

Issue 27  
Fall 2024

# East Texan

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aboard the USS Lexington

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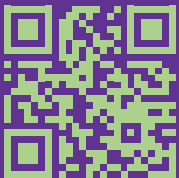
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## FROM THE EDITOR

*Beginning with this Fall 2024 issue of East Texan magazine, you will see some name changes on the masthead. Moving forward, I will serve as the new editor, and I couldn't be more thrilled about the opportunity.*

*Our quarterly magazine debuted in Spring 2018 and over time has grown, becoming quite the crown jewel among the various publications of Polk County Publishing Co. Inc.*

*Debbie Dickerson served as the inaugural editor, overseeing the various changes and improvements. However, that chapter has closed as she has chosen to pursue other opportunities. We appreciate Debbie's contributions over the years and wish her well in her new endeavors.*

*I became a regular contributor to East Texan in Issue 12, the Winter 2021 issue, with the launch of "Small Town Bites," a feature that showcases restaurants in the East Texas region and sometimes even beyond. Shortly thereafter, I began contributing regular feature stories as well.*

*I am excited about taking the reins as we continue to bring you interesting stories and pictures of life in East Texas.*

*A little about me, for those who may not know me ...*

*My husband and daughter are my world. The three of us enjoy food and drink, music, movies, books and travel – anywhere and everywhere. I'm a Baylor Bear, Hubby is a Sam Houston Bearkat and Daughter is a freshly minted Longhorn at The University of Texas. I tell you this, so you won't be surprised if the occasional outing in Austin or Waco shows up in the East Texan.*

*Emily Banks Wooten  
East Texan, Editor*



## On The Cover



*See story page 30. Photo by Chris Edwards.*

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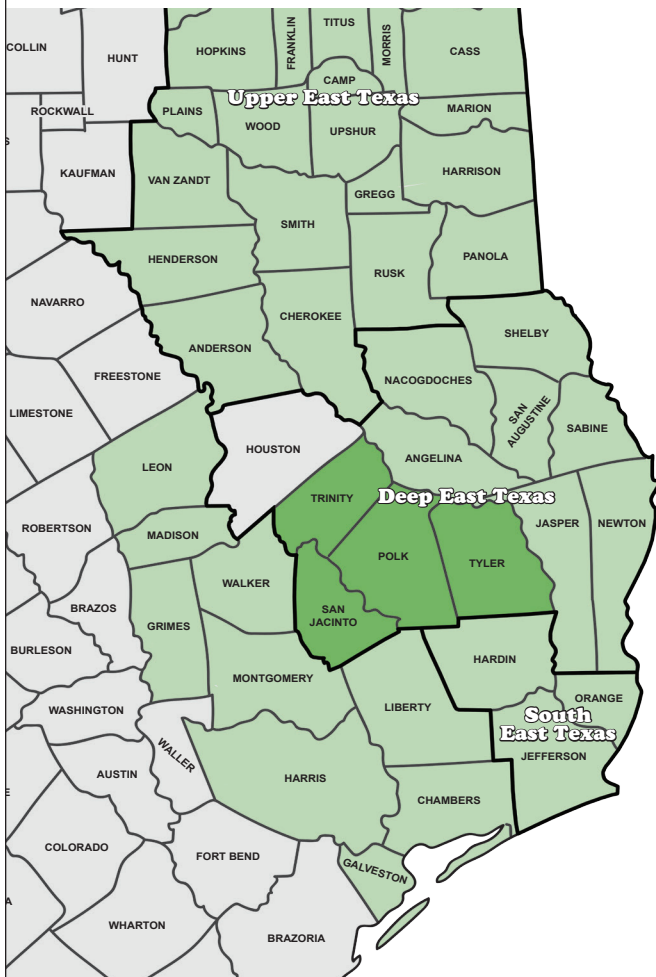
To contact the editor, email [editor@easttexasmag.com](mailto:editor@easttexasmag.com).



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# Food & Fun

## ..... IN HUNTSVILLE

### *Exploring the Presidential Library of East Texas*

**By Brian Besch**

This is our third edition of Food and Fun, and I think that means we can call it a series. To this point, we have traveled both north and south. It felt right to head west this time, through the Sam Houston National Forest, on to the campus of Sam Houston State University, making a stop at the Sam Houston Monument and ending at the Sam Houston gravesite.

If you haven't noticed a theme by now, we are digging into Texas history this edition, touring the life of Sam Houston, all presented in Huntsville.

By the time you pick up our magazine, the weather may have cooled off into the breezy low 90s, but we made this trip in the heat of August. Something indoors felt like the correct call.

If you attended school within the state's borders, there's little doubt a healthy dose of Texas history was provided. Many of us do not need a reminder of who Sam Houston was, but for those who have forgotten, a refresher course and plenty of detail is available throughout Huntsville.

We drove directly to the SHSU campus, where there is a 15-acre village that brings the story of Sam Houston to life. Its official name is the Sam Houston Memorial Museum and Republic of Texas Presidential Library.

In return for a \$5 entrance fee, we received three and a half hours of entertainment. On the grounds, there are facilities

housing artifacts, different homes where Houston lived, cabins staged with periodical pieces, gift shops, a forge and pottery shed.

Many know that Houston was the first and third president of Texas, but how many know he enjoyed whittling? He made a fashion statement with a leopard skin vest before the look was stolen by middle-aged women and pimps.

There are two main facilities from which to start. We happened to begin our tour at the education center, but that was mostly because we missed our turn on Sam Houston Avenue.

The weekend we were there, the education center was hosting an exhibit chronicling Houston's life. Also included were artifacts and products made with Houston's likeness or name attached. I did not get pictures of everything, but items like a barbecue sauce, whiskey, comic books and the dollar bill were too good to pass up.

After leaving the educational center, we took a path outside that leads to many structures where Houston lived and worked.

The first of these was the Steamboat House, where Houston died, and his funeral was held. It was here that members of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas came to visit for a final time to sing him tribal songs. Originally, it was located northeast of Huntsville's town square. The house received its name because of its resemblance to a riverboat.

*[right] The Sam Houston Monument must be viewed from close proximity to be truly appreciated. Photo by Brian Besch.*



SAM HOUSTON  
1793-1863



*[above] The memorial museum is another main entrance for a tour of the grounds. It is here you can learn of Sam Houston's life in great detail, while viewing some of his personal belongings. Photo by Brian Besch.*

Another was the Woodland Home, which was Houston's main residence. The dogtrot house was surprisingly cool with a breeze blowing through the middle on a hot day. Houston's law office is still standing next to it. Curators have decorated the home with pieces befitting of the time, with a few original items.

Other sites along the trail are multiple historical cabins, a forge and pottery shed. The pottery shed provides some of the pieces within the cabins. Handcrafted benches on the trail are made from reclaimed wood. There is also a gift shop, one of the few we've seen that is reasonably priced. You can find items

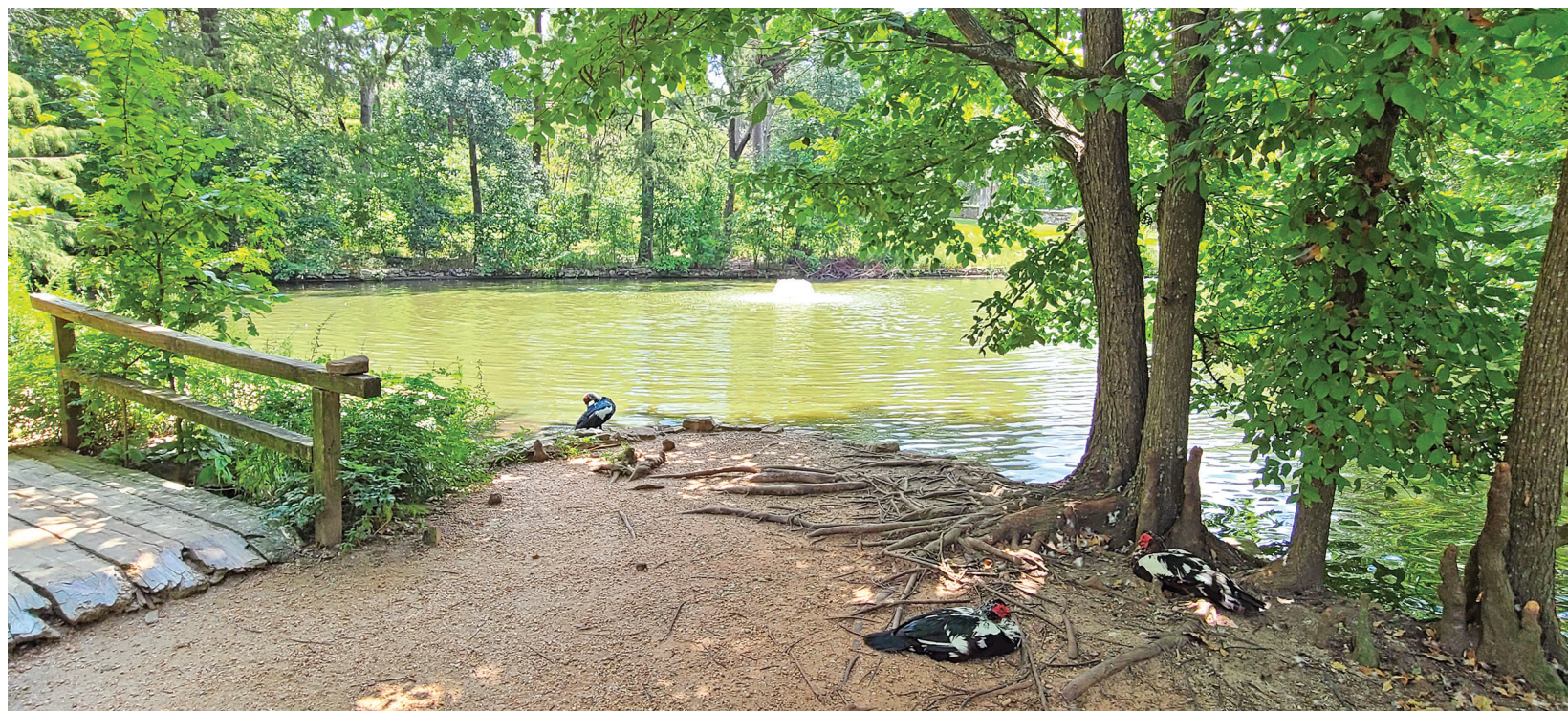
related to Texas history, Sam Houston, along with arrowheads and rocks.

