose the right dish: Shallow baking dishes are best for creating a crunchy topping, whereas deeper roasting pans are good for preserving moisture.

Undercook your pasta: For the best texture, boil noodles 2–3 minutes fewer than the package indicates to allow the pasta to finish cooking in the oven.

Choose the right cheese: Aged cheeses like Parmesan, Asiago and feta offer sharp and tangy flavors, but they won't create a creamy texture. For an ooey-goopy consistency, go with meltable cheeses like cheddar, asadero and Gruyère.

Brighten rich flavors: Finely grated lemon zest, a tablespoon of Dijon mustard or a few dashes of your favorite vinegar-based hot sauce will make flavors pop. —PD

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

NEXT MONTH

TEXAS: A BLUES STATE Widespread influences created 'a sort of international blues, a United Nations gumbo of sounds.'

A HERO IN ANY LANGUAGE

Mexican immigrant Marcelino Serna became the most decorated Texan of World War I.

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WEB EXTRAS ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.

◀ **MIKE DOWNEY**, Bryan Texas Utilities: “My son Davis is wheeling after my late father, Sherwood Downey, one day on the farm many years ago.”



◀ **CHARLES BAXTER**, CoServ: “Two Texas state birds with the same thing in mind.”

▼ **LINDA LEE BICKFORD**, Grayson-Collin EC: Bickford’s nephews, Dustin and Daniel.



▲ **SALIMA ASARIA**, CoServ: “Charmed, are we?”

▼ **MARY RUST**, Comanche EC: “Two fawns out for an early-morning adventure.”



UPCOMING CONTESTS

JUNE FEEDIN' TIME	DUE FEBRUARY 10
JULY TRUCKS	DUE MARCH 10
AUGUST FAMILY TIES	DUE APRIL 10

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

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



Pick of the Month Wine Swirl

Nacogdoches February 9
(936) 564-7351, visitnacogdoches.org

This Saturday evening wine and food pairing event sponsored by the city's Main Street program showcases Texas wineries and local and regional food trucks along historic brick streets downtown. Wineries will be stationed in booths outside of shops.

WINE: DENIZ BAYRAM | DREAMSTIME.COM. KIMONO: SUPAWAT BURSUK | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM. MASK: MICHAEL FLIPPO | DREAMSTIME.COM

February

7

McKinney Black History Month: A Conversation With Author Zachary Wood, (972) 540-5067, mckinneytexas.org

8

Levelland [8-9] High Plains Cowboy Church in the Dirt Series, (806) 894-4161, malleteventcenter.com

Port Lavaca [8-9] South Texas Square & Round Dance Association February Frenzy, (361) 575-2665, squaredancetx.com

Fredericksburg [8-24] Wine Lovers Celebration, (872) 216-9463, texaswinetrail.com

9

Austin Rodeo Austin Gala & Youth Art Auction, (512) 919-3000, rodeoaustin.com

Ennis Czech Music Festival, (972) 878-4748, ennisczechmusicfestival.com

San Antonio Asian Festival, (210) 458-2300, asianfestivalsa.com

10

Bastrop Rockne Historical Association Fundraiser, (512) 304-8379, facebook.com/rharockne

15

Luckenbach [15-16] Hug-In and Valentine Ball, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

February 9
San Antonio
Asian Festival



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SPECIAL
TRAVEL
ISSUE

In the **APRIL 2019 TRAVEL ISSUE**, we'll share some creative and cool ways to travel Texas and create adventurous memories.

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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AROUND TEXAS EVENT CALENDAR

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Rosenberg [15-17] Houston Glass Show, (713) 410-4780, maxmillerantiques.com

16

College Station Eisenhower Dance Detroit, (979) 862-5766, academyarts.tamu.edu

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

Port Arthur Rotary Club Taste of Gumbo, (409) 985-7822

17

Crockett Cinderella, (936) 544-4276, pwwfaa.org

21

Nacogdoches [21-23] Nacogdoches Film Festival, (936) 645-1499, nacogdochesfilmfestival.com

Edinburg [21-24] Fiesta Edinburg, (956) 383-4974, edinburg.com

22

Galveston [22-March 5] Mardi Gras! Galveston, (409) 770-0999, mardigrasgalveston.com



February 28
Port Arthur
Mardi Gras
Southeast Texas

23

Fredericksburg Historic Cave Creek School Open House, (830) 990-1017, historicsschools.org

Henderson Mardi Gras/Gumbo Cook-Off, (903) 392-8232, visithendersontx.com

Palestine Mardi Gras Parade, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

28

Kerrville A New World: Classical Music Lands in America, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

Port Arthur [28-March 3] Mardi Gras Southeast Texas, (409) 721-8717, mardigras.portarthur.com

March

2

Lago Vista [2-3] La Primavera Race, (512) 267-7952, lagovista.org

3

San Antonio Bexar County Czech Heritage Society Annual Dance, (210) 494-5171, bexarcourtyczechheritagesociety.com

7

Mansfield [7-17] Arts Week, (817) 804-5796, visitmansfieldtexas.com

Submit Your Event!

