

Issue 12
Winter 2021

East Texan



**Everything Old
is New Again**

A car hobby becomes a new career

Stronger Than Ever

The Robins decide to stay home



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

*Alright everybody, hold one tight we have made it to 2021!
2020 was a bumpy ride and I think I can safely say we all
wanted it over.*

*Now is the time to embrace this New Year and make it better.
We cannot control everything going on in the world today, but
can control how we react to it.*

*If you look for the bad, I guarantee you will find it. Let us
all put effort into searching out the good. Not just looking for
others being good, but choosing to be kind. Smile first, even if it
is still hidden behind a mask people will see it in your eyes. Let
the aggressive driver pass on by and maybe their road rage will
cool. Take a deep breath and just find peace in your own mind.*

*Everyone is weary from 2020 and a little grumpy so let's all
give each other a break and be a better person.*

Have a wonderful New Year!



~ Debbie Dickerson
East Texan editor

On The Cover



Photograph by Tony Farkas.

See full story on page 6.

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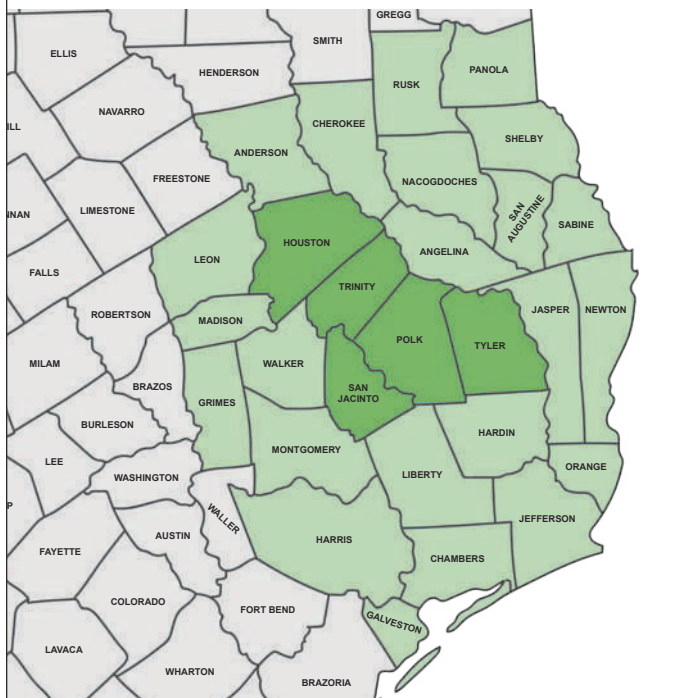


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Everything OLD is NEW Again



Story by Tony Farkas

Jimmy Cochran's passion gives him such a great sense of anticipation that he relishes getting up each morning.

That passion is restoring vintage vehicles, something he grew up with and continued throughout his life.

The 71-year-old Cochran was in the used car business for many years, and he turned that experience into his hobby.

"I'm semi-retired; I had a dealer's license from 1978 to 2018," he said. "I gave up the license, but not the love. The car collection became another business, where people either use them as backdrops or purchased them.

"I like all old cars, but my real passion is for pre-war, wartime and post-war models — 1930s, '40s and '50s," he said. "They have the most unique body designs. I'm a '49 model, and that's the reason I like those years."

Cochran said he grew up around cars — especially the older ones.

"My father was a tractor mechanic by trade; we never could afford a new car, so I've been around used cars all my life," he said.

"I've always liked the old cars — I've had the passion since I was a kid. I see potential in every one of them.

"When I get it in the shop, I start dragging things in that will go with it," he said. "I've only had one that I couldn't figure out what to do with, and I traded that off. I'm a hands-on guy."

Even as a child, he had the bug. Starting out with four-wheel scooters, he began his foray into rebuilding and refurbishing vehicles.

"I had a scooter, one someone gave me when I was in junior high school. I overhauled the engine, painted it, ran it all over the place," he said

The next step

A 1936 Dodge 500 Business Coupe parked on his lot northwest of Trinity about 10 years ago was the key to the start of his new venture of restoring old vehicles.

"I kept (the Dodge) parked here, and it started drawing people to it," Cochran said. "Those people would then ask me if I knew



about this old car in the woods or over there in a barn, and I would go a check it out. Next thing you know, I'm dragging stuff in here left and right.

"These cars are like a magnet drawing people in off the road; I have met people from other countries because of these old cars," he said. "As a matter of fact I had a young couple in their 30s stop here, they were from Scotland. They had flown over here, got a rental car at the airport and drove around sightseeing, had a big time. They got around here, and did a U-turn and hung out with me, talking and taking pictures, and two hours later, they told me that out of all of the traveling they've done, hanging out with me was the highlight of their trip."

Cochran is not hung up on any particular model, and not on any particular vehicle; it would be like trying to choose a favorite song.

"There's something to love about each and every one," he said. "I still like the old engines like the flathead V8. They're just nostalgic — they sound bad, but there's nothing bad about them. And it's

not just the sound, but the feel, the smell, everything.

"You won't see anyone using the current cars in 40 or 50 years, but you can take one of these old cars out of a field, and if they'll turn over, they'll run."

One of his first pieces was pulled out of a field with chin-high weeds; Cochran said he made it run again under its own power, and then started driving it to car shows. However, restoring a vehicle doesn't necessarily mean creating a pristine piece.

Cochran prefers that many of his pieces retain the patina of rust and age, and he'll clear-coat on top of it to preserve that look — wanting it to look like it just came off the farm. He also likes to do most of the work on the vehicles, but does hire out the glasswork and pinstriping, as well as some of the welding.

"I've sold them for people to advertise with, and I've rented them for people to advertise with, and I've now got people who call me when they find something, and if I get something good from it, I'll give them a \$100 bill. It keeps them looking," he said.

Right: One of several projects Jimmy Cochran is working on is a 1927 Ford Model T Coupe.

Below: After being spotted by Buc-ee's management at his Highway 19 shop and collection, Jimmy Cochran was commissioned to create display vehicles to use at various Buc-ee's, the first of which is still displayed in the store in Ennis.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

| | | | |
|------------|------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| JAN. 29 | 6PM | CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BANQUET | CLEVELAND CIVIC CTR |
| FEB. 12 | 12PM | CITY DAY OF PRAYER | CLEVELAND CIVIC CTR |
| MAR. 17 | 12PM | TASTE OF CLEVELAND | CLEVELAND CIVIC CTR |
| APR. 3 | 9AM | BUNNY BLAST | OLDE CITY PARK |
| APR. 18-24 | TBD | LIVESTOCK SHOW & RODEO | STANCIL EXPO & ARENA |
| APR. 23 | 4PM | DAIRY DAY BUYERS DINNER | CLEVELAND CIVIC CTR |
| MAY 6 | 12PM | NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER | CLEVELAND CIVIC CTR |
| JUNE 5 | 9AM | CHAMBER OUTDOOR EXPO | STANCIL EXPO & ARENA |
| JULY 4 | 7PM | JULY 4TH CELEBRATION | CLEV. MUNICIPAL PARK |
| AUG. 6 | 5PM | BACK TO SCHOOL SPECTACULAR | CLEVELAND CIVIC CTR |
| OCT. 2 | 10AM | FALL FESTIVAL | CLEVELAND CIVC CTR |
| DEC. 3-4 | 12PM | CLEVELAND HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS | CLEVELAND CIVIC CTR |
| DEC. 4 | 6PM | CLEVELAND HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS | CLEVELAND CIVIC CTR |



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Jimmy Cochran, a longtime car dealer and a lifetime car enthusiast, has a 1949 Ford Police Cruiser prominently displayed at his lot on Highway 19 north of Trinity. Cochran has a passion for cars and trucks from the 1930s to the 1950s, and if you make an appointment, you can travel down memory lane with his antiques.

Famous finds

Cochran's cars attracted more than just people, it attracted a manager with the Buc-ee's organization who happened to be driving by the lot.

"He told me I have some stuff they need," Cochran said. "He said they redo the old trucks to use as displays inside of a store. He looked around at what I had, and had me get together with someone who was rebuilding them. We met, and they picked out four trucks — two 46 Fords, a 49 Studebaker and a 49 Chevrolet."

Cochran was given an opportunity to build one on his own, and he went to work. An old parts truck was on the lot, and he began work. Eight months later, when the Buc-ee's people came to pick it up, Cochran said "his mouth flew open like a two-bit suitcase."

The first one built is in the Ennis store, and the latest one is going to a new store that is scheduled to open in Georgia.

"They were real pleased, and told me to get to work on the next one," he said.

Those builds, Cochran said, are not typical; the work is mostly cosmetic. There is no engine, or even axles, leaf springs or rear ends; the inside is redone, the bed and hood are repaired and painted, and the whole piece is mounted on heavy casters to allow it to be moved around.

Barrels are used to mimic wheels; those are used to house display items such as small stuffed beavers sold by the stores.

And if there's no parts laying around, that's OK; items such as shaving brushes, barrels, picnic tables and other items not necessarily car-related are repurposed into bed material, running boards, and even shifter knobs.

It's a process Cochran plans to continue as long as possible.

"I like it so much I can't wait to get in here in the morning," he said. "I need to get out here and do something with these cars." ■

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Stronger Than Ever

Story by Debbie Robins

Jeremiah 29:11. For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord; plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Because of Him, we are stronger than ever. Stronger than ever? That was the last sentence I typed when I originally wrote the article about the April 22, 2020 tornado that destroyed our home of 20 years. For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper and not harm? How could that be true after a devastating storm touched down and took 3 lives? Took homes away from families. Their belongings strewn into a careless wind tunnel, with no discrimination of age. No care for the people that would become homeless. No mercy for those who were already having their own struggles just trying to get through life.