Our last point of interest was the memorial museum, where exhibits were arranged neatly, making the history easy to consume. There had been a recent water leak, and not all wings were accessible.

Back on the road, we made our way to the Sam Houston Monument. There is a good chance you've seen this before traveling down Interstate 45. I have many times, but my wife had never seen it in person. I can now say, to truly appreciate how large it is, you have to get out of the vehicle and see for

*[right] The trails were kept neat and provided scenic views of a lake. We even had a few ducks show off for us a little later. Photo by Brian Besch.*







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yourself. My wife said she had no clue and was very surprised.

A sign near the visitor center says it is 77 feet, the world's tallest dedicated to an American hero. Fun facts provided on a sign say the monument is 60 tons, his cane is 32 feet, and hands are seven and a half feet.

The final stop on our tour of Sam was his final resting place. Houston is buried in Oakwood Cemetery, in existence as early as 1846. Huntsville's founder, Pleasant Gray, originally deeded the land to be used. The cemetery is filled with headstones from the 1800s and is a beautiful area. However, the heat had reached a boiling point, and we were hungry.

To the center of town, we chose historic Texan Cafe for the first time. It is the oldest cafe in Texas. The neon sign out front matches the historical theme. It has an open kitchen, full bar and big windows facing the town square.

An alcoholic drink called The Outlaw was close to a margarita and labeled as "perfect" by its drinker. She also ordered a grilled shrimp salad, which was graded a 10, with excellent flavor and a good swimmers-to-garden ratio.

I had a difficult decision between the jalapeno barbecued salmon, mushroom smothered pork chops or chicken fried steak. Our waiter's favorite was the chicken fried steak, so that was my tiebreaker. With fantastic flavor, it did not need a knife. Surprisingly, the green beans may have been the best thing on my plate. An incredible smoky flavor and the right amount of crunch made them the best I've ever had.

As a bonus, there is a museum attached to the restaurant with interesting pieces ranging from odd to historical figures

*[left] This exhibit inside the Walker Education Building showed visitors what can be produced from a bale of cotton. Photo by Brian Besch.*

and artists. We took in art from Picasso and a letter penned by George Washington. I've been told the museum was covered in a previous edition of the East Texan, so I will let it provide details.

While in town, we passed by City Hall Cafe and Pie Bar. With a name like that, we knew where dessert would be consumed. We shared two pieces of pie, coconut meringue and salted chocolate caramel pecan. Both were good, but we missed out on the mocha expresso pie that was unavailable. However, it won't be our last trip, and there will be many more opportunities to try what Huntsville has to offer. ■



*[above right] The chicken fried steak from Café Texan was tender and one of the better around, but the green beans were truly the best I've had.*

*[right] My wife's shrimp salad from Café Texan received high marks for its flavor.*



*[below] The slices of coconut meringue and salted chocolate caramel pecan from City Hall Cafe and Pie Bar were a good way to cap the day.*

*Photos by Brian Besch.*



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# TAKING A STEP BACK IN TIME ... aboard the USS Lexington



[above] Located at Corpus Christi's North Beach, the USS Lexington Museum on the Bay is an impressive sight to behold. Photo by Emily Banks Wooten.

## By Emily Banks Wooten

We had the opportunity to tour the USS Lexington Museum on the Bay in Corpus Christi earlier this year and it exceeded our expectations immensely. A visit there should be high on the bucket list for anyone who is a WWII enthusiast or a military history buff.

It was a humbling experience, and we were reminded frequently that as a former U.S. Navy vessel, the ship has steep stairways, low overhangs and some hazards to look out for.

Built by Bethlehem Steel Corp., the USS Lexington was launched Sept. 26, 1942, and commissioned Feb. 17, 1943. She set more records than any other Essex Class carrier in the history of naval aviation. The ship was the oldest working carrier in the U.S. Navy when decommissioned in 1991.

After training maneuvers and a shakedown cruise, the USS Lexington joined the Fifth Fleet, formerly the Central Pacific Force, at Pearl Harbor. During World War II, the carrier

participated in nearly every major operation in the Pacific Theater and spent a total of 21 months in combat. Her planes destroyed 372 enemy aircraft in the air, and 475 more on the ground. She sank or destroyed 300,000 tons of enemy cargo and damaged an additional 600,000 tons. The ship's guns shot down 15 planes and assisted in downing five more.

The Japanese reported that the USS Lexington sank no less than four times. Yet, each time she returned to fight again, leading the propagandist Tokyo Rose to nickname her "The Blue Ghost." The name is a tribute to the ship and the crew and air groups that served aboard her. "The Blue Ghost" was also the first aircraft carrier to welcome women serving aboard in 1980.

After the war, the USS Lexington was briefly decommissioned (1947-1955). When reactivated, she operated primarily with the Seventh Fleet out of San Diego, Calif. Although not involved in actual combat, she kept an offshore vigil during tensions in Formosa, Laos and Cuba.

[right] The Phantom II's unequalled versatility took it all over the globe as a fighter, bomber, interceptor and photo-reconnaissance plane. Photo by Emily Banks Wooten.





[above] The Battle of the Coral Sea fought in May 1942 was a game-changer in terms of naval battles as the primary weapons weren't guns, as had been for centuries, but planes. Photo by Emily Banks Wooten.

During the 40 years that the USS Lexington served on active duty, she had the distinction of five designations – aircraft carrier (1943), attack aircraft carrier (1952), anti-submarine aircraft carrier (1962), training aircraft carrier (1969) and auxiliary aircraft landing training ship (1970).

As one of the longest serving and most decorated aircraft carriers in the world, the USS Lexington Museum on the Bay offers a truly unique experience to all who visit. While guided tours are available, we opted instead for a self-guided tour so we could explore at our own pace. There are five different tour routes covering 100,000 square feet and eleven decks, with each beginning and ending on the hangar deck. The routes may be taken in any order. Each one is unique and features multiple interactive displays.

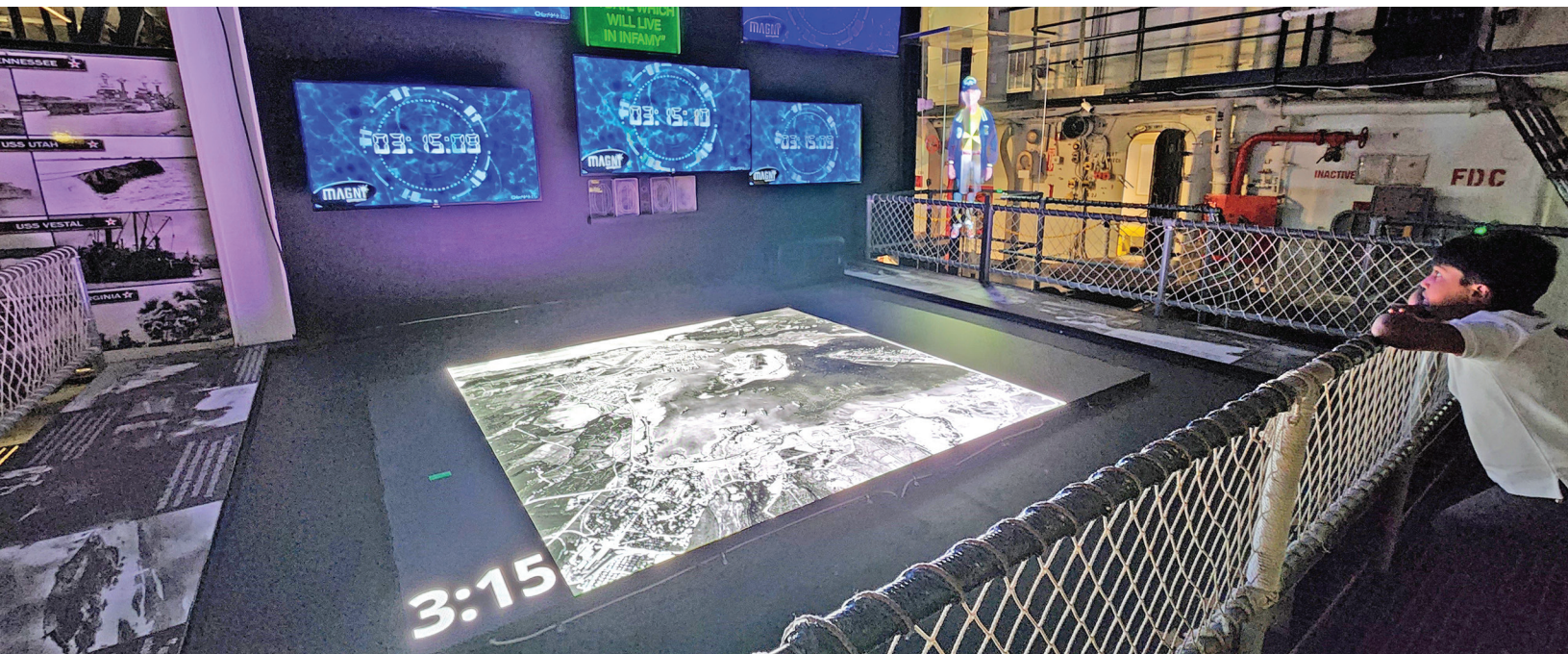
The most popular of the five tour routes is the “Flight Deck” which includes an up close look at 20 aircraft aboard from the

National Museum of Naval Aviation. You’ll also get a look at the anti-aircraft guns, landing gear – and get a true education in naval history.