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



2016 – Code Talkers of WWI and WWII

2017 – Sequoyah & Cherokee Syllabary

2018 – Honoring sports legend Jim Thorpe

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A Close-Up With Nature

Corpus Christi botanical gardens put visitors eye to eye with flora and fauna

BY EILEEN MATTEI

INSIDE THE ORCHID CONSERVATORY AT the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center, I'm curious about a bananalike pod dangling from a vine climbing the 14-foot-high walls. "That's a vanilla bean," explains volunteer Jorge Garcia. "Vanilla is an orchid native to the Americas."

Benches in the center of the conservatory overflow with hundreds of orchids parading purple, yellow, pink, red and white flowers. Aerial roots hang down from vanda orchids like long, wavy hairs. "Orchid roots like to come out of the pot," Garcia says.

Nearby, a screened butterfly house shelters plants that attract monarchs, queens, gulf fritillaries and black swallow-tails. Signs identify tropical milkweed, hibiscus and butterfly bushes that butterflies visit to sip nectar or lay eggs. A buck-eye with multiple eye spots on its wings flutters around my knees.

My husband, Guy, relaxes on a swinging bench under a cedar elm as I wander through the sensory garden, touching a sandpaper tree, sniffing scented geraniums and marveling at the bright purple clusters of American beautyberry.

We stroll through the bromeliad collection—pineapples, ball moss and living walls of plants—to the hummingbird garden. I spot yellow-striped bumblebees and a buff-bellied hummingbird zipping around the mealy blue sage and Turk's cap.

Michael Womack, the gardens' executive director, meets us at the rose garden and guides us down a nature trail's crushed granite path. Meandering through 165 acres of native thorn scrub and wetlands,



Charlie is one of the playful macaws that call the center home.

the trail sports large interpretive panels that feature photographs of wetland animals from the botanical gardens' Wildlife in Focus contest.

"We are trying to preserve a natural spot in the middle of Corpus Christi," Womack says. "This is a safe place to experience nature and see its diversity."

From the bird tower overlooking a gator lake, we spot coots and black-necked stilts. Boardwalks lead us to a wetland gazebo, where we watch tricolored herons, roseate spoonbills and ibises.

Ecosystems support more than plants and birds, and I'm thrilled to have a slender vine snake twine around my wrist in the visitors center, where guests can interact with about 55 reptiles and 30 parrots.

"Resident reptiles help people see the native reptiles in our region and appreciate brush country habitats," Womack says.

Huckleberry, a cockatoo, leans into Guy's hand, tilting upside down to have his neck stroked. I fall for Ivan, a 12-pound green iguana with iridescent orange

scales and long claws.

"Tortoises and snakes are the big deal for kids," says Dedra Benedict, an animal care specialist. "Adults prefer the birds." Benedict leads parrot talks on Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons, showing off the personalities of some of the birds. "They need a lot of attention. People think the parrots are going to do the talking here, but they refuse to learn the script. Macaws, cockatoos and other parrots behave like 2-year-olds."

Tequila, a blue-and-gold macaw, has a reputation as a dancer, so I wiggle my shoulders at him. Perched on the back of a chair, he begins swaying and bouncing like a bobblehead doll. What a colorful dance partner!

"We want people to make the connection that exotic parrots and reptiles are linked to plants," Womack says. "The parrots live in forests, which are home to many of our tropical plants."

Eileen Mattei, a Nueces EC member, is a Texas master naturalist in Harlingen.

 **WEB EXTRAS** ▶ Read this story on our website to view a slideshow.

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Customer Rating

★★★★★

SAVE \$1,299

ITEM 63584

NOW \$699.99

COMPARE TO PROSKIT \$1,999



LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

*HONDA EU3000ISA stated specs

FREE SUPER COUPON

WITH ANY PURCHASE



CENTECH
7 FUNCTION
DIGITAL
MULTIMETER

- 3.5" LCD Display
- Battery Included

COMPARE TO PROSKIT \$167

ITEM 98025/30756/63604
63758/63759/69096/90899 shown

Cannot be used with other discounts or prior purchases. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 6/1/19 while supplies last. Limit 1 FREE GIFT per customer per day.

20% OFF SUPER COUPON

ANY SINGLE ITEM*



Limit 1 coupon per customer per day. Save 20% on any 1 item purchased. *Cannot be used with other discounts, coupons or any of the following items: 40 Service Inside Truck Club membership, Extended Service Plan, gift card, open box item, 3 day Parking Lot Sale Item, compressor, floor jack, sales, saw mills, storage cabinets, chests or carts, trailers, trencher/shovel, welders, Airmax, Ames, Sauer, Cobra, CoverPro, Dayton, DeWalt, Harbor Freight, Hercules, Icon, JigLife, Lync, Posi-Lock, Predator, Tailgator, Viking, Volcano, Zurich. Not valid on prior purchases. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 6/1/19.