The struggles have been real. It has been more than 5 months since the tornado touched down. In short, the house is in the process of being re-built. We have been very blessed to have several amazing builders and contractors build this Ark. If we learned anything from this ordeal, it is to truly love your neighbors as yourself, and to trust in the Lord. This is where we obtained our strength. And this is where it all began....

Living in a hotel for 2 months while trying to decide if we should rebuild or move on, was a difficult decision, to put it mildly. We spent most of our days collecting receipts, itemizing items for insurance, and doing laundry. I learned that if I bought totes, it was easier to organize our belongings while in the hotel. I had totes of food, toiletries, shoes, tools, insurance receipts, blankets, pillows. Everything we could salvage that we may need at the hotel. Except Kip didn't have socks. So, he went and bought socks. Who would think something so little, such as owning a pair of socks would be important enough to write about? The little things really did matter. Friends and coworkers gave us totes of snacks for the kids, and we received gift cards to restaurants and Lowes. It was amazing and so very helpful. Hotel living with a family of 5, plus 2 dogs, and no real space to spread out, was starting to get to all of us. We had stopped living. All that we knew at that moment was stress and an unknown future. Kip surprised me one night

and took me to a dinner in Galveston; hoping to bring back some of the happy times we have always known together. We ordered dinner from the waiter, and there we were, just sitting at dinner like we used to do. I looked up at him, watching as he stirred his tea. I remember we always loved to make tea at home. I started thinking about that word: Home. We didn't have one anymore. Tears started swelling up in my eyes, and I looked away quickly, hoping he wouldn't notice. I tried to ignore the huge lump in my throat as I struggled to fight back the tears, that appeared from nowhere. I couldn't stop them. Tears rolled down my cheeks, and he saw. He grabbed both of my hands from across the table and held them firmly. He asked, "What's wrong?" I sobbed, "I just want to go HOME!" The next thing I knew, we were holding hands across from each other with our arms on the table, and we both had tears running down our faces. At that very moment, our Pastor, Brother Randy Piatt called. We hadn't spoken to Randy in months, but we had been messaging each other through all of this. How in the world did he know to call right this moment? Kip answered, and they prayed together, and after they hung up, Kip shared the conversation with me. We both felt a lot better, as this was just the little nudge of encouragement we needed at that very moment. This enabled us to look at the bright side of things, and we would see the sunshine through the clouds.

Our day got a little brighter a few weeks later, when our daughter Jordan and our amazing son-in law (who we call our son), flew in from Honolulu, Hawaii to surprise us after the tornado destroyed the family home. Jordan is a sergeant in the Army, and Grant already served his Army time, after re-enlisting. During Covid-19, the military was extremely strict on allowing travel for their enlisted, so we knew Jordan and Grant wouldn't be able to fly down after the tornado. But somehow, they got special permission, and showed up on the front lawn. I was inside cleaning up debris, while talking on the phone. I looked outside to see two people walking up. This was common, as people were always walking up to say, "Hi," or to pass out food or toiletries to tornado victims. I didn't even recognize them, nor would I have ever



fathomed they would be able to fly to Texas. It was them. Jordan and Grant were walking across our front yard. I kept looking at them, thinking surely I'm mistaken. I dropped my phone call and gave them a big hug. This was the happiest we had been in a while. To have our kids home during this tragedy was such a needed blessing. Our other kids couldn't come down, and it would be far too emotional for them, not to mention they had work and weren't able to leave. But we were extremely blessed to have Jordan and Grant home. We all stayed back at the hotel the week they were here, enjoying each other's company. We made many trips to the house, and they helped us pack up and dishes and food that was salvageable in the cabinets. It was hard when it was time for them to leave, but I was happy for the time we got with them.

After the kids left to go back home, we made trips to the house almost daily, to haul off storm debris, knock out walls, haul huge, heavy piles of wood, glass, and sheetrock to the curb, hoping the city would pick it up as promised. Many hours of difficult, manual labor were put into this, and working in 100 degree temperatures was extremely difficult and exhausting. We faced many challenges.

It seemed that every time we went to the house, it was raining. Not just a sprinkle, but rain. It was almost like something was telling us to go away. Don't rebuild here. It's not worth it. The

house is a complete wreck. It's a wet, demolished, soggy mess. You could smell the rotting sheetrock, and the mold growing on the wood. Flies were out of control, chasing us around, dodging a swat. We bought a "fly salt gun" just to have some fun shooting at the flies. It looked like a toy rifle, but you load it with salt, aim it at the flies, and pow. It was oddly satisfying.

We tried buying bug spray and fly bait at stores, but they were all sold out. Every time we went inside the house, it seemed to get worse and worse with the smells of the soaked wood, house debris, wet sheetrock, and the flies. As it rained, water poured from our ceiling above us, and soaked our heads and clothes. There were puddles of dirty water on the tile. When we went upstairs, all that existed was a staircase to nowhere. There were a few leaning walls, that were somehow still standing, and the sky. That's it. (We always liked the open concept look, but this wasn't exactly what we had in mind.) It was very disheartening to stand upstairs with no roof, no ceiling. You just felt vulnerable. We asked ourselves countless times, "What are we doing?" Why are we even pondering the thought of rebuilding this mess. It's awful. Maybe we are just confused, or stressed out, and don't know where else to go or what to do. God, we need a sign. Please, just give us a sign so that we know what you want us to do. Silence. The only sign we

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received was more rain. Soaking wet, exhausted, confused, stressed out, and basically homeless, we decided to head back to the hotel. I loaded Mikie and the wet dogs up in the car, while Kip was still inside rummaging through the house.

I caught a glimpse of him standing upstairs, or what used to be upstairs, in the old “Beach Room.” (I had themed bedrooms). He was just standing there, upstairs, exposed under the open sky, while it rained on him. He was looking helpless and overwhelmed with confusion and doubt. I saw him look around, walk a few steps, stop, and just stare again. I felt awful for him. He’s the man of the house; the one with all the answers or solutions. But this time, he lacked both. He then disappeared out of sight, as I waited in the car; rain tapping on the roof. I just kept looking at that house thinking, “There’s just no way, this house is a huge mess.” I must have said those words a million times. A few moments later, he got in the car and just sat in silence, drenched. We just sat there without talking for what seemed like an eternity.

Then, out of nowhere, he pulls out a photograph that he was holding. It was a photo of a double rainbow, that we had taken over 10 years ago.

The double rainbow in the photograph was shining brightly across the lake, right in front of our home. It was not often that we would see a double rainbow, so we felt very lucky to have captured it with our camera. This was back in the day where we would develop all our photographs.

The picture was wet and faded. I just looked at him with a confused expression on my face. Typical these days. Kip explained that as he was walking around the house upstairs, he went to the laundry room. He told me he was talking to God, asking what to do with the house. He said he looked down at the floor, and he spotted something poking out from underneath the washing machine. He reached down to pick it up, and discovered it was the picture of the double rainbow. When he first showed me the photo, I was not sure why this photo was so significant to Kip. He then flipped it over and I noticed there was writing on the back of it. We had never seen that anyone had written on the back of



this photograph before this day. There was no doubt, this was Victoria’s handwriting. The writing was more than just words written on the back of a photograph, scribbled by a 10-year-old child; these words would mean something

significant to our entire family all these years later. Victoria, our 24-year-old daughter, had written on the back of this photo when she was about 10 years old. In cursive writing, it said, “A Piece of Home.” Oh my gosh. That was our sign. This is the sign from God we had been waiting for. An answer to our prayers. This rainbow signifies God’s Promise. Here we were, sitting in the car holding a wet photo, looking at a demolished house that was getting more soaked by the rain, and we just received our answer. God’s Promise. While sitting in the car in the driveway that rainy day, Kip and I looked at each other as tears swelled up in our eyes. We really didn’t have much to say. We sat in silence in the car, rain still



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Daughter Victoria Robins replaces the destroyed artwork she had painted years ago with a new painting titled 'Octavia.'

coming down. We both knew what this meant. We took one last look at our house that was in shambles as we backed out of the driveway. We stopped one last time, looked at the house, and he exclaimed, “You see Debbie, this is God’s Promise. We are coming home, and we will rebuild.”

We left that afternoon feeling content, feeling this was the right decision.

After that day, we had more ambition, more confidence, more strength. We were stronger than ever. Kip worked for many days drawing out his own blueprints for the house. He isn’t an architect, or a builder. But he drew it exactly as we wanted it, and today, it is built exactly as it was drawn by him. I’m not sure how he was able to draw out a blueprint, demolish his home, rebuild his home, and work a full-time job. It was catching up to him though. The stress became too much, as the demands of his job and the builders were colliding in a force too strong for him to conquer. He decided to leave his job, as he had a home to build. So, I started calling him “Noah,” after Noah’s Ark. God had given him the ability and knowledge to draw up floor plans and manage a rebuild. It has gone rather smoothly, considering the size of this new “Ark,” and the amount of damage done from the tornado. Our daughter Victoria who wrote those words on the rainbow photograph, is also an artist, who lives in California with her amazing husband, (who we also call our son). She painted us a large painting of an Octopus for one of our themed rooms in the house, a few years ago. This painting was lovingly named, “Paths,” for all the paths that we take along the way in life. We treasured this painting, as it was from Victoria, and meant so many different things to everyone. We had Paths hanging in the media room, which was blown away by the tornado. Paths was found later, but he was mangled, wet, and damaged beyond repair. Since we lost that beloved painting, we asked Victoria to paint us another Paths. She obliged but she decided the new painting would be a little different. We now have “Octavia.” Octavia means strength, and



Kip drawing blueprints.

eight. We are not sure what the “eight” will mean for us, but the word “strength” has a lot more meaning to us these days. Octavia is a beautiful Octopus painting in brighter colors, and her canvas is larger than Path’s canvas was. We are eagerly awaiting to adorn our walls with Octavia in our new home.