High-speed catapult launches, arrested landings, air operations and aircraft refueling all took place on this 910-foot long and 142-foot-wide airport. The original flight deck was a long rectangle, but jet aircraft demanded a separate landing and take-off area, so in the 1950s she underwent major modifications, which allowed her to serve another 36 years. Points of interest on deck are take-off and landing control stations and arresting gear, anti-aircraft gun mounts and vintage aircraft.

The second tour route is the “Foc’sle” which is a vernacular for forecandle, a forward upper deck area that extends to the bow. The Foc’sle Tour begins on the starboard side of the hangar deck towards the bow, or front of the ship. The forecandle is

[below] A state-of-the-art multi-media exhibit features a film montage that retells the story of the attack on Pearl Harbor as the clock ticks down, enveloping you in this historic and devastating event. Photo by Emily Banks Wooten.







*[above] The “Warbirds & Warships Scale Model Gallery” was five years in the making and features over 490 pieces on display. It is the largest publicly exhibited model collection in Texas, created by more than 120 talented craftsmen. Photo by Emily Banks Wooten.*

the area of the ship where the equipment to raise and lower the anchors is located. Anchoring was a complex maneuver performed by boatswain mates (“bosuns”) who operated and maintained the equipment. The anchoring process was precisely coordinated between the bridge and the foc’sle. In addition to this equipment, the foc’sle area is now used for various exhibits.

One of the highlights of the “Foc’sle” is a state-of-the-art multi-media exhibit that features a film montage that retells the story of the attack on Pearl Harbor, enveloping you in this historic and devastating event. A graphic map of Pearl Harbor at a 1/2400 scale sets the scene with models of the ships docked in position, just as they were on the day of that fateful attack. The events unfold in front of your eyes through realistic battle animations, an 8,000-watt sound system, and transducers that shake the walkway with each rumbling explosion. To the side,

you will see the Japanese plan of attack as a 1941 model radio fills the air with FDR’s famous address to Congress, “A Date Which Will Live in Infamy.”

Near the multi-media exhibit is the complete Pearl Harbor survivor license plate collection, a display that took over 20 years to complete and is one of only a handful ever assembled. The collection is dedicated to the members of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association.

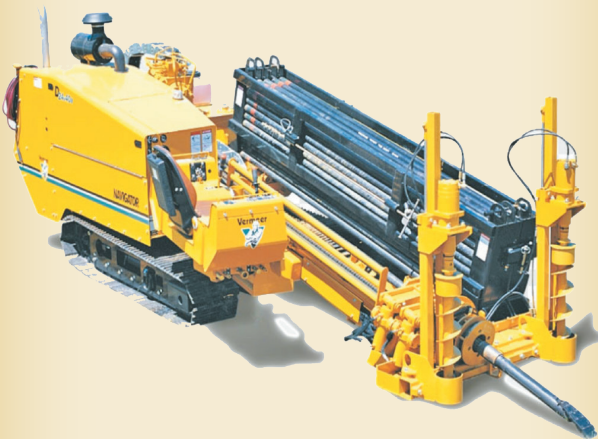
Just below the flight deck is the Combat Information Center (CIC), which collected and evaluated all information on the status of USS Lexington, other friendly ships and enemy forces. The CIC directed the ship’s performance in close coordination with the air operations center (AirOps) and the carrier air traffic control center (CATCC) next door. The CIC is located on the tour route referred to as the “Gallery Deck,” which also includes the captain’s gallery and cabin and a library.

*[below] The Boeing F/A-18 Hornet was unveiled in 1986 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Blue Angels, a flight exhibition team conceived in 1946 by Admiral Chester Nimitz to raise the public’s interest in naval aviation and boost Navy morale. Photo by Emily Banks Wooten.*



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The “Lower Decks,” the fourth tour route, features the “Warbirds & Warships Scale Model Gallery.” Five years in the making and with over 490 pieces on display, it is the largest publicly exhibited model collection in Texas. More than 120 talented craftsmen spent many thousands of hours creating the models displayed in this must-see exhibit.

Also included on the lower decks are the crew’s galley, the dental clinic, the engine room, carrier row, sick bay and chapel, all of which allow visitors to see how the up to 3,000 crewmembers lived during months at sea.

The fifth and final tour route is the “Hangar Deck.” During wartime this deck stored as many as 60 aircraft. Maintenance, refueling and rearming of these aircraft took place here. Unchanged in size since WWII, the hangar deck measures 654 feet by 70 feet, is 17.5 feet high, and covers 40,000 square feet. The deck is divided into three bays that could be sealed off by electrically operated fire doors. Each bay contains its own conflagration station for station damage control.

Sprinkled throughout are numerous interesting bits of trivia about the USS Lexington. For example, you could park more than 1,000 automobiles on the Lexington’s flight deck. She has more sleeping space than the largest hotel in the world and carried enough fuel to sail a distance of 30,000 miles nonstop. The flight deck is equal to more than two acres. You could play three football games at the same time on the flight deck or 14 basketball games at the same time.

During her 40 years, she steamed a total of 209,000 miles which is the equivalent to eight times around the world. She has crossed the equator 14 times and the International Date Line six times. She has more telephones than a city of 5,000 and can produce enough electric power to supply a city of 150,000.

We spent about four and a half hours touring the USS Lexington. However, there is so much to see that one could easily spend the entire day. ■

*USS Lexington Museum on the Bay is located at 2914 N. Shoreline Blvd. in Corpus Christi. Hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Labor Day through Memorial Day but are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. during Spring Break and during the summer from Memorial Day to Labor Day.*

*Admission is as follows: Adults (18+) - \$20.95, Seniors (60+) - \$17.95, Military - \$15.95, Youth (13-17) - \$17.95 and Children (4-12) - \$14.95. Parking is \$5.*

*For additional information, call 1-800-LADY LEX or go to [usslexington.com](http://usslexington.com).*

*[right] Used to communicate between ships or from ship to shore, the signal flags atop the USS Lexington are a beautiful sight against the blue sky. Photo by Emily Banks Wooten.*



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# SURPRISING MOSCOW, TEXAS

*[above] Looking into the entrance to the Moscow Masonic School Park. Photo by Janice R. Edwards.*

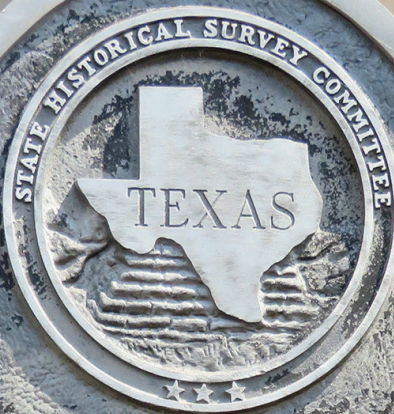
**By Janice R. Edwards**

Who would have ever thought there would be a town in rural East Texas named Moscow? But just down the road from Livingston, Texas at the junction of U.S. Highway 59 and Farm to Market Road 350 is the tiny, peaceful unincorporated town of Moscow, Texas. At first sight, there is not much to suggest a stop there – possibly a small convenience store/gas station and post office. Blink and you’ll miss this community of 170 residents (according to the 2000 census). But look just a little past the end of your nose – Moscow, Texas exudes history. In fact, within a four-block radius there are two city parks and – count them – five Texas historical markers. Just four miles beyond them on FM 350 is another, most intriguing, Texas historical marker. Oh, the stories this little town could tell if it could speak. Take the time to read the markers and an unexpected prosperous past emerges out of history’s midst.

The first marker tells a story, one how Moscow came into being, and begins the revelation of the forgotten saga. David and Matilda Green settled on the John Dickinson headright in the 1840s during the era of the Republic of Texas. Green established a post office in 1847 calling this place simply, Green’s. However, the name of this community changed to Moscow, Texas in 1853 when the postal authorities rejected the proposed formal name of Greenville – it was too close to another town, Greensboro, Texas. In frustration, the folks then named it after a city they knew was nowhere close to the name or their location – Moscow, Russia – and the postal authorities were happy.

Moscow was originally incorporated in 1856 and sometime in the late 1800s became a trading center for farmers and a stage stop on the Liberty-Nacogdoches Road. In 1880, with a citizenship of 228 people, it became the largest city in Polk County. In its heyday, it boasted cotton gins, sawmills, saloons,

*[right] State Historical Marker for Moscow. Photo by Janice R. Edwards.*



## MOSCOW

SETTLED BY DAVID GREEN, DURING ERA OF THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS. FIRST POST OFFICE ESTABLISHED UNDER NAME OF GREEN'S IN 1847. CHANGED TO MOSCOW IN 1853.

INCORPORATED IN 1856. WAS STAGE STOP ON THE NACOGDOCHES-LIBERTY ROAD. SITE OF SEVERAL FAMOUS SCHOOLS. HAS HAD FREE SCHOOL SYSTEM SINCE 1851.

A CANNERY FOR VEGETABLES AND FRUIT AND BIBLE COLUMN FACTORY (MAKING ARCHITECTURAL PILLARS) WERE EARLY INDUSTRIES. IN 1881 BECAME IMPORTANT RAILROAD TOWN. ITS SEVEN-MILE MOSCOW, CAMDEN & SAN AUGUSTINE IS ONE OF THE SHORTEST RAILROADS IN TEXAS.

(1967)



*[above] Historic C. E. Mathews house. Photo by Janice R. Edwards.*

*[below] The Masonic School Marker in the remains of the Masonic School wall that once surrounded the school grounds. Photo by Janice R. Edwards.*



*[below] The Holhausen Darby Cemetery sign located to the right of the state historic marker for John Wesley Hardin. Photo by Janice R. Edwards.*





a hotel, a food cannery and an architectural column factory among other businesses and shops. And the railroads came: the Houston, East and West Texas Railway (1880); followed by the seven-mile-long Moscow, Camden and San Augustine constructed from Moscow to Camden in 1899 (one of the shortest railroads in Texas). They were so “uptown” then, that a mule-drawn streetcar transported people from the business district to the railroad depot. A weekly newspaper, the East Texas Pinery, was first published in Moscow in 1885.