HARDY SUPER COUPON

POWDER-FREE NITRILE GLOVES
PACK OF 100
• 5 mil thickness

12¢ PER PAIR



SAVE 59%

NOW \$5.99

COMPARE TO VENOM \$14.97

MODEL: VEN145

ITEM 97581, 97582, 97583, 37050, 37051, 37052, 64417, 64418, 61363, 68497, 61360, 61359, 68498, 68496 shown



LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

U.S. GENERAL SUPER COUPON

30" BULK STORAGE TECH CART

- 4847 cu. in. of storage
- 355 lb. capacity
- Extra deep top compartment and drawer for maximum storage space.



COMPARE TO \$89.99

NOW \$84.99

COMPARE TO \$395

SAVE \$310

MODEL: KRBCLTPC

ITEM 64002



LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

Side tray sold separately.

SUPER COUPON

7 FT. 4" x 9 FT. 6" ALL PURPOSE/WEATHER RESISTANT TARP



COMPARE TO BLUE HAWK \$9.98

SAVE 70%

NOW \$2.99

MODEL: B68X10-Y

ITEM 69115/69121/69129/69137/69249/877 shown



LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC SUPER COUPON

21 GALLON, 2.5 HP, 125 PSI VERTICAL OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR



- Air delivery: 5.8 CFM @ 40 PSI, 4.7 CFM @ 90 PSI

COMPARE TO \$229

SAVE \$79

MODEL: C201H

ITEM 61454/69091/62803/63635/67847 shown



LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

BADLAND ZXR SUPER COUPON

12,000 LB. TRUCK/SUV WINCH

- Weighs 83.65 lbs.
- 21" L x 10-1/8" H



SAVE \$400

COMPARE TO WARN \$699.99

MODEL: 98820

ITEM 64045/64046/63710 shown



LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

CENTECH SUPER COUPON

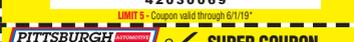
2/10/50 AMP, 12 VOLT BATTERY CHARGER AND ENGINE STARTER



COMPARE TO SCHUMACHER ELECTRIC \$59.99

MODEL: SE-1250

ITEM 60581/3418 60653 shown



LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

COVERPRO SUPER COUPON

10 FT. x 17 FT. PORTABLE GARAGE



COMPARE TO SHELTER LOGIC \$270

SAVE \$100

MODEL: 76377

ITEM 62859/63055/62860 shown



LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

PORTLAND SUPER COUPON

14" ELECTRIC CHAIN SAW



COMPARE TO \$49.99

SAVE \$60

MODEL: 071-45247

ITEM 64498/64497 shown



LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

SUPER COUPON

10" PNEUMATIC TIRE

NOW \$3.99

SAVE 45%

COMPARE TO FARM & RANCH \$7.35

MODEL: FR1055

ITEM 69385/62388/62409/62698/30900 shown



LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

PITTSBURGH #1 SELLING JACKS IN AMERICA SUPER COUPON

RAPID PUMP® 3 TON STEEL HEAVY DUTY LOW PROFILE FLOOR JACK

Weights 73 lbs.

SAVE \$70

COMPARE TO TEQ \$149.99

MODEL: TR300182

ITEM 64264/64266/64879/64881 61282/62326/61253 shown



LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

3/8" x 14 FT., GRADE 43 TOWING CHAIN



COMPARE TO MIBRO \$64.99

SAVE 69%

MODEL: 426920

ITEM 60658/97711 shown



LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

3-POINT QUICK HITCH



COMPARE TO \$159.99

SAVE \$80

MODEL: 10712

ITEM 97214



LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON

301 PIECE MASTER MECHANIC'S TOOL KIT

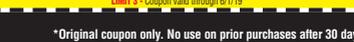
LIFETIME WARRANTY

SAVE \$140

COMPARE TO KLUTCH \$299.99

MODEL: 43994

ITEM 63464/63457/45951 shown



LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

BUNKER HILL SECURITY SUPER COUPON

60 LED SOLAR SECURITY LIGHT



INCLUDES 6V, 900 mAh NiCd battery pack.

COMPARE TO SUNFORCE \$59.99

MODEL: 82123

ITEM 62534/56213/69643 shown



LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

SUPER COUPON

TWO-TIER EASY-STORE STEP LADDER



COMPARE TO WERNER \$33.88

SAVE 40%

MODEL: S322A-1

ITEM 67514



LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

PORTLAND SUPER COUPON

1750 PSI ELECTRIC PRESSURE WASHER



COMPARE TO BRIGGS & STRATTON \$174.44

SAVE \$94

MODEL: 20600

ITEM 63255/63254 shown



LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 6/1/19

*Original coupon only. No use on prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase or without original receipt. Valid through 6/1/19.

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- ✓ Includes FREE Premium Channels

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