The word “home” sounds very exciting to us, but this build would not be possible without the amazing workmanship of a dear friend, Jerry Foote. He was there for us several years ago when we were remodeling the house. He hung new sheetrock, paint, and all of the trim work inside. After the tornado, he called to check on us, and asked if there were anything he could do to help us. He is an expert at his job. He is now working on our house as if it were his own. He is very respectful, knowledgeable, and highly skilled. He has been there since the beginning, designing, and installing all the plumbing, he has built a retaining wall, hung doors, cut out concrete; the list goes on, and continues. He has been there every day as a consultant for us, as well as for the other contractors we have on site. He is working hard alongside them and making sure all goes perfectly. We honestly feel we could not rebuild this house without him. We look up to Jerry and will forever be grateful to him for helping to get our home back. He has sacrificed his days to work out in the dangerously hot Texas heat, in the middle of August. Walls have gone up, roof is now on, plumbing and electrical has been installed. Kip installed all of the electrical, as he loves electrical work. We started our search for a framer, to get the house framed in, but we ended up finding a builder and a friend: JC, with JC Construction. With his knowledge and contacts, we have been able to do a lot more than just frame the house. His expertise has given us a stronger home than we could have ever hoped for. His crew constructed our home from a single graph paper that was drawn and re-designed by Kip multiple times. But because of our newfound relationship, the house turned out better than if we had given him and his crew an engineered blueprint. There were many questions that came up during construction,

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and JC offered suggestions and guidance; never steering us in the wrong way. Without Kip, Jerry, and JC working together, it would not be possible to have our “Ark” as it stands today. We now have a roof, and I’m so grateful. We still have a long way to go.

This brings me to the HVAC system. The week after the tornado hit, and everyone was still scrambling for hope and sanity, Kip happened upon Roger, and didn’t even realize who it was until they started talking. Roger was at the front of our subdivision, with his wife Tammy. They were both grilling hamburgers and hotdogs on their barbeque pits, to feed all of the tornado victims. Roger and Tammy were the couple who came to rescue injured victims by their boat. They are the couple that were out boating the day the tornado hit and came by our peninsula to see if we needed any help immediately after it touched down. Since they were in a boat, they could boat people out to ambulances. They loaded up Taylor, Oma, and the young boy that was injured, and took us all to the Kickapoo Marina to wait on ambulances in the rain, while driving through a debris- filled lake. They let us put doors we used as gurneys on their new boat seats, not caring if we damaged them or their new pontoon boat. Not caring about their own safety, but the safety of those injured. After the tornado, they continued with their heroic actions. They spent countless hours that led into months, cooking hamburgers and other food from their bar-b-que pits and delivering them to the tornado victims. They spent their own money to feed those in need long after the tornado. When Kip first saw Roger grilling the food, he wasn’t sure who he was, until they started talking. Kip realized it was the guy and lady that rescued the victims that were thrown from their homes. Kip asked Roger, “Why did you do what you did that night?” Roger humbly stated, “It was just the right thing to do.” Kip later found out that Roger installed HVAC systems, and he never had any doubt that Roger would be our guy to do the job. When we finally had the house ready to install the system 5 months later, we called on Roger, and he came to the house to do a walk-through. When Roger and I saw each other, we just hugged for a long time, eyes swelling

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with tears once again. We didn't have to say a word; we knew.

Tammy had canned some fresh jars of Cowgirl Candy, several amazing varieties of jellies, and divinity for Roger to give us. I treasured this and didn't even want to open the jars, as they were such a precious offering. Tammy has her own story of the events of that awful evening, and I hope

one day, she shares it. Oma keeps in touch with us. She texts us often and seems happy under the circumstances. She is with her son, as she decided not to rebuild on her property next door to us. She is still recovering but she is having a difficult time physically. In the process of all of this, Oma wanted us to take ownership of her lot. Kip has spent over 20 years taking care of this yard, even before she lived there. But now to purchase it, knowing there won't be another Oma next door, is very bittersweet. So much of "her" is still on that lot. I remember her always being on her front porch. Her front porch isn't there anymore. I remember bringing dinner to her front door. Her door is gone. Her house is gone. It is lonely without her here. I remember all of the pies she would bring us, now we only have the memories to cherish since she lives far away from us now.

Kip and Kalyn have since pursued their own dreams and started a new chapter. Kalyn is attending college, aspiring to become a NICU RN, like I did when I first became a nurse. She is currently living in her college dorm. She comes to visit us on weekends when she is able. Kip has been an avid fisherman since the age of 3. He has been a deck hand in the U. S. Virgin Islands in the past and is currently a deck hand for a charter company in Galveston. He just received his Captain's license and aims to open his own charter business in the near future. We are proud of their resilience despite the adversities they have endured.

Adversity is a word we know all too well. I learned on Facebook that it was Taylor's birthday on August 28. That morning, I walked



to the end of the peninsula and stood looking at the exact location we had found him on April 22. I relived the moment of seeing him on the wet ground, moaning. I relived the moment where we all stood around him as his own brother, and other men loaded him onto a door that was detached from a home, and carried him onto the boat; using the door as a gurney.

I relived being by his side when he took his last breath, with tears rolling down my face as I watched helplessly, with no tools to help him and no ambulance in sight. Our only hope was to perform CPR on him, until Paramedics arrived. I talked to Taylor, as I stood looking over the lake towards what used to be his home, and I told him I was so sorry that I couldn't save him. I told him I think about him and Brooke every day, and that we will always remember them. I told him I know he's singing his karaoke up there with Jesus and the Angels, and that from this moment on, I will be happy that he is with Brooke in Heaven, and I will not be sad, but that's easier said than done.

Thankfully, the young boy, who I later found out is Taylor's nephew, is finally home from the hospital after recovering from the broken bones and surgeries that he endured after being thrown from his house with his mom, Taylor, and Brooke. I won't be sad any longer, as I know Taylor and Brooke are home together forever. *There is a time and a season for everything. A time to be born and a time to die, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance. Ecclesiastes 3.*

These times of missing Oma, losing Brooke and Taylor, and remembering him on his birthday, are sad reminders of how quickly lives can change, and how the most important thing at that moment, is talking to the person right in front of you, right then. That moment might not be there again. That moment will soon be a memory. Now is the time to count our blessings, love more, and rebuild our lives. It's time to be home. ■



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Happy Days Diner & Tammy's Country Kitchen

Story by Emily Banks Wooten

"One, two, three o'clock, four o'clock, rock. Five, six, seven o'clock, eight o'clock, rock. Nine, ten, eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock, rock. We're gonna rock around the clock tonight."

When I heard that song during my childhood and adolescence I knew it was Tuesday night and time to gather around the TV with my family to watch the beloved sitcom "Happy Days" and see what the Cunninghams were up to. Oh, how we loved that middle-class family from Milwaukee and their idyllic life in the 1950s.

While it's not Al's Diner and you won't find Richie or Fonzie there, you will find some solid good food at Happy Days Diner in Shepherd, Texas. There's a jukebox in the front corner and the walls are covered with pictures of Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, James Dean and Humphrey Bogart, as well as a few classic cars.

The menu is entertaining as all the dishes are song titles from the 50s and 60s.

On a recent trip there, my 13-year-old daughter and I ordered the "You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet," which was hand-breaded homemade steak fingers with cream gravy, a choice of French fries or mashed potatoes, a house salad and a dinner roll. She chose brown gravy for her mashed potatoes while I preferred the cream gravy for mine.

The plate arrived with four beautiful steak fingers that were each the size of the palm of my hand. I kid you not. They were first class. The meat was tender and the crunchy breading was perfect. I'd definitely order it again.



Photo by Kevin Wooten



Photo by Emily Banks Wooten

My husband selected the “Ooo Baby Baby,” which was two center cut pork chops, fried or grilled, with choice of French fries or mashed potatoes, a house salad and a dinner roll. He ordered them grilled and was a little disappointed. While they were seasoned perfectly, he said, they were so thin that they’d dried out during grilling.

Our first experience at Happy Days Diner was in August of 2006. I was three and a half months pregnant with our daughter and we’d stopped there for breakfast on the way to Houston for a day of shopping and a movie. I had two scrambled eggs, bacon, toast and hashbrowns with a side order of chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and cream gravy. I ate — and enjoyed — every bite and didn’t think a thing of it. My sweet husband didn’t say a word but just smiled and continued drinking his coffee. Several days later, I accidentally overheard him telling my mother that he’d never given much thought to that whole “eating for two” thing but that he’d certainly witnessed an increase in my appetite as my pregnancy had progressed. We still laugh about that today.

We’ve had something of a family tradition evolve over the years at Happy Days. After we’ve placed our order, to pass the time as we’re waiting on the food to arrive, we each select our favorite picture of Elvis and Marilyn from the selection on the walls. There are plenty from which to choose and it’s not uncommon for our individual faves to change from one visit to the next.

And once you’ve satisfied your appetite at the Happy Days Diner, you may also do a little shopping. There’s a rack with a selection of T-shirts for sale, as well as a large array of hair bows and \$1 hair scrunchies. You may also replenish your stash of Scentsy wax bars or Avon Skin So Soft.