A second marker tells the story of the First Baptist Church. It states the church was built in 1849 by members utilizing square nails, hand sawn lumber, and pegs joining sills and floor framing. This marker was recorded in 1945 prior to Texas’ Centennial year celebration. The marker resides on the outside wall of a little church. Today’s First Baptist Church looks very different from the one described in the historical marker.

A third marker appears outside a well-manicured antebellum house – the E.C. Mathews house. This house was built in 1856 by “Daddy Poe.” It incorporates columns made of hollowed pine trees (a process Poe pioneered) and a swinging upstairs porch. In the peak of its success, Moscow featured a factory that made the hollow columns from the area’s large pine trees.

The fourth and fifth historical markers are located on the two city parks mentioned earlier. One marker and park commemorate Texas Statesman William Pettus Hobby, and the other marker and city park memorializes the Moscow Male and Female Academy (operated after 1857 under Masonic authorization as the Moscow Masonic Academy) which is how it is basically remembered. Both parks seem to be under utilized and have seen better days but would make good places for a picnic lunch on a road trip discovering Moscow.

The marker for William Pettus Hobby (1878-1964), businessman and politician, states he was born near the marker’s site in Moscow, Texas. He attended the Masonic Moscow Academy. In 1895, he began work at The Houston Post as a circulation clerk. He became the Post’s managing editor at the age of 23 and was named publisher of The Beaumont Enterprise in 1907. He became the governor of Texas in 1917 when James E. Ferguson was impeached and was elected to his own full term in 1919. He was the president of the Houston Post from 1924 until his death in 1964. The Houston Post Company included both the radio station KPRC and KPRC-TV. In August 1955, he became chairman of the board of the company. The state historical marker at his birthplace was dedicated in Moscow in 1964.

The Moscow (Masonic) Male and Female Academy marker was erected in 1963 and positioned in the remains of what was the wall surrounding the school. The marker is included in the Texas 1936 Centennial Markers and Monuments list. The Moscow Male and Female Academy was built in 1853 and served the community under this name until 1857 when the Masons took the school



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*[above] Remains of stairs – all that remains of the Masonic School. Photo by Janice R. Edwards.*

under their auspices and it became the Moscow Masonic Academy (or according to some sources, Moscow Masonic High School). The school remained in Masonic hands until it merged into the public school system. In Moscow's glory days, it was "the place" to send your children to be educated. Many dignitaries attended this school. The school burned down around 1935 and there is little left on the grounds but a couple of original staircases and a partial wall.

The most intriguing state marker is about four miles out FM 350 in front of the Holhausen Darby Cemetery (established 1862) – that for John Wesley Hardin (May 26, 1853 – August 19, 1895), the western outlaw and gunslinger. The marker indicates that it is placed near the boyhood home of Hardin, that he was a folk hero and an ardent Southerner who killed over 30 men in his life. It goes on to say that his resistance to Union troops made him a hero and set him on his lawless career. His family was politically active and well connected in the Confederacy, with his father achieving the rank of captain. Hardin even ran away from home in 1862 at the age of nine to join the Confederacy. Hardin reached adolescence and was strongly against black people as the South entered the Reconstruction period.

Hardin was living in or around Moscow when in November 1868 at age 15, he challenged his Uncle Holhausen's former slave, Major "Maje" Holhausen, to a wrestling match – which Hardin won. On the next day – according to Hardin – "Maje" ambushed him, and Hardin shot him five times. "Maje" died three days later. Hardin's father believed he would not receive a fair trial in a Union-occupied state (where more than a third of the state police were former slaves) and ordered his son into hiding. Weeks later, three Union soldiers were sent to arrest Hardin. Hardin shot and killed them. So, Moscow was the site of John Wesley Hardin's first victim on the road to his killing over 30 men. Who knew?

There are three other markers a little further from Hardin's marker outside of Moscow: the town of Corrigan (7.2 miles away); Bethel Baptist Church (approximately 7½ miles away); and Greenfield Cemetery (approximately 13.1 miles away). There's a lot of history packed into the area around Moscow that you might miss if you blink when you drive by. So, on a cool Autumn day, grab your camera, pack a picnic lunch and take a road trip to Moscow ... Texas. You might just learn something. I know I did. ■





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For questions, concerns, or more information, please contact [ashley@polkcountypublishing.com](mailto:ashley@polkcountypublishing.com).

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# A nose so bright to light up Lufkin

*Luminous red-nosed attraction is a tradition signaling Christmastime*

**By Chris Edwards**

Christmas displays – sure, we’ve all seen big, flashy ones, and, sure, we’ve all shaken our heads, laughed (or experienced a combination of those reactions) at some of ‘em.

There are some that are big and bold, however; fitting of their surroundings, and able to eke out smiles from a whole town. For 58 consecutive years, as of this coming December, the city of Lufkin has played host to a 45-foot tall oil pumping unit festooned as jolly Saint Nick’s red-nosed sleigh-guiding most famous reindeer of all.

Rudolph the Red-Nose Pumping Unit, a Mark 640 pumpjack, is synonymous with Christmastime in Lufkin, Texas, and a reminder of the legacy of industry in the town.

The city, in partnership with Lufkin Industries, created an annual Christmas in the Pines celebration, downtown, where the lighting of Rudolph is the linchpin factor of the event, which has grown through the years to include craft and food vendors, a ceremony featuring a Boy Scout troop reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance” and an art contest.

According to information from Lufkin Industries, the company responsible for both Rudolph and the pumpjack’s creation, the tradition began as we know it in 1966, when employees carefully tossed a few Christmas lights on a pumping unit onsite at the Lufkin Industries facility in Lufkin. The late Lufkinite and historian Bob Bowman wrote that even before the city began celebrating Rudolph with the official lighting in 1966, it had been a tradition at the plant going back to 1953, to decorate a small pumping unit with a red light bulb and a ribbon.

A Lufkin Industries employee, Guy Croom, was the first to do it, having been inspired by Gene Autry’s hit song chronicling Rudolph’s turn at guiding Santa’s sleigh.

From those beginnings, when that group of Lufkin employees adorned the pumper with a small red nose and some lights and placed it outside the machine shop for the community to enjoy, it became a tradition, much beloved by Lufkinites and visitors alike.

As the sands passed through the hourglass, the displays on the pumper became more elaborate, and in 2024, it takes four to five days to install all of the lights, which number in excess of 4,000, on the unit. When it is fully extended, it stands its full 45 feet, and a 38-foot dump trailer stationed to the rear of Rudolph becomes Santa’s sleigh.

A LUFKIN (formerly Lufkin Industries) representative said it takes three days to move Rudolph downtown to set him up,

and then another three days, at the end of the holiday season, to disassemble and put him into storage, in wait for the next year’s festivities.

Through the years, the location of Rudolph migrated from the original on-site placement, visible to the community from Raguet and Angelina streets, to the front of Lufkin Mall, where it was a staple for many years. It was also stationed, for a brief time, at the corner of Pershing and Feagin.

There have even been different iterations of Rudolph through the years, including the Mark II pumper, which was invented by Joe Byrd, a Lufkinite who moved from Colorado to work at Lufkin Industries. Byrd invented that pumping unit in 1956, and the tallest model was 90 feet.

For many Lufkinites, Rudolph is more than a welcome signal of Christmas cheer, but a bittersweet reminder of the industry that put the town on the map. The company that bore the attraction, as well as the patents and manufacture for the pumpers to create it, once employed thousands of people. Founded in 1902, and then known as Lufkin Foundry and Machine Company, as a machine shop, the oil and gas industry made the company a powerhouse and kept Lufkin’s economy afloat.

An acquisition by General Electric in 2013, amid falling oil prices, then a merger with Baker Hughes in 2017, and a subsequent rebranding to LUFKIN, have left the once large employer a shell of its former self, with just 36 employees, and with it, a refocus within the city’s economy to smaller companies and a focus on arts tourism.

Rudolph, in the perennial children’s tale penned by Robert May, represents the American dream for children; that everyone is special and should be recognized for their unique talents and abilities. The City of Lufkin, in a sense, is like the sleigh-guiding fawn famously ridiculed for his red nose. Despite the gutting of the city’s major employer, it remains a viable center in East Texas of economic viability and cultural relevance. Rudolph, the 45-foot pumpjack, with his nose so bright, is a window to traditions and a welcome reminder, to some, of that past, but also a beacon to future prosperity, within the city’s boundaries, as well as throughout the deep Pineywoods region. ■

*Rudolph the Red-Nose Pumping Unit will be unveiled for the 58th year on Friday, Dec. 5, at 5:30 p.m. The location is 113 South First Street in downtown Lufkin. You can put it in your GPS, or Google Map the location, but it’ll be hard to miss.*

# MOVIN' ON UP!

*The Sam Houston Bearkats are making the leap to FBS*



By Kevin Wooten

Sam Houston's football program has made a long journey from their earliest iteration to the present, where they now compete in the highest division in college football. Reaching the top of the collegiate pecking order comes with many advantages, as well as challenges. More scholarships, better opponents, and the need for upgraded facilities are all part of the new normal.

The Bearkats began playing football in 1912. Those earliest teams competed as independents, without any official affiliation until 1923. They played in the Texas Intercollegiate Athletic Association (TIAA) from 1924 to 1931. At that point they moved to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletes (NAIA), where they participated from 1931 until 1982. The next step up in competition was from 1982 until 1985, when they competed at the NCAA Division II level. It was at this point that the important shift to Division I competition began, competing in the FCS (Football Championship Subdivision), which is the lower level of Division I, from 1986 through 2021.

It was in 2021 things began to get a bit crazy. Sam Houston

saw an opportunity to join a more competitive conference when they joined the Western Athletic Conference (WAC). Their stay was short-lived, when a series of events occurred that created an opportunity to move up to the highest level.