Happy Days Diner is located at 6230 US-59 in Shepherd. It’s open daily from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. They don’t deliver but they do offer take-out. The telephone number is 936-628-6515.

Some time back we received a circular in our local newspaper that was a menu for a place called Tammy’s Country Kitchen, east of Woodville. The menu touted the “best burgers in town” and “breakfast all day.”

My husband and I decided to drive over one Saturday and check it out. I’d studied the menu pretty closely and had a fairly good idea of what I was planning to order. On the way over, however, I decided to look it up on my Trip Advisor app and check out the reviews. There were plenty and one after another raved over the burgers.

My curiosity was definitely piqued so I changed my mind about my order once there. I selected a cheeseburger and sweet potato fries and my husband ordered a hamburger and onion rings. Oh. My. Goodness. The reviewers had not overstated. That may have been the best burger I’ve ever had. I’ve wracked my brain trying to determine what it was that made it so good and I still can’t put my finger on it. I do know, however, that there will be more Saturdays in our future in which my husband and I will drive over there for no other reason than to get those burgers again. We enjoyed both the sweet potato fries and onion rings too.

Tammy’s Country Kitchen is located on 233 US Hwy. 190, one mile east of Woodville. Hours are 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays. The telephone number is 409-331-9811. While they don’t deliver, they do offer curbside pickup. ■



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Photo by Emily Banks Wooten



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a fadin' renegade's last stand

Story by Chris Edwards

“Pass the word I’ve done the best I can.”
- Doug Supernaw, “Fadin’ Renegade”

Each year the Country Music Association rolls out its exceedingly ridiculous parade of high-dollar fashion and spraytans and back-slapping. There was a fuss made in the aftermath of the most recent ceremony, about how it did

not include tributes to three bona-fide country legends who had passed: John Prine, Jerry Jeff Walker and Billy Joe Shaver. Two days after the show aired, another legend of country music passed right here in deep East Texas, Mr. Douglas Anderson Supernaw.

Had the long, tall Texan died prior to the broadcast, I doubt they would have included a tribute to him, either.



Photo by Bev Moser.

The CMAs, like so much of what is trotted out to the general public as representative of the “music business” is fake, and Doug Supernaw was not. That guy was as real as Death Valley summers are hot.

If you’re a casual music fan of a certain age, you might remember when Supe was a big mainstream star, a time when “Reno” and “I Don’t Call Him Daddy” were played dozens of times a day on the radio. It was a time when there was still a place for country music that sounded like, well, country music, on the top of the Billboard charts, and

there was a place in the big radio markets for great songs. Although that was all coming up on 30 years ago, those records, like Red and Rio Grande and You Still Got Me hold up as amazing collections of songs to this day.

To most folks for whom music is not a big part of their life (and shame on them for their poor life choices), Supernaw was relegated to the “I haven’t heard anything about him in years” status, due to his disillusionment with the music business and other factors I won’t address here, but he was always around and always relevant. To that end,



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it was an honor to be able to chronicle his return to full-time touring and what was supposed to be a comeback to recorded product for this magazine's inaugural issue back in 2018.

Sadly, it was a comeback that was cut all-too short. He was on a tear, playing great shows, promoting an album that showcased re-recordings of many of his old hits, and reminding the world that he was a force to be reckoned with. However, a nagging cough and other symptoms led to an eventual diagnosis of advanced forms of cancer in early 2019. The doctors, from what I'm told, did not give him much time, but they had no idea just how tough a man Doug Supernaw really was. He beat one of the cancers, and, after some aggressive treatments and the caring prayers and meditative energies from legions of fans and friends, it looked like he had beaten it all for good.

It was not to be, though.

The last time I saw him was during the Christmas parade in downtown Livingston in 2019. He was helping out in his wife Cissy's shop downtown, and he looked great. Seeing him greet customers as they walked in, and help out with moving furniture and other goods, made me wonder if any of the folks coming into the store knew they were in the presence of greatness.

Things seemed to be going well for him in the drawn-out debacle that was 2020, but then in September, word had gotten around via social media that his health had taken a drastic and sudden wrong turn. That news was a punch to my solar plexus, and I'm sure it took the breath of many fans upon discovery.

The first time I saw Doug Supernaw onstage was at one of the Jasper Lions Club rodeos in the early '90s. I'd tagged along with my mom, and was blown away, not just by the music and his performance, but by the example I saw after the show.

I stood in line with my rodeo program to be autographed and waited impatiently. I still loathe standing in lines to this day, otherwise I'm about as longsuffering as a Hindu cow. What Doug was doing, though, was making sure that he not only signed whatever the fans in line had for him, but that he got to hang out and talk to each and every one of them for a bit. All of this, in spite of the fact that the sack full of Burger King goodies sitting on the table behind him was getting cold.

Through the years I've heard stories about how he played benefit shows for families in need, or for causes near to his heart, when he could have played big-paying shows, instead.

I've heard stories about how he gave of his time to help coach Little League teams or would spring into action if someone needed help with their horses. He'd do anything for anyone. He was just a regular, very real guy, albeit one with a massive amount of talent and a beautiful, beautiful soul.

Despite how much he tried to blend in, however, there was just something magnetic about Doug. He had a sort of charisma that made him stand out wherever he was. I remember a few years ago hanging out with him at a Texas Country Music Association event in Longview, and there were a good many musicians, industry folks and

fans coming and going; oblivious to most everything and everyone else but him. Everyone wanted to stop and talk to him.

Another time, at a party in San Marcos, after a music festival he'd played, he was the center of attention, even though it seemed like he would've been content to just sit on the host's couch and eat pizza. Everyone at the party hung on his words about getting to meet Neil Young, or stories about playing Farm Aid events and of what the Beach Boys were really like.

One of the stories I've heard that best illustrates Doug Supernaw in a nutshell comes from the Midland-based singer/songwriter Scott Hayley, whom Supe was mentoring shortly before he entered into hospice care.

Hayley recently recounted via Facebook posting of how he and Doug were on a road-trip, and Tanya Tucker's



Photo by Bev Moser.

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version of the Allen Shamblin tune “The House That Built Me” came on the radio. The song, which was a big hit when it was recorded by Miranda Lambert, recounts a house full of memories once occupied by the narrator, who returns as an adult to the house she grew up in.

When it hit radio with Lambert’s rendition, it was at a time that Supernaw wasn’t likely paying much attention to pop culture or what was on the radio. Hayley said that he looked over at his friend, who was riding shotgun, and the beauty of the song struck him to the point of bringing him to tears. “It’s so beautiful,” is what he said of the song.

That story spoke volumes to me about what kind of a guy Doug was. He was, on the surface, a fun-loving fellow who was the life of the party, and someone who loved to laugh (and make others laugh) but he was also a guy with an enormous amount of talent and a truly beautiful soul.

The wave of mainstream popularity that Supernaw enjoyed in the early 1990s may have been his own slice of 15 minutes of fame, but he was important to many people far beyond the short, fickle memories and attention spans of gauche mainstream culture. All of that CMA Awards glitz and readymade Instagram-posting “outlaw” stuff is, again, utterly fake and Doug Supernaw was not.

His success and legacy prove that every now and again the good guys finish first and come out on top, and lately, that same concept holds true with the popularity of real

artists like Jason Isbell, Tyler Childers and Chris Stapleton making legit art.

Their popularity probably seems like an aberration to those whose image of country music is defined by Jason Aldean and rapped verses about tractors and beer over

computer-generated drumbeats. I’m sure that if Doug Supernaw were just starting out today, he would seem like an outlier, confined to what mainstream radio looks at as the ghetto of “Americana” or “traditional country.” But then again, the real music and real people making that music are still out there. It just requires more effort to find them than most folks are willing to commit.

To many around Livingston, no doubt, he was just Doug, a magnetic and charming fellow who could be seen around

town just enjoying life and the company of friends and his lovely wife Cissy.

If such a thing as an angel on earth exists, it is his widow. Supposedly, in the mid-90’s when Doug was hanging out in the area, after a gig, he spotted her and said something to the effect of one day he’d return and marry her. Well, he must’ve had a bit of Nostradamus in him, because that’s what happened, and he not only found the love of his life, but a renewed vitality and commitment to his artform.

God bless Doug Supernaw, a most incredible artist and an even better human being. ■



The late, great Doug Supernaw with the author, backstage. Photo by Mollie LaSalle.

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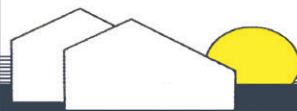
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RECOVERY GAVE ME BACK MY SON

Story by Nancy Carr





Top: Kyle (left) with his family celebrates almost 4 years living in recovery. Bottom: Kyle and his mother, Nancy. Right: Kyle as a baby with his parents.

Becoming a mother was one of the greatest joys I had ever experienced. Kyle was a vibrant, exuberant child with a larger-than-life personality from the day he was born. Our family was truly blessed. He was always the center of attention and became friends instantly with anyone he met. He had this thirst for life, until he was about 12 years old. That's when things started to change and fracture our family unit until Kyle entered recovery in 2013.

Kyle was always precocious and outgoing, it was his defining character trait. So when he started to isolate in middle school, I became extremely concerned. He began asking why he was "different" and why he didn't fit in. As a parent, all I wanted to do was provide the best possible life for my child, so I looked into different therapists and psychologists to help him through this period. I thought, "he'll grow out of it – he's so personable and has such a bright future."

Little did I know that would be the beginning of a decade-long battle against addiction. Kyle began showing signs of depression and anxiety. He asked to see doctors, who put him on prescriptions. Kyle began abusing those medications, and soon graduated from pills to heroin. His father and I would have never guessed our child was shooting up heroin at just 15 years old.