A fundamental realignment of NCAA conference athletics began when The University of Texas and University of Oklahoma left the Big 12, which is part of the D-I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), the highest level of Division I. UT and OU departed for the Southeastern Conference (SEC). This move set off a series of unexpected movements of teams across conferences. It was during the upheaval, in 2021, that Sam Houston accepted an invitation to join the FBS Conference USA (CUSA). The motivation for the move was to have the Bearkats compete at the highest level, while also gaining access to the lucrative financial windfall of the College Football Playoff monetary distribution and media rights shares from the likes of ESPN and CBS Sports Network. Of course, it is almost always about the money.

The Bearkat football program was very competitive during the last 10-15 years at each level in which it competed. But the move to CUSA and FBS competition required a large commitment on many different levels.



First, the move up meant an initial increase in scholarship limits for football players from the FCS level of less than 70 to 85. Recently, the maximum allowable football scholarships increased to 105 beginning in the 2025-26 season. The increase will allow more players to participate on scholarship, which creates more depth at all positions of the team. The difference in scholarship limits is the primary difference between FCS and FBS football.

Second, the move up required a dedicated commitment to improving the athletic facilities for football, as well as other Bearkat athletic programs that will compete in CUSA. The baseball/softball complex received upgrades, a new tennis facility is in progress, and plans are being made for a dedicated track and field location. The new track and field facility is required as a result of planned upgrades to where the Bearkats play football, Bowers Stadium.

Bowers will be the most high-profile change most people will see. Moving up to FBS requires a minimum standard of facilities that far exceed those at the FCS level, and this is where Sam Houston has placed its priority.

The first step was to remove the track around the football field. While having both the track and football field in the same stadium was a practical consideration in the past, expectations at the FBS level are that the two sports compete in different locations, with each having dedicated facilities.

The second, and most expensive, construction phase at Bowers will be the demolition of the press box, which was built in 1986 during the original construction of the stadium. Sam Houston has secured \$60 million in funding to build a state of the art, modern press box that will represent a far superior experience not just for fans, but also for coaches who communicate with those on the field. Up-to-date audio and visual spaces will greatly improve television, radio and streaming quality. Also included in the new design will be dedicated suites and club levels as revenue-producing ways to enjoy the games in luxury.

With the move up in competition, as well as the improved game-day experiences, the hope is that more students and alumni, as well as casual fans, attend the game day festivities that also include expanded pre-game tailgating opportunities.

Sam Houston began CUSA play during the '23-'24 season. They were ineligible for the conference championship during this transition period. The football team struggled early on, beginning the season with eight consecutive losses before winning 3 of their final 4 games. The current season as full members of CUSA offers the opportunity for a conference championship, as well as the ability to participate in a post-season bowl game.

Time will tell if the Bearkats will have continued success at this level of competition, but if the current results are any indication, the winning ways of Sam Houston football will continue. As of this writing the team has an overall 4-1 win-loss record while being 2-0 in conference play.

*[left] The current front entrance to Bowers Stadium is due to be demolished as part of the stadium remodel. Photo by Kevin Wooten.*



*This is a rendering of the proposed front entrance of the Bowers Stadium remodel. Photo courtesy gobearkats.com.*



*This is a rendering of the proposed Bowers Stadium press box. Photo courtesy gobearkats.com.*



*Live music is part of the new and expanded tailgating opportunities. Photo by Kevin Wooten.*

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## ***Farewell Timberman***

By Sandy Carroll

*The delicate dance transpiring  
When Nature opens its eyes  
On a Leon Hale kinda morning  
Beneath East Texas Skies.*

*A beautiful ache within my chest  
Untamed beauty beneath the pines.*

*Little else matters,  
Except thicketed Deer or a swirling Bass on my line.*

*Devoted Outdoorsman, lover of print  
Writing stories of things unexplained  
He awakened mysteries of Hidden Coves,  
Or Logging Roads hidden in rain.*

*Coffee fed days of wandering,  
With notebook, thermos, and pen.  
You always captured Yesterdays  
Beyond the River Bend.*

*Your writings are etched in the Timberline,  
Unburdening a humble Man's load.  
As leaves begin turning to woodsmoke,  
I'll "See You on Down the Road."*

# *Along the Navasota*

by POET

SANDY CARROLL

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## My love of Moonshine Patio Bar & Grill began by chance ...

*Proving that advertising does work*

By Emily Banks Wooten

Years ago, while thumbing through a magazine in a hotel room in Austin, I saw an ad that caught my eye with its drool-worthy photos of beautiful food. It was for a restaurant called Moonshine Patio Bar & Grill.

I was in town for a conference and had no plans for dinner that evening, so I decided to check out Moonshine. Everything on the menu sounded great, but I was drawn to the seared rainbow trout with cornbread stuffing, chile sage butter and green beans with bacon. Every single bite was wonderful.

The opportunity to return to Moonshine presented itself over the summer when we were in Austin for our daughter's

three-day orientation at The University of Texas. She had a full schedule that included meals, so it would just be the two of us. The trip happened to fall on our wedding anniversary, and I couldn't think of a better place to celebrate the occasion than Moonshine.

I'd built it up quite a bit and was hoping that we wouldn't be disappointed. Of course I was worried for nothing. Moonshine is one of those places where you just can't go wrong, regardless of what you order.

I started with an iceberg wedge composed of bacon, tomato, blue cheese, candied pecans and ranch and it was delightful. The sweetness from the candied pecans was a nice counterpoint to the pungent blue cheese. For my entree, I selected the

*[below] Daughter ordered the Sunday house club sandwich with turkey, ham, bacon, pimento cheese, red onion, house mayo, lettuce and tomato, served with a side of French fries. Photo by Natalie Wooten.*





*Hubby enjoyed the center cut pork chop with bourbon cherry chutney, herb salad, demi-glace and Yukon mashers.  
Photo by Kevin Wooten.*



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horseradish crusted salmon with lemon dill butter sauce and Brussels sprouts. Everything about it was wonderful. He chose the jalapeno hanger steak with salsa verde, demi-glace and Yukon mashers. He commented that his jalapeno hanger steak was the tenderest piece of steak he'd ever eaten. He insisted on sharing a bite of it with me and it melted in my mouth like butter. I knew that's what I would be ordering on our next trip to Moonshine.

We were back in Austin not long ago to move our daughter into her dorm. On our last night there, we went to Moonshine. I didn't even have to look at the menu. I knew I was getting that jalapeno hanger steak. I did and was not disappointed one bit. Every single bite was divine. Hubby selected the center cut pork chop with bourbon cherry chutney, herb salad, demi-glace and Yukon mashers. Coming in at about three inches thick, I think it may have been the thickest pork chop I've ever seen. He shared a bite with me, and it was moist, tender and absolutely delicious. Our daughter ordered a Sunday house club with turkey, ham, bacon, pimento cheese, red onion, house mayo, lettuce and tomato (minus the red onion). It comes with French fries, but she opted to also accompany it with a side of baked macaroni pimento cheese with a bacon gratin. We were all happily sated as we rode back to the hotel.

Located at 303 Red River, Moonshine Patio Bar & Grill is housed in a building that is a Texas Historic Landmark, having formerly served as the Hofheintz-Reissig Store. According to the Texas Historical Commission marker erected out front, the structure served as a grocery and dry goods store for nearly 100 years, having been built between 1850 and 1875 for German Emigrant Henry Hofheintz. A one-story addition was later added and was used as a saloon and a residence. Hofheintz' eldest child, Catherine Louise, and her husband, Adolph Reissig, inherited the store, and the property remained in the family until 1966. The building is a beautiful example of the German-influenced architecture found in many 19th-century Texas buildings. It is also on the National Register of Historic Places.

Co-founders Chuck Smith and Larry Perdido opened the doors of Moonshine Patio Bar & Grill in 2003 with the desire to take you back to a simpler time. Comfortable and familiar, relaxed and easygoing, Moonshine greets guests like family, serving up great cooking with an innovative take on classic American comfort food.

As of this writing, I truly believe that Moonshine Patio Bar & Grill may be my favorite restaurant in Austin. ■

*I selected the horseradish crusted salmon with lemon dill butter sauce and Brussels sprouts. Photo by Emily Banks Wooten.*



# Find Someone More Interesting Than Me

**“I hope I served honorably, I ruled justly, and I left the office at the next level”**

**-Jacques Blanchette, Tyler County Judge, 2007-2022.**

**By Mollie LaSalle**

*Author's note: Two years ago, in August 2022, I called Jacques Blanchette and asked if he would be willing to sit for an interview for the next East Texan. He politely declined, saying “Find someone more interesting than me.” I approached him again two months ago. I didn't even get the words out when he looked at me and said, without hesitation, “I'm ready, let's do it.”*

Teddy Roosevelt was quoted as saying “speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far.” Jacques Blanchette seems to have taken these words to heart, he is a soft-spoken man who knows what he wants and has left his legacy of service for future generations.

Blanchette gets this narrative started - “I'm a native of Beaumont, I attended first through fifth grade at Eugene Field Elementary. Mother and Dad (Val and Doris Blanchette) had property in Colmesneil, in Tyler County, and subsequently built a house there, in 1967. I started school there in sixth grade and graduated from Colmesneil High School in 1974.” He had already met his future bride when Leeza Griffin was encouraged by her tennis coach to get off the bus and meet him upon returning from a match at Lamar in February 1973. Jacques had gone with a friend to pick up the friend's girlfriend, who was also on the bus. Leeza was a Woodville High School sophomore, Jacques a Colmesneil High School junior. The tennis coach was none other than the legendary Sergio Ramos.

Jacques attended Kilgore College from 1974-76, getting an associate's degree in general studies. From Kilgore, he went to Texas Tech in Lubbock to continue his education. “When I was at Texas Tech, I really wasn't fulfilled in my degree pursuit,” he said. “I took an occupational preference test, which was 500 questions. The results showed the top preference was funeral director, the second choice was beautician. It was funny because

I told the counselor that I had only been to four funerals in my life, and my only association with beauticians was one of my classmate's mothers, who was a local hairdresser. My mind was trying to process the thought that I am not going to set little old ladies' blue hair. Consequently, I thought I am floundering; I am going to go work somewhere for a while so I can figure out what I am going to do.”