The next eight years would be filled with ups and downs. Kyle's father and I were in complete denial of his addiction – we thought he would rebound every time he said "I'm done." We sent him to multiple psychologists, therapists, treatment centers, and facilities. We were able to find centers in-network but we traded quality of care for cost. Finding a treatment center that treated all three aspects of addiction seemed nearly impossible. We saw him deteriorate in front of our eyes, attempt getting sober, then fall off again and again. Kyle would hide from the world feeling overwhelming shame and guilt, but continue using. He was a slave to the drugs.

In 2013, something finally happened. After a string of failed career moves, arrests, overdoses, and increasing medical problems, Kyle finally told us he couldn't keep doing this. We sought out a treatment center that worked on mind, body, and spirit. As parents, all Kyle's

father and I wanted for him was to be happy and productive. We listened to addiction professionals who had overcome the same debilitating disease of addiction.

Our family experienced, what I like to call, "a collective enlightenment" as a result of Kyle's recovery. Through intensive work, Kyle finally became open and honest enough to share with our family that he was gay. He had sat in fear for so many years, thinking we would turn our backs on him. He began coming out of his shell again and engaging in life for the first time in years. I saw the vibrant, social Kyle again. Our entire family started addressing issues we had glazed over for years. We became a true family unit.

Recovery has completely changed our lives. As a family, we've begun to have direct and open communication with one another. Kyle and his brother are best friends again. Kyle's father and I have never had a better marriage. Kyle's able to show up for us and participate in his own life again. But what's most miraculous is how those dark days are now the foundation of the strong family bond we've built.

Almost four years later, our lives are completely different. It was through practicing honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness, that Kyle found himself. He's since identified that "different" feeling he experienced was due to his addiction and fear of coming out of the closet. Today, he's a proud gay man and is a respected member of his community. He's engaged to a wonderful man and living the life he's always wanted. There is no greater gift than watching your child live life to the fullest, and that's exactly what's happened since Kyle got sober.

There's no "right" way to prepare for a loved one's addiction. This disease blindsides you, it hits you when you least expect it. Our family was able to overcome this disease by listening to our child, providing support any way we could, being cautious not to enable his addiction, and helping to find a recovery solution when Kyle became ready. My hope is that every parent who struggles with their child's addiction is able to find the freedom we have, and to let them know that it gets better. ■

RECIPE



Thick & Hearty
Sausage Bean Soup

Recipe by Barbara White
Photo by Amy Holzworth

This easy-to-assemble soup is the ultimate comfort food to serve on a cold day. Some cornbread on the side makes it even better.

Ingredients:

- 1 pound ground pork sausage
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can chicken broth
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can navy beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can kidney beans
- 1 cup chopped baby spinach (optional)
- 2 potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 2 cups water
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 bay leaf

Directions:

Brown sausage, onion, green pepper and celery in Dutch oven or soup pot. Drain any accumulated grease.

Add all of the remaining ingredients and simmer for approximately one hour or until potatoes are cooked through.

Makes about 10 cups.



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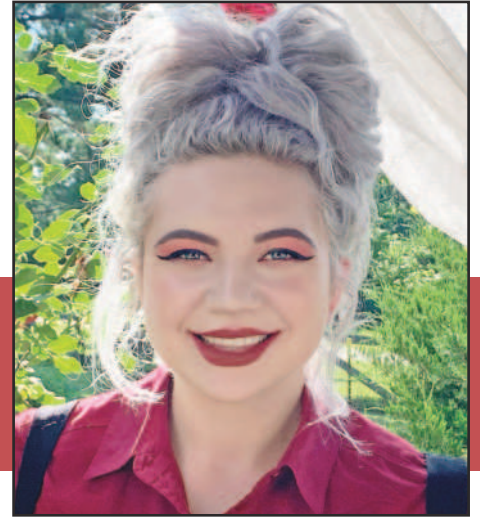
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Dead Eye Virginia Luce

*Kitchen window whopper a refreshing highlight
in budding list of East Texas big buck tales*



Story by Matt Williams

Texas' 2020-21 white-tailed deer season is still young. Not surprisingly, there have already been some remarkable bucks taken by hunters all around the state. With the meat of the rut still ahead in some regions and lots of holiday hunting traffic sure to come, it's a safe bet plenty more will surface before the season's end.

Virginia Luce's 11 pointer isn't the biggest buck reported from eastern Texas this season, but the story behind her Houston County whopper is arguably one of the most refreshing to come down the pike in quite a while.

The veteran huntress from Kennard is a four-time cancer survivor who retired just two months ago after working for 25 years as a registered nurse. Luce hasn't missed a season opener in years, many spent on the 80-acre spread where she and her husband, Myrl, built their home back in the 1980s.

The property is conveniently located adjacent to the Davy Crockett National Forest. The big woods gobble up more than 160,000 acres of real estate in Houston and Trinity counties. Family members are the only ones who get the green light to hunt on the couple's little slice of heaven.

"It's a pretty good spot," she said. "My husband and I have hunted and fished together for our entire married life — 63 years. "I usually kill a buck every year, but we don't allow anyone to shoot the momma deer. The way I see it, if you leave the girls alone, the boys will come."

Luce turned 80 on her last birthday, her husband, 83. While neither gets around as well they used to, the lady hunter can still shoot a rifle as well as she ever did.

The couple keeps corn feeders going on the property each fall and they rely on game cameras to watch them. Luce has logged countless hours in hunting blinds over the years, but physical limitations have forced a change in strategy the last few seasons.

"I do all my hunting from the house now," she chuckled. "My kitchen is my deer stand. We take the screen off one of the windows every fall. I can see a pretty good ways from there."

Luce always keeps her trusty rifle close by during deer season, and the window sill makes a good rest just in case she needs it. She shot a .30-30 for years but claims she went to a flatter-shooting Remington .243 a few years ago so she could extend her range.

"That .30-30 is a great brush gun for East Texas, but I like my .243 pretty good, too," she said. "It doesn't kick near as hard, either."

Lunch Time Whopper

Luce was at her post making lunch at around noon on Nov. 8 when she peeped out the kitchen window and saw what looked like a buck slipping along the edge of the national forest, about 175 yards away. Curious to get a better look, she grabbed her binoculars.

What she saw was a familiar face that came as somewhat of a surprise.



Kennard huntress Virginia Luce with the Houston County 11 pointer she bagged from her kitchen window on Nov. 8. Luce, 80, dropped the buck with one shot from her .243 at 175 yards. The deer has been gross scored at 160 2/8 B&C. Photo courtesy of Virginia Luce.

“It was a really big buck,” she said. “We’d seen him on our game camera at a feeder a few weeks back, but that was the last deer I expected to show up right here behind the house.”

Luce didn’t waste any time tending to business. She poked her rifle barrel through the window, found the buck in her scope and touched the trigger as he slipped into a narrow lane near the edge of their property.

Mr. Luce, who was kicked back in a living room recliner watching television at the time, said he had no idea his wife was even looking at a deer until the rifle barked.

“She watches them all time in there,” he said. “Right after the shot she hollered ‘well, that was the big one, daddy.’ That’s when I put my boots on, got on the tractor and went to load him up. He didn’t go far. She doesn’t miss very often.”

Of all the bucks the lady hunter has shot in her lifetime, Luce claims this one is by far the biggest.

“When I saw all those horns I thought was I seeing things — I’d never seen anything like it,” she said. “I got so excited about that deer that I can’t even remember what I was fixing for lunch.”

There was plenty to get excited about. Sporting 11 scorable points, including a split brow tine, the buck has been taped at 160 2/8 gross as a non-typical by Jacob

Carter at McCarty Taxidermy.

“It a really neat looking deer,” Carter said. “And what a neat story. It’s not every day you hear about an 80-year-old woman shooting a big buck out their kitchen window!”

Other Big Boys

As earlier mentioned, several other outstanding bucks have been reported from across the state in recent weeks, including several from East Texas counties as far north as Wood, Smith, Bowie and Red River to as far south as Polk, Tyler, Walker and Montgomery. Here are a few top-notch East Texas bucks you may or may not know about:

* Pernell Davis, Trinity County 11 pointer: Splendor archer Pernell Davis’ free ranging 11 pointer from Trinity County may be best archery buck reported from the region thus far. Davis, 58, said the 8 1/2-year-old non-typical has been taped at 171 3/8 B&C. “I got on this deer in late-October and I told my wife I’d be home when I killed him,” Davis said.

The hunter finished the job several afternoons later, on Oct. 30, with a 22-yard shot. “He never knew what hit him,” he said.

* Collin Moore, Nacogdoches County 17 pointer: The scoring verdict is still out on a massive non-typical taken in Nacogdoches County by Collin Moore of Central



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Heights, but the rack is sure to ring the bell thanks to 17 scorable points and tremendous mass resulting from the palmated main beams.

Moore shot the deer just before dark on the afternoon of Nov. 14. "I'd seen him crossing a pipeline at 3:30 p.m. that afternoon, but he got across and never checked up," he said. "I kept my rifle pointed that direction the rest of the day. I was looking at four does through my scope just before dark and he walked right out right into the crosshairs. That's when I let him have it."

* Dustin Pridgen, Shelby County 14 pointer: Pridgen was hunting from a box blind on 50 acres on the afternoon of Nov. 15 when he shot one of the best bucks taken in Shelby County in quite some time. The 14 pointer has been officially scored at 180 4/8 gross and 176 3/8 net for the Texas Big Game Awards program.

Pridgen, 27, said he got pictures of a buck a few seasons ago that looked remarkably similar, but he hadn't seen any sign of him since and thought he was gone.

Others hunters knew different.

"Not long after I posted pictures on Facebook I had lots of people contacting me saying they had been after him," he said. "I know of at least three other hunters on land around me who had pictures of him. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time."

On Nov. 14, Collin Moore was manning a box blind on 900 acres in northern Nacogdoches County when he bagged his big 17 pointer. There was no official score on the rack at press time, but the buck is sure score pretty high as a non-typical. Photo courtesy of Collin Moore



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Dustin Pridgen of Joaquin was hunting on 50 acres in northern Shelby County on Nov. 15 when he shot one of the best bucks reported from eastern Texas this season. The 14 pointer has been officially scored at 180 4/8 gross and 176 3/8 net for the Texas Big Game Awards program. (Photo courtesy of Dustin Pridgen)

Big Bucks Online

Two of the best online sources for keeping tabs on the pulse of Texas deer hunting are texasbiggameawards.org (TBGA) and loscazadores.com.

TBGA is run jointly by the Texas Wildlife Association and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The program provides a recognition outlet for hunters who harvest quality big game animals and the land managers responsible for producing them. There are categories wild-raised white-tailed deer, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep and javelina.

The program is free for anyone to enter qualified harvests. Scored entries must be documented by an official TBGA or official B&C scorer.

The site maintains a fluid list of bucks taken across the state, including photos. The listings are broken into eight geographical regions, high and low fence.

Loscazadores.com links to one of the state's most popular big buck contests. Based in Pearsall, the contest is currently in its 34th season. For years the contest catered mostly to South Texas and Mexico hunters, but there are now multiple categories for deer taken in the Hill Country, West Texas and along the Gulf Coast. There are several options for entering; basic entry is \$40. The website maintains entries in 11 divisions with multiple categories in each one. ■

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Venison Burger Bake

Prepare this recipe with ground venison baked with cornbread stuffing. Serve warm with a side salad or nothing at all.

- 1 box Cornbread Stove Top Stuffing (cook as directed)
- 1 pound ground venison
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup diced zucchini
- 1 cup shredded/diced squash
- 1 cup diced mushrooms
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- Salt and pepper (optional)

Cook Cornbread Stove Top Stuffing as directed.

Cook ground venison in cast iron skillet. Remove from skillet and set aside.

Add butter, garlic, squash, zucchini, and mushrooms to skillet and cook until vegetables are soft. Add mushroom soup

mix, sour cream, and ground venison stirring everything together.

Remove from heat and top with cooked cornbread stuffing.

Bake in the oven at 400 degrees for approximately 20-30 minutes.

Easy Crock-Pot Venison Korean BBQ

One of the best ways to cook venison is low and slow in a dutch oven or a Crock-Pot. Campbell's has a slow cooker line that celebrates ethnic cuisine, like their Sweet Korean BBQ Slow Cooker Sauce with roasted garlic and sesame that is used in this recipe.

- 2 pounds venison, cut into stir-fry size bites
- 1 packet of Campbell's Korean BBQ Slow Cooker Sauce
- Rice noodles
- Water (for cooking rice noodles)
- Bag of spinach

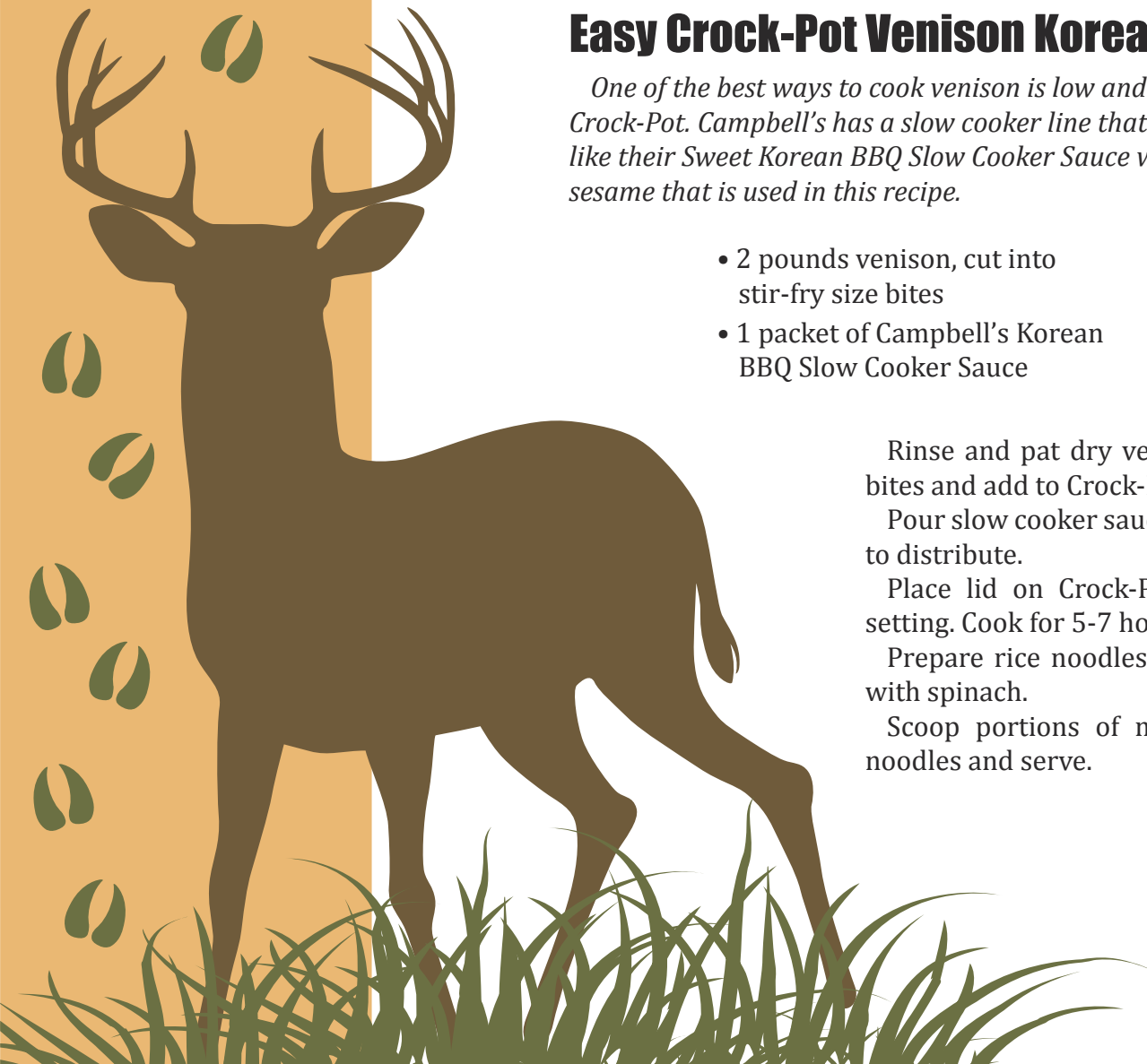
Rinse and pat dry venison; cut into stir-fry size bites and add to Crock-Pot.

Pour slow cooker sauce on top of venison and stir to distribute.

Place lid on Crock-Pot and set on the lowest setting. Cook for 5-7 hours.

Prepare rice noodles per instructions and plate with spinach.

Scoop portions of meat and sauce on top of noodles and serve.



Venison Cheeseburger Soup

For the ultimate meal on a cold winter night, serve this Venison Cheeseburger Soup Recipe with warm bread and a green salad. If you want to add 1 pound of ground beef with the venison burger – you may do it. It works perfectly. Just drain the ground beef after browning it.

- 1 cup diced potatoes, peeled
- ½ cup canola oil
- 2 pounds ground venison
- 1 cup finely chopped onion
- ½ cup finely chopped green bell pepper
- ½ cup finely chopped red bell pepper
- ½ cup jalapeño peppers, finely chopped
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tablespoon homemade Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 ½ quarts homemade beef broth
- 1 ½ pounds white American cheese, sliced
- ¼ cup chopped scallions

In a large saucepan, add the potatoes and enough water to cover them by about 2 inches. Bring to a boil over high heat. Lower the heat to medium and simmer, uncovered, until fork-tender, about 15 minutes. Drain and return to the pan. Cover and keep warm.

In a large stockpot, heat the oil over medium-high heat. When hot, add the venison burger and cook, breaking up the meat slightly with a wooden spoon, until the burger begins to brown, 6 to 10 minutes.

Add the onion and the bell peppers and cook, stirring, for another minute or two. Add the jalapeños and then

the flour, herb blend, salt, and black pepper. Cook, stirring until mixed well and thickened, 3 to 4 minutes.

Add the broth, lower the heat to medium, and cook, stirring, until heated through, taking care not to break the meat up too much. You may also use 1 pound of ground venison and 1 pound of ground beef if you wish.

Remove the pan from the heat, add the slices of cheese, one at a time, and stir gently until the cheese melts into the soup and the soup becomes creamy. Add the scallions and the potatoes and cook just until heated through.