Jacques' great uncle, W.O. Stringer, could have advised Jacques on his future endeavors at this point in time, but he was long gone from this earth by the 1970s. W.O. Stringer was the county judge in Jasper, Texas in the early 1920s when he founded Stringer Funeral Home in 1928. Stringer eventually sold the business to his nephew, J.O. Stringer. In 1979, Ky Griffin was named the manager of the funeral home and in 1982, became an owner and was named vice president and general manager, later becoming CEO/President of the now re-named Stringer and Griffin Funeral Home.

Jacques admitted that he was smitten with Leeza and was ready to get married, as she was living and working in Houston and was glad to move back home. Jacques and Leeza were married on St. Patrick's Day in 1979. They moved back home to Tyler County where Jacques went to work for Ogden Chevrolet in Colmesneil for three months. In 1980, Jacques took a job with GMAC in Lufkin. It was at this point in time that Leeza's brother Ky began calling Jacques and asking him to consider coming to work for him at a funeral home in Jasper in which he had taken over the management. Jacques said, “Ky asked me what I would think about coming to Jasper and plugging in with him, so we did, but at the time, you needed to be able to do the embalming. I wasn't interested in that side of the business, so I left the industry. We moved to Tyler at the end of 1989 and from 1990 -1991, I worked as a representative for National Write Your Congressman (NWYC) which was a counterpart of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Blanchette distributed research materials to constituents to encourage

*Work is a family affair for Leeza and Jacques Blanchette at Stringer & Griffin Funeral Home in Woodville in August 2024.  
Photo by Mollie LaSalle.*





a grassroots movement of connecting to your lawmakers. Blanchette remarked that the period of time in that role was beneficial to him in that he was exposed to taxpaying members of the business community.

The year 1991 would bring yet another move for the Blanchettes when Ky called saying he was going to open a funeral home in Woodville. "I agreed to work there for a while but was not considering anything permanent. As I started doing day to day duties at the funeral home, the job began to suit me, and I commuted to and from Houston to attend the Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service to become a licensed funeral director in 1994."

Blanchette had always known that he wanted to do something bigger than himself. He said that one day as he was passing the Tyler County Courthouse, "It came into my heart, prepare yourself to run for office one day. Several years passed, and I did. I went and talked to then county judge Jerome Owens who told me that it was his plan to seek one more term unless District Judge Monte Lawlis retired, then Owens would seek that seat, which is what happened in 2006."

That year, Jacques entered a three-man race for county judge. He had two challengers on the Democratic side, and he was the lone Republican candidate. The March primary that year narrowed the race down to two, Blanchette, and his lifelong

friend, Scott Yosko, then Woodville's police chief. Blanchette began campaigning in earnest in the fall of 2006. He was quoted as saying. "I'm not looking for a job, I've already got one. I don't have an axe to grind, I don't have a rock to throw, I don't have an agenda to promote, but I'm willing to serve. If you consider me worthy enough to give me this opportunity, I'd consider it an honor to serve you."

Blanchette won the race for county judge, defeating his old friend by almost 700 votes. Judge-Elect Blanchette released a statement to his constituents the following week, relaying what he hoped to accomplish. "If it's not broke, don't fix it. If it needs improving, seek input, find out what areas need to be improved, and if so, how ... I want to lead from a position of unity, not disrupt the complexion of the courthouse ... I just want to hopefully enhance those things my predecessor did that were appropriate and necessary."

At the end of 16 years in office, he explained, "The first 12 years were very progressive, and we accomplished much. The last four were wrought with some debilitating changes. During my first term, I went in asking myself what I can and cannot do. By my second term, I figured out what I could do. By the third term, I figured out what I would do, and during my fourth term, I tried to fix some of the things that I had done. It's called commissioners court for a reason. You just preside over

*Jacques Blanchette (back row, fifth from left) joins other elected officials for the Jan. 1, 2019 swearing-in ceremony, marking his fourth and final term as county judge. Tyler County Booster file photo.*



the court. Your vote really only counts if they are split, then you're the deciding vote. It's a majority rule governance, and then you are the official signator of whatever the majority rule determines over the governance of the people in this sub-portion of the state of Texas called a county."

He compared being a county judge to the Rotary four-way test: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? He has acknowledged in the past that a public official can't please everyone, but his reasoning was that it all comes down to doing the right thing. He has been quoted as saying that if his decisions benefitted the whole rather than a select few, then he could live with that, even if it wasn't popular or politically expedient.

Blanchette was asked what he hoped he had accomplished during his time in office; he thought about it for a good thirty seconds and responded, "I hope I served honorably, I ruled justly, and I left the office at the next level. I reference it this way – in emergency management, one coordinator comes in and brings a skillset and builds a floor, the next one would build a floor above that. My hope is that whenever I finished my time in office, that I had completed the floor that I was responsible for, on top of the one that had already been established. It is continuing to grow and become better, and the next floor has the firm foundation to sit on, just as I hope for Milton (Powers) in his time of service to leave a good floor during his years."

Judge Blanchette wrote a farewell letter to his constituents which was published in the Tyler County Booster, December 8, 2022. A brief synopsis is included here: "My fellow Tyler Countians, December 31 will mark the end of an era for my serving as your chief elected official, executive officer, emergency management director, president member of county government and sitting judge over several courts ... what an honor you have entrusted in me. Thank you! We have weathered many challenges together ... additionally, my family has made many personal sacrifices during this season of public service ... may peace be with us all as the days ahead unfold with new opportunities and challenges, together, we can meet each one."

During his 16 years as the head of Tyler County's governing body, Blanchette guided his constituents through many patches of rough water, often literally – challenges, such as Hurricane Harvey – and through other stretches, such as the Coronavirus pandemic. Through tragedies and triumphs, Blanchette led with compassion and soft-spoken dignity.

Blanchette "passed the torch" to his successor Milton Powers Jan. 1, 2023. His plan was to enjoy his retirement. These days, you can find Jacques at the funeral home, helping out part-time on an "as needed" basis. He said, "It was my thought to do something and still be available for family obligations. We didn't know how that configuration would work. Technically, I am retired. I didn't replace the judgeship with this as a full-time work, but because it is family configured, then whatever I need to do, I'm glad to do it." ■



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# SPICY PECANS

**By Barbara White**

*Placed in small containers or gift bags, these tasty and simple-to-make spicy pecans make great little gifts. For milder salted pecans, omit the cayenne pepper. You may want to make an extra batch so you can keep some for yourself!*

**Ingredients:**

- 1 pound pecan halves
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1-2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste
- 2 teaspoons salt, or to taste

**Directions:**

Preheat oven to 200 degrees. Place pecans on a jelly roll pan or sheet pan. Melt butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Remove the saucepan from heat and add Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice and cayenne pepper. Mix well and pour over pecans, stirring to coat all sides, and arrange in a single layer.

Place in preheated oven and bake for 45-60 minutes, or until pecans become toasty and brown. Stir occasionally while cooking. Remove from oven and sprinkle with salt to taste, stirring to coat all sides.

Cool completely and store in an airtight container for giving. For storage longer than a couple of weeks, place in a freezer container and freeze.

Makes about 4 cups.

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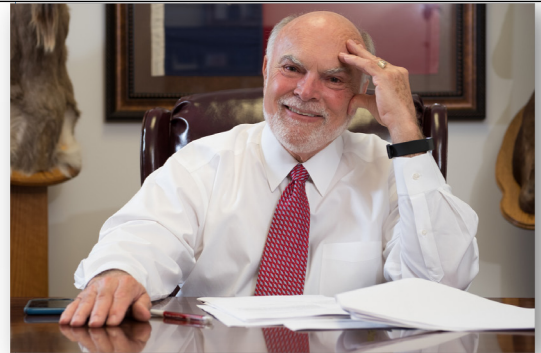


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# WILD BOAR

## *from the woods to the table*

By Luke Clayton

When I was a youngster growing up in very rural Red River County in northeast Texas, my dad or one of his friends would occasionally kill a wild hog, usually in the “rough” country along the Red or Sulphur Rivers. Wild porkers have been running around the Lone Star State for well over 100 years but back in the eighties, their numbers began to explode resulting in the “hog problem” common in much of Texas and several other states.

With all that good eating pork out there for the taking, I am surprised that more people don’t take the time to learn the differences in cooking wild and domestic pork. Pork is pork but wild pork is usually much leaner; wild hogs have to work to get their groceries rather than waddle up to a feed trough and their meat contains more muscle and less fat. Anything that can be done with domestic pork can be accomplished with hogs from the wild and that includes making cured, smoked ham and sausages.