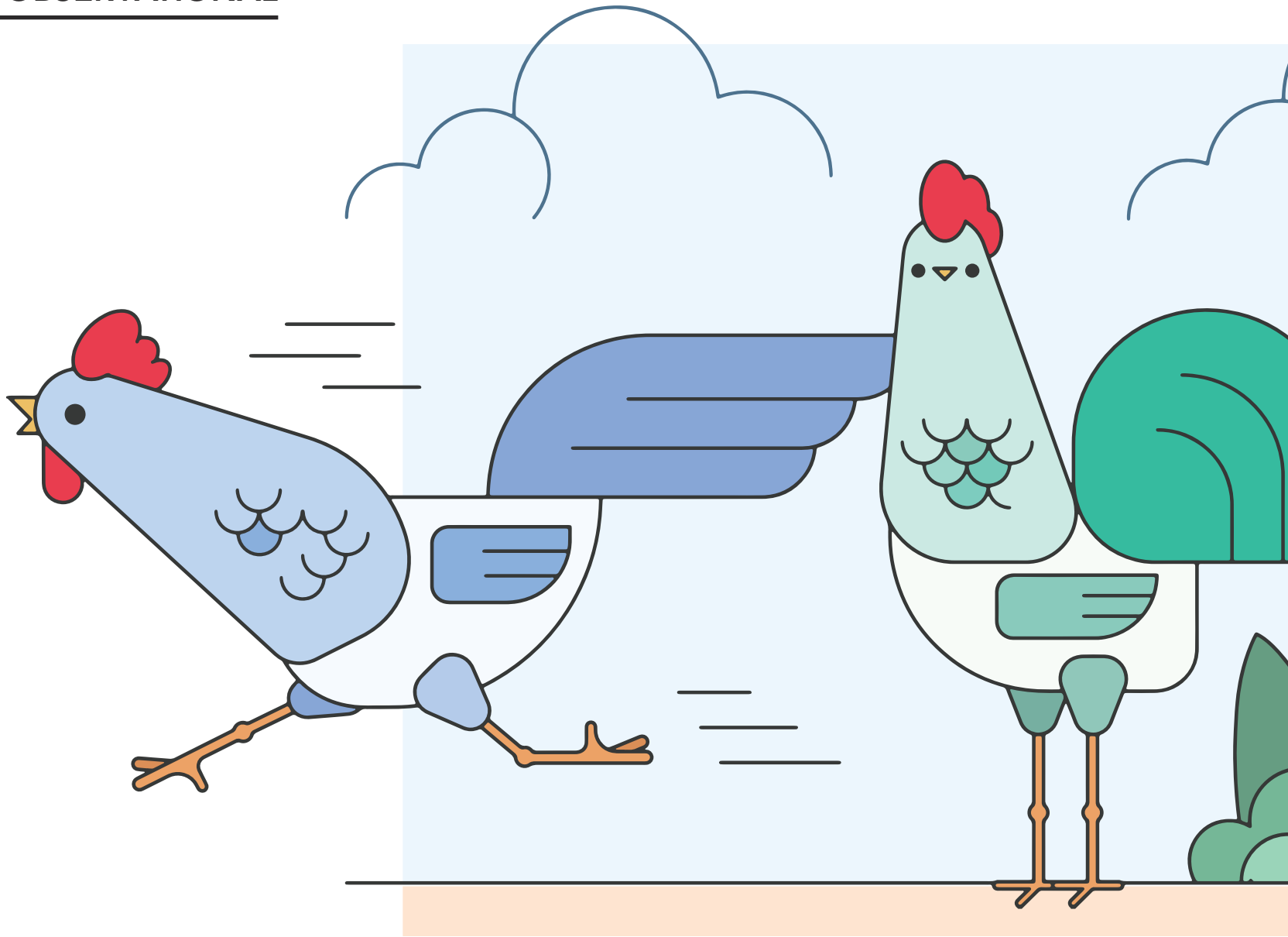
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KEEP CALM
AND CARRY ON



Story by Barbara White

There are days when I look at the world and all I see is a yard full of chickens – not cowards, actual chickens. Chickens start squawking and flapping around at the slightest provocation. Chickens always act like it's the end of the world.

When I start viewing the universe as a cacophonous barnyard, I take it as a sign that maybe, just maybe, it is time to seek some stability and predictability from a source who is, unlike a chicken, unflappable.

It was on one of those days that I turned off the television, stepped away from the internet and picked up a magazine from a stack that, considering I was seeing farm animals that weren't really there, had been ignored for too long.

The teaser headline on the front of the magazine made me turn to the article right away: "Life Lessons from Queen Elizabeth."

Who wouldn't want advice from Queen Elizabeth II? She is 94 years old and, as of this writing, still going strong. Long live the queen!

I have always felt a certain kinship with the queen and like to think that we have a lot in common. She has an affinity for tea and for dogs. So do I! She loves horses; I once rode one. She likes things to be neat and tidy. I do, too! In fact, that is one of the top goals for my next life. She wears a royal crown; I enjoy the occasional Crown Royal. She is surrounded by people who wait on her hand and foot; I think I could easily learn to live with that.

The article offered some generic advice about positive thinking, serving others, establishing a healthy routine... yada, yada, yada. With my vast knowledge of Queen Elizabeth, and with four seasons of Netflix's "The Crown" under my belt, I had expected nothing else. The queen rarely weighs in, publically at least, on current events. During the nearly 70 years she has been monarch, she has been the picture of cool, calm consistency.

She still adheres to that "stiff upper lip" and "keep calm and carry on" philosophy for which the Brits were known back in the day and that I used to find irritating. Not anymore.

As odd as it might sound, when I start seeing chickens where people should be, I can also find solace in TV weather forecasts. Sure, you can go to some dot-com and get the forecast down to the minute, but I want to see a familiar face. Once a meteorologist makes it to the top spot

in the weather department, they tend to stay for decades and, just like with my good friend the queen, I start to feel like I know them. They are stable, predictable and unflappable. No matter what may be bearing down on us, you can count on the chief meteorologist to project a calm demeanor and not go all squawky-flappy on us.

When I was growing up, we had a choice of three local stations for our nightly forecast. My family's go-to weather guru was a skinny guy with glasses named Bob Lynott. I lie not.

I lived in Oregon for the first 13 years of my life and Bob was there for every one of them, although I was probably more interested in my belly button than the weather during his earlier broadcasts.

In those low-tech days, good ol' Bob would slap his magnetic images of puffy clouds, rain-dripping clouds and the occasional uplifting likeness of Mr. Sunshine onto a map to illustrate what was going to happen in our corner of the world the next day. Since we lived in the Pacific Northwest, the cloud with the dripping rain got quite a workout. He drew the warm and cold fronts on the map with a magic marker.

I did a quick computer check to make sure I was spelling Bob Lynott's name right (his last name; I was pretty sure I had nailed his first name) and found his obituary. It reminded me of why he was our weather guy. This is one of the stories it told about Bob: "One time, the day after missing badly on a forecast, he made his entrance to his weather slot by putting his hat on the end of an umbrella and sticking it in front of the camera before he came on." He did that sort of thing fairly often; he was predictable even when the weather was not.

Bob may not have always been right, but you could count on him to fess up when he messed up. No matter what, he was unflappable. We knew we would keep tuning in and that Bob would be there to greet us.

The late author E.L. Doctorow once compared writing a novel to driving a car at night. "You can see only as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way." He may have been referring to writing, but I think it could be one life's great lessons. We don't really need to know what is around the next curve or even our destination; we just need to navigate the road a few feet at a time. It sounds like something my peeps Queen Elizabeth and Bob Lynott might say.

Keep calm and carry on. ■



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~ Kelli



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CALENDAR

January

Galveston

24th Annual Townes Van Zandt Wake/Old Quarter Acoustic Café
JANUARY 1

Sugarland

Sugarland Holiday Lights 2020/Constellation Field
JANUARY 1-3

Kingwood

4th Annual Blessing of the Bikes/Harley-Davidson of Kingwood
JANUARY 2

Houston

2021 Houston Boat Show/NRG Stadium
JANUARY 3-12

Galveston

Happy New Year, Vienna Style/Grand 1894 Opera House
JANUARY 5

Tomball

The Texas Tenors live at Main Street Crossing
JANUARY 8

Crockett

Exile in concert/Crockett Civic Center
JANUARY 9

Beaumont

Mardi Gras of SETX presents Beans & Jeans/Civic Center
JANUARY 9

The Woodlands

Firefall at Dosey Doe/the Big Barn
JANUARY 9

Beaumont

"A Night in Harlem"/The Jefferson Theater
JANUARY 9

Houston

Bridal Extravaganza 2021/G R Brown Convention Center
JANUARY 10

Lufkin

East Texas Bridal Fair/Pitser Garrison Civic Center
JANUARY 12

Lufkin

Marty Stuart and his Fabulous Superlatives/ Temple Theater
JANUARY 16

Houston

Monster Energy Supercross/NRG Park
JANUARY 16

Kingwood

2021 Winter Festival/Town Center Park
JANUARY 16

Houston

Chevron Houston Marathon/Downtown
JANUARY 17

Beaumont

2021 Bridal Traditions Show/Beaumont Civic Center
JANUARY 17

Galveston

Yaga's Chili Quest and Beer Fest
JANUARY 17-18

Galveston

The Oak Ridge Boys/Grand 1894 Opera House
JANUARY 18

Livingston

Multi-Cultural Festival
JANUARY 18

Houston

Houston Auto Show/NRG Stadium
JANUARY 22-26

The Woodlands

Little River Band at Dosey Doe/the Big Barn
JANUARY 22

Beaumont

International Gem & Jewelry Show/NRG Park
JANUARY 22-24

Marshall

Memphis Soul/Memorial City Performance Center
JANUARY 23

Livingston

Pie & Wine Pairing for National Pie Day/ Tempe
CREEK VINEYARD JANUARY 23

Lufkin

Rhonda Vincent and the Rage/Pines Theater
JANUARY 23

Livingston

Children's Pow Wow/Alabama Coushatta Tribe
JANUARY 25

Houston

WWE Royal Rumble/Minute Maid Park
JANUARY 26

Livingston
85th Annual Chamber Awards Banquet
JANUARY 28

Humble
2021 Humble BBQ Cook-off/Civic Center
JANUARY 29 & 30

Tyler
Rita Moreno/UT Tyler Cowan Center
JANUARY 30

Coldspring
Bandit Run/Sam Houston National Forest
JANUARY 30

Tomball
Tomball Cars and Craft Extravaganza
JANUARY 30

Houston
Shawn Colvin 30th Anniversary Tour/The Heights Theater
JANUARY 30

The Woodlands
Mickey Gilley & Johnny Lee at Dosey Doe
JANUARY 31

February

Tyler
Viva Momix 40th Anniversary/Ut Tyler Cowan Center
FEBRUARY 2

Galveston
Mardi Gras of Galveston
FEBRUARY 5-16

Humble
2021 Humble Rodeo/Civic Center Arena
FEBRUARY 5-6

Crockett
The Marshall Tucker Band/Crockett Civic Center
FEBRUARY 6

Lufkin
An Evening with Rene Goldsberry/Temple Theater
FEBRUARY 6

Beaumont
Hot Tropics Night/Beaumont Botanical Gardens
FEBRUARY 6

Tyler
East Texas Bridal Expo/Harvey Convention Center
FEBRUARY 6

Beaumont
Mardi Gras Southeast Texas/Crockett Street
FEBRUARY 11-14

Orange
The Phantom of the Opera/Lutcher Theater
FEBRUARY 12

Houston
Reckless Kelly at the Heights Theater
FEBRUARY 12

Beaumont
3rd Annual NRF Capes & Crowns 5K/Event Center
FEBRUARY 13

Crystal Beach
2021 Mardi Gras Parade
FEBRUARY 13

Crockett
2021 Davy Crockett Classic
FEBRUARY 13

Huntsville
Gene Watson at the Old Towne Theater
FEBRUARY 13

Longview
The Music of Sam Cooke/Belcher Center, Letourneau University
FEBRUARY 13

Jacksonville
Cherokee Craft and Trade Fair
FEBRUARY 13

Greenville
Glenn Miller Orchestra/Texan Theater
FEBRUARY 14

Beaumont
2021 Taste of the Triangle/Civic Center
FEBRUARY 16

Houston
Itzhak Perlman at the Houston Symphony Shenandoah & Restless Heart/Arena Theater
FEBRUARY 18

Nacogdoches
2021 Nacogdoches Film Festival/Fredonia Hotel
FEBRUARY 18-20

Bay City
Matagorda County Fair BBQ Cook-off
FEBRUARY 19-20

Port Arthur
2021 Rotary Taste of Gumbo/Civic Center
FEBRUARY 20

The Woodlands
Mark Chesnutt Acoustic at Dosey Doe
FEBRUARY 20

Conroe
Big Top Vintage Market at Heritage Place/Heritage Park
FEBRUARY 20

Lufkin
Ruthie Foster at the Pines Theater
FEBRUARY 20

Beaumont
American Musical Landscapes/Symphony of SETX
FEBRUARY 20

Houston
Houston Creole Heritage Festival/Midtown Park
FEBRUARY 20-21

Bay City
Matagorda County Fair & Livestock Show
FEBRUARY 21-MARCH 6

Beaumont
Lovestruck Wedding Expo 2021/Civic Center
FEBRUARY 21

Tyler
Schoolhouse Rock Live!/Ut Tyler Cowan Center
FEBRUARY 26

Montgomery
Lake Conroe Big Bass Classic
FEBRUARY 26-28

Houston
HCSF 2021 Worldwide Hunting Expo/G R Brown Center
FEBRUARY 26

The Woodlands
Rev. Horton Heat at Dosey Doe
FEBRUARY 27

CALENDAR

Longview

2021 Starry Starry Night Art Gala/Museum of Fine Arts
FEBRUARY 27

The Woodlands

Tracy Byrd at Dosey Doe
FEBRUARY 28

Houston

Quinceanera Expo/George R Brown Center
FEBRUARY 28

March

Tyler

Roald Dahl's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory/
Cowan Center
MARCH 1

Huntsville

Sam Houston Birthday & Texas Independence Day
Celebration
MARCH 2

Houston

Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo 2021/NRG Park
MARCH 2-21

Houston

Houston Fishing Show/G R Brown Convention
Center
MARCH 3-7

Houston

Wynonna & Cactus: Party of Two/Heights Theater
MARCH 3

Lufkin

Ranky Tank at the Pines Theater
MARCH 4

Houston

Ray Wiley Hubbard at the Heights Theater
MARCH 5 & 6

Lufkin

Innovation Nation live at the Temple Theater/AC
Campus
MARCH 6

Navasota

Tracy Lawrence at Texas Birthday Bash
MARCH 6

Nederland

Nederland Heritage Festival 2021
MARCH 9-14

Lufkin

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical/Temple Theater
MARCH 11

Conroe

Lone Star Jeep Invasion 2021/Montgomery Cty
Fairgrounds
MARCH 12-13

Longview

Longview Ballet presents Cinderella/Belcher Center
MARCH 12

Houston

Shiny Ribs at the Heights Theater
MARCH 12

Galveston

43rd Corvette Chevy Expo/Galveston Island
Convention Center
MARCH 13

Livingston

Trade Days at Pedigo Park
MARCH 13-14

Houston

George Strait in concert/NRG Stadium
MARCH 14

Greenville

Jim Messina at the Texan Theater
MARCH 14

Nacogdoches

Nacogdoches Azalea Trail
MID MARCH-MID APRIL

Palestine

Texas Dogwood Trails Celebration
MARCH 19-APRIL 4

The Woodlands

Houston Music and Arts Festival/Town Green Park
MARCH 20-21

Jasper

2021 Azalea Festival
MARCH 20

Katy

David Allen Coe at the Wildcatter Saloon
MARCH 20

Lufkin

Doolin' at the Pines Theater
MARCH 20

Lufkin

Angelina County Youth Fair
MARCH 22-27

Beaumont
South Texas State Fair/Ford Park
MARCH 25-APRIL 4

Huntsville
Walker County Fair and Rodeo
MARCH 25-APRIL 3

Crockett
Tracy Lawrence/Crockett Civic Center
MARCH 26

Woodville
Western Weekend Trail Ride and Rodeo
MARCH 26 & 27

Lufkin
Steep Canyon Rangers/Temple Theater
MARCH 26

Houston
The O'Jays at the Arena Theater
MARCH 26

Montgomery
Music & Mudbugs Festival
MARCH 27

Palestine
Old Time Music & Dulcimer Festival
MARCH 27-28

Galveston
25th Annual Grand Kids Festival/1894
Opera House
MARCH 27

Marshall
Larry Gatlin/Memorial City Performance
Hall
MARCH 28

Greenville
Celtic Angels Ireland/Memorial
Performance Hall
MARCH 28

April

Navasota
Navasota Wine Walk 2021/Downtown
APRIL 2

Woodville
78th Annual Dogwood Festival & Parade
APRIL 3

Port Arthur
Cajun Heritage Festival 2021
APRIL 3-4

Lufkin
Parsons Dance Company/Temple Theater
APRIL 8

Houston
Lauren Daigle World Tour/Toyota Center
APRIL 8

Corsicana
John Conlee at the Palace Theater
APRIL 8

Houston
Christopher Cross 40th Anniversary Tour/
Heights Theater
APRIL 8

Houston
Reggae in the Park 2021/Minute Maid Park
APRIL 10

Waxahachie
Scarborough Renaissance Festival
APRIL 10-11, 17-18, 24-25

Longview
An evening with Sandy Patty/Belcher
Center
APRIL 14

Lufkin
Blue Man Group/Temple Theater/AC
Campus
APRIL 15 & 16

Houston
Houston International Film Festival
APRIL 16-25

Houston
The Music of Billy Joel/Houston Symphony
APRIL 16-18

Galveston
Galveston Island Wine Festival/Saengerfest
Park
APRIL 17-18

Tyler
Blue Man Group/UT Tyler Cowan Center
APRIL 17

Lufkin
Earth Day Celebration at Ellen Trout Zoo
Springfest 2021/Downtown
APRIL 17

Pasadena
A Rally to Remember 2021/San Jacinto
Harley Davidson
APRIL 17

LaMarque
Texas Crawfish and Crab Festival
APRIL 17

Houston
Rodney Crowell at the Heights Theater
APRIL 17

Mt. Pleasant
2021 Smoky Eyed Backyard BBQ
APRIL 17

Houston
Houston Latin Fest 2021/Midtown Park
APRIL 18

Lufkin
Angelina Benefit Rodeo/Expo Center
APRIL 21-24

Corsicana
Navarro County Derrick Days Pro Rodeo
APRIL 24 & 25

Nacogdoches
The Old Stone Fort Bicycle Race
APRIL 24

Galveston
Rotary Club Crawfish Boil/Moody Gardens
APRIL 25

Lufkin
Bella Gaia at the Temple Theater
APRIL 25

League City
66th League City Music Festival and BBQ
Cook-off
APRIL 29

*Events are subject to change or cancellation.
To submit a calendar item email Mollie at
events@easttexanmag.com*

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Crockett Emergency Department saved my life"

-Gerald



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They found my cancer. I am a survivor."

-Roberto



"With my complex medical issues and needing frequent blood draws, I don't want to be stuck twice.

I only go to Dolores!"

-Teri

"I could barely walk but look at me now,

With a new hip from Dr. O'Meara I'm walking a mile every day!"

-Susan



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