We always butchered a few hogs when I was growing up and my dad would make sausage and ham from the meat. I remember the process took a great deal of time consuming hard work and once I got away from home, I made it a point to get my ham and sausages from the grocery store. And then, at about the age of 30 with a family to feed and tight budget, I decided I would try my hand at “cranking” out some sausage from a wild hog I killed. I began with pan sausage and purchased all seasonings individually, blended them and made some pretty tasty breakfast sausage. I moved on to smoked links, summer sausages, etc. and later learned how to easily cure and smoke ham. After years of transforming wild pork into tasty food, I’ve learned that it is much easier and cost effective to simply purchase the kits that contain everything necessary to transform the raw meat into tasty sausage or ham. I am about to go into detail explaining how to make cured ham or cured and smoked sausage but first, let’s begin at the beginning, once you

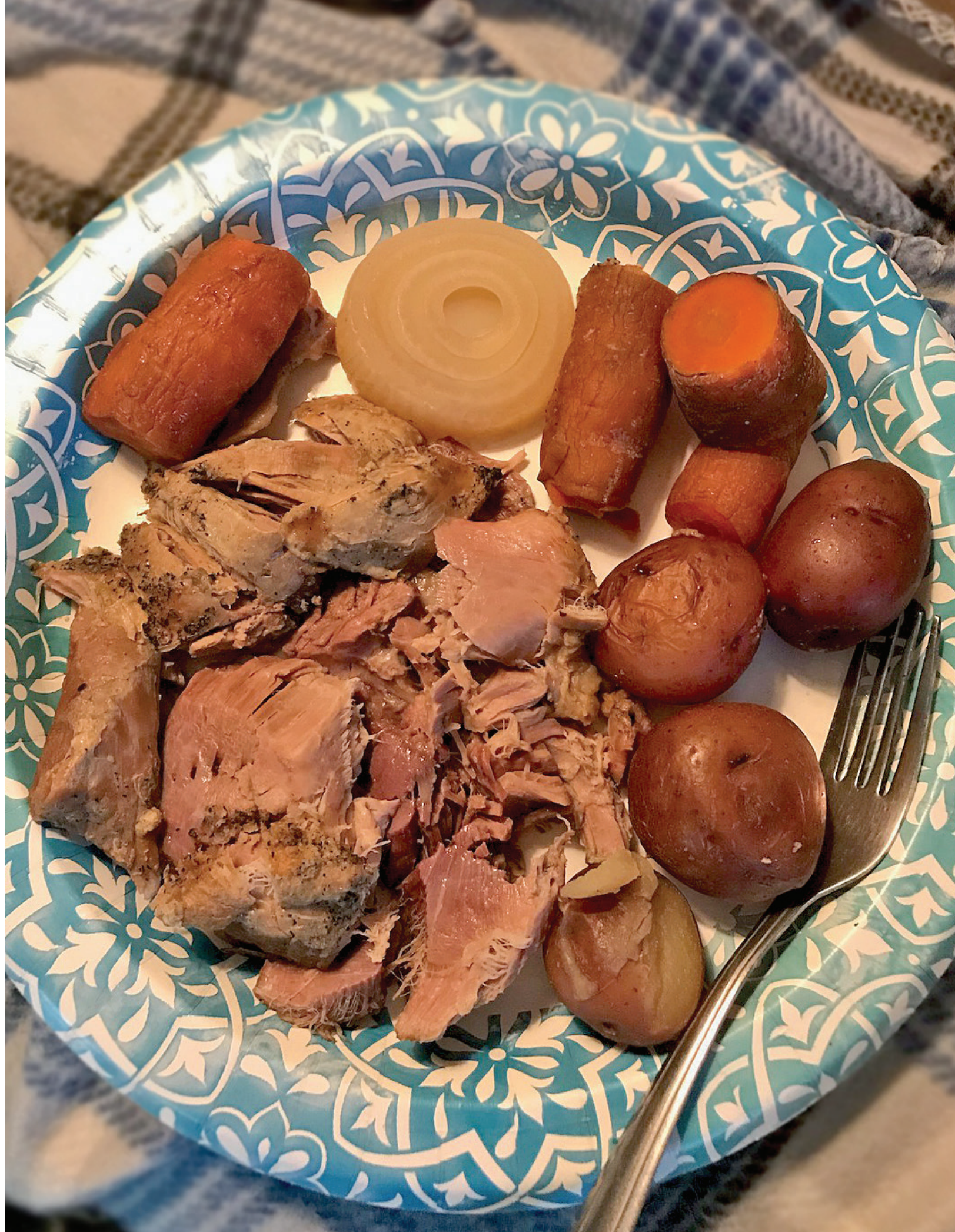
have your wild hog on the ground.

Deciding which hog to kill for table fare is really pretty simple. Look at it as though you were at a livestock auction picking out a hog to butcher, would you choose the oldest, rankest boar or a younger, fatter hog. The answer is pretty obvious. I have killed boars weighing up to 160 pounds that made great sausage and ham but if you have the opportunity to be choosy, pick a smaller boar or sow of any size.

Much hog hunting today takes place at night when the porkers are most active. I hunt a patch of woods about a mile from my home and often head out about a hour before dark and plan to hunt a couple hours after dark. I kill lots of hogs back in the woods that are simply too heavy for an older man to drag out. I’ve learned to quarter the porkers, hide on just as an elk would be quartered and packed out. I’ve found that leaving the hide on keeps the meat clean while I’m packing it back to the ATV.

If you have an easy way to get your hog out of the woods, simply field dress as you would a deer and skin and butcher it back at camp or at home but I usually don’t have that luxury. I begin by removing the two front shoulders; the shoulders are not attached to the body with bone and remove easily. Next, I remove the hind legs hide on, by cutting down to the ball joint, severing the joint and cutting the meat close to the hip bone. And then, all that’s left to do is make a lengthwise cut through the hide from the neck all the way to the tail, peel the hide back and remove the two backstraps. The hide around the neck skins easily and the neck meat can be removed from the neck bone. The tenderloins are really small on most wild hogs and not worth the trouble but they can also be removed by cutting behind the back rib. The entire process takes no more than fifteen minutes and is the easiest way I’ve found to keep the meat clean in transport and lightening the load when packing the hog out of the woods. I’ve use a couple of old belts with a cords tied on either end to make a carrying strap for the quarters.

*[right] Wild pork roast. Photo by Luke Clayton.*





*Wild pork ham, cured and smoked. Photo by Luke Clayton.*

**NOW BACK TO PREPARING THE MEAT** Regardless which type sausage you decide to make, you must first obviously grind the meat. This can be done with an old fashioned “hand crank” grinder or an electric one. If you go with an electric grinder, make sure and get one that generates at least one-half horsepower. The smaller grinders usually don’t work very well on tougher cuts of wild pork. Decide if you wish to make “bulk” sausage such as breakfast sausage, Italian or Chorizo. These sausages do not need to be stuffed into casings. Seasonings are simply added to the ground meat and then the sausage is packaged and frozen until needed. I always buy pre packaged seasonings. These “kits” contain all the ingredients to make sausage in perfect amounts and they are available for making either bulk sausage or links and summer sausages. I get my seasonings for sausage and cure for making ham from Butcher Packer Supply and on each box are very detailed instructions as to how to proceed. Some sausage makers run their meat through a one-eighth inch grinder plate but I prefer using a three-eighths inch plate which makes for a bit coarser grind. The meat also flows much easier through the bigger holes, making the grinding process much easier.

If you wish to make links or larger summer sausages, you will need some method of “stuffing” the seasoned meat into casings. This can be a stuffing tube on the end of your meat grinder or a hand crank sausage stuffer which I much prefer. These are readily available for not much more than a hundred dollars and money well spent if you make much sausage. I usually use “natural” casings for links but prefer the collagen casings for making summer sausages. Regardless which type you use, make sure and place the casings in warm water for a few minutes before you stuff them.

With the meat ground and seasoned, most of the work is done. You will need some sort of smoker to give smoke flavor to the summer sausage or links and to supply heat. The key is to slow smoke the meat rather than “cook” it. I usually set my smoker to 225 degrees and, using a meat thermometer with a probe, bring it up to 160 degrees. This process takes from 4 to 6 hours and I rotate the sausages a couple times to avoid overheating. Regardless what type smoker you use, there will be hotspots and occasionally rotating the meat will insure even heat.





*Gusiado wild pork. Photo by Luke Clayton.*

Once your sausage is up to temperature, place it on a table outside or sink and “bloom” it by spraying it with cold tap water. This insures the stays “full” inside the casings and does not shrink. I like to place my smoked sausages in the refrigerator for a couple of days and let the cure and seasonings “work”. I think this adds flavor to the finished produce. If you like cheese in your sausage, you can add high temp cheese during the mixing process. My favorite blend is a jalapeno summer sausage by Butcher Packer and I always add high temperature cheddar cheese.

**MAKING HAM** Making ham sound like a challenging endeavor but in truth, it’s much easier than sausage making. It’s possible to cure the entire hind leg of the hog, bone in which I have never done and have no plans to begin. I much prefer to cut three pound pieces from the upper ham or sometimes the back straps and cut them into smaller pieces. These “chunks” of pork will cure thoroughly in 7 days. I use the dry cure method and always use sugar cure rather than the more salty cures. I begin by rubbing the pre packaged sugar cure into each piece of meat and then coating the meat with dark brown sugar.

Next place the pieces of meat in a plastic container and place it in the refrigerator for the 7 day curing period. I often add a bit of honey to give added sweetness to the meat. After seven days, remove the meat from the container and place in your smoker. I begin with a very low temperature of about 120 degrees for a couple hours of heavy pecan, hickory or wild plum wood smoke. Then I crank the heat up to about 150 degrees for 3 or 4 more hours. At this point your ham will be thoroughly smoked. I place the smoked pieces of ham back in the frig for another week to allow the meat to “mellow”. At this point, the ham can be fried or baked or frozen for future use. To be truthful, I always enjoy a big breakfast of ham, eggs and hash browns as soon as the smoking is complete. Just make sure and always remember to cook your homemade ham before eating. Cook it in the same manner that you would if using “store bought” ham from a domestic hog.

*Luke and his friend Larry Weishuhn recently released their new co-written book, “Poor Man’s Grizzly”, all about hunting wild hogs and preparing the meat. Available through [www.larryweishuhn.net](http://www.larryweishuhn.net) and [www.catfishradio.org](http://www.catfishradio.org). ■*

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# Baptists, Buddhists, Bushes can all join in

By Barbara White

Only a handful of people in the entire world have ever heard it. At least two of those people have died, going to their graves without ever telling a soul about what they heard. It might be because they thought it wasn't worth mentioning, but I find that hard to believe.

You will likely never hear it, so you'll just have to take my word for it: I do a great impression of Johnny Mathis. I mean, it's really good. Believe me.

Even if you've never heard of Johnny Mathis, I guarantee you have heard his voice. His versions of "Sleigh Ride" and "The Christmas Song" are among the Christmas classics that will begin to play over store speakers any day now, although most have the decency to wait until the Halloween costumes and candy have been cleared from the shelves.

Your list of Christmas classics may differ from mine.

Those of us old enough to remember licking S&H Green Stamps or when every restaurant had a cigarette vending machine may prefer something sung by Nat King Cole or Bing Crosby, whose versions of holiday classics will likely still be playing in the background when people who haven't been born yet are checking their gift lists, compiled by Artificial Intelligence, and paying for their purchases by mental telepathy.

I prefer Johnny Mathis songs because I like his voice and because there is something about the way he pronounces words that make him easy for me to imitate. As a singer, many would agree that I am not that great, but I have Johnny's diction down pat. Did I mention that I do a very good imitation? Trust me, it's good.

It goes without saying that some people love Christmas music and others loathe it, probably because it stirs up memories. That can go either way. Most of mine are good.

I remember when I was about 5 years old my dad used to deliberately mix up the words to a well-known song, just so I'd get frustrated by his lack of knowledge and try to correct him. He would sing, "Randolph the rude-nosed red deer..." I would respond, hands on hips, "No, no, no! That's not the way it goes!" and he would continue to get it wrong. We kept up that routine long after I had finally caught on to the fact that maybe, just maybe, he wasn't the only slow learner in the room.

It is a wonder I survived such cruelty.

Years ago, I tried the same joke with a young child who was born much less gullible than I. For an instant, she looked at me like I had just sprouted antlers, but then she rolled her eyes. Quick kid, that one.

Someone wise once wrote "Memories you don't even know you're searching for can be found beside an old song." (I'm great at jotting down quotes that I like, but terrible about noting who said them. My apologies to whoever came up with that doozy.)

Love them or hate them, from "Silent Night" to "Here Comes Santa Claus," we all know the Christmas classics. Baptists, Buddhists and atheists can all hum along. Cat lovers, dog lovers, Democrats, Republicans, J.Lo, George Bush, serious people, silly people, those who wear tinfoil hats... I'll bet they all know the words to "Jingle Bells."

It would not surprise me if Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga, Lil Nas X and the West Coast Bad Boyz all got their start singing "Frosty the Snowman" as toddlers.

Christmas music is a common denominator. There are a lot of other things we have in common but we don't seem to be in the mood to acknowledge those things right now.

We can't even seem to agree on whether to call it the Christmas season or the holiday season. You do you.

Fun fact: Johnny Mathis was born in the East Texas city of Gilmer, a little north of Tyler. Don Henley, a founding member of the rock band Eagles, was born there too.

But Johnny Mathis is my claim to fame. Trust me. It's the best impression you'll never hear. ■





# SHOP EAST TEXAS

## It's Holiday shopping time!

Jasper, the self-proclaimed Jewel of the Forest, does have a few jewels to enjoy during a day of shopping East Texas. I highly recommend Chinese Kitchen for lunch. The atmosphere is not the reason to go here, but their unique hot and sour soup is the best I have ever eaten, and I have never been disappointed

with anything else on their menu. For more traditional taste buds, Cedar Tree Restaurant, Smitty's Smokehouse, Fish Tales, and Belle Jim Restaurant are also special options. Now, on to a day of shopping!

~ Kelli



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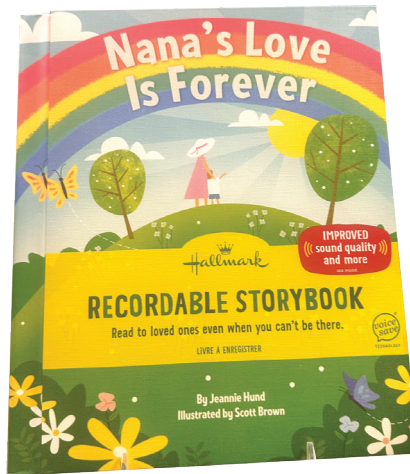


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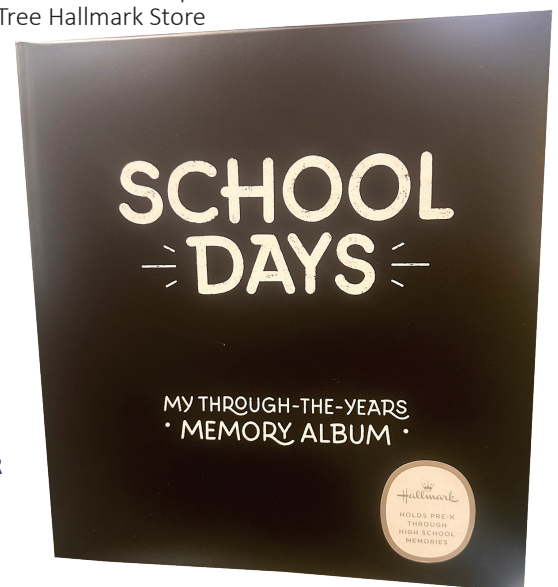


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# CALENDAR

## OCTOBER

### **Tomball**

Rodney Crowell at Main Street Crossing  
*OCTOBER 1-2*

### **Woodville**

Tyler County Fair  
*OCTOBER 2-5*

### **Winnie**

Texas Rice Festival  
*OCTOBER 2-5*

### **Center**

East Texas Poultry Festival  
*OCTOBER 3-5*

### **Lufkin**

An Evening With Little Texas/Pines Theater  
*OCTOBER 4*

### **Lufkin**

Fall Festival/Texas Forestry Museum  
*OCTOBER 4*

### **Jasper**

Fall Butterfly Festival/Sandy Creek Park  
*OCTOBER 5*

### **Beaumont**

Oktoberfest 2024/Beaumont Civic Center  
*OCTOBER 5*

### **Huntington**

2024 Huntington Catfish Festival/Centennial Park  
*OCTOBER 5*

### **Orange**

The Big Pumpkin Run/riverside Pavilion  
*OCTOBER 5*

### **Huntsville**

Fair on the Square 2024  
*OCTOBER 5*

### **Tyler**

Rose City Air Fest  
*OCTOBER 5*

### **The Woodlands**

The Woodlands BooFest/Town Green Park  
*OCTOBER 5*

### **Corsicana**

The Bellamy Brothers at the Palace Theater  
*OCTOBER 10*

### **Tomball**

Moe Bandy at Main Street Crossing  
*OCTOBER 10*

### **Lufkin**

Ratatouille at the Pines Theater  
*OCTOBER 11*

### **Nacogdoches**

Pineywoods Fair/Expo center  
*OCTOBER 11-15*

### **Conroe**

35th Annual Cajun Catfish Festival  
*OCTOBER 11-13*

### **Montgomery**

Montgomery Quilt Walk 2024/Downtown  
*OCTOBER 11-12*

### **Kirbyville**

Kirbyville County Music Show/Palace Theater  
*OCTOBER 12*

### **Hawkins**

Hawkins Oil Festival 2024  
*OCTOBER 12*

### **Canton**

Canton Autumn Festival/Downtown  
*OCTOBER 12*

### **Marshall**

Fire Ant Festival 2024  
*OCTOBER 12*

### **Kilgore**

Kilgore Oktoberfest 2024  
*OCTOBER 12*

### **Edom**

Edom Art Festival  
*OCTOBER 12-13*

### **League City**

League City Harvest Festival 2024  
*OCTOBER 12*

### **Huntsville**

Gabe Wootton at West Sandy Creek Winery  
*OCTOBER 12*

### **Nacogdoches**

Nac Arts Ball at Banita Creek Hall  
*OCTOBER 12*

### **Beaumont**

12th Annual Butterfly Release/Ford Park  
*OCTOBER 12*

### **Katy**

Katy Rice Harvest Festival/Civic Center  
*OCTOBER 12-13*

**Port Neches**

Mid County Market Days Fall Festival  
*OCTOBER 12*

**Lindale**

Crossroads Classic Car Show  
*OCTOBER 12*

**Nacogdoches**

SFA Gardens Fall Festival Plant Sale  
*OCTOBER 12*

**The Woodlands**

Trout Fishing in America/Dosey Doe, the Big Barn  
*OCTOBER 13*

**Gilmer**

East Texas Yamboree  
*OCTOBER 16-19*

**Houston**

Electric Light Orchestra/Toyota Center  
*OCTOBER 16*

**Longview**

Lyle Lovett at the Belcher Center  
*OCTOBER 17*

**Tyler**

Texas Rose Festival 2024  
*OCTOBER 17-20*

**Woodville**

35th Annual Harvest Festival/Heritage Village  
*OCTOBER 18-19*

**The Woodlands**

50th Anniversary Free Concert with Lyle Lovett and Hayes Carll  
C W Mitchell Pavilion  
*OCTOBER 18*

**Orange**

The Bacon Brothers at Lutzer Theater  
*OCTOBER 19*

**Coldspring**

39th Annual Wolf Creek Car, Truck and Bike Show  
*OCTOBER 19-20*

**Madisonville**

23rd Annual Texas Mushroom Festival  
*OCTOBER 19*

**Beaumont**

2024 Beaumont Comic-Con/Ford Park  
*OCTOBER 19-20*

**Livingston**

Trade Days at Pedigo Park  
*OCTOBER 19-20*

**Jefferson**

Bigfoot Conference 2024/Convention and Visitors Bureau  
*OCTOBER 19*

**Lufkin**

Halloween Trail/Texas Forestry Museum  
*OCTOBER 19-31*

**Kountze**

Big Thicket Hogs and Strings Cook-off and Music Fest  
*OCTOBER 19*

**Jefferson**

Taste of Jefferson/Downtown  
*OCTOBER 20*

**Tomball**

Patsy Cline Tribute at Main Street Crossing  
*OCTOBER 20*

**Sugarland**

Judas Priest at Smart Financial Center  
*OCTOBER 22*

**Tomball**

Ray Wylie Hubbard at Main Street Crossing  
*OCTOBER 25*

**The Woodlands**

Cody Johnson at C W Mitchell Pavilion  
*OCTOBER 25-26*

**Lufkin**

The Rocky Horror Picture Show/Pines Theater  
*OCTOBER 25*

**Silsbee**

3rd Annual Ghosts at the Museum/Ice House Museum  
*OCTOBER 25-26*

**Jasper**

Trick or Treat in the Park/Martin Dies Jr. State Park  
*OCTOBER 26*

**Colmesneil**

Harvest Party and Pumpkin Patch/Victory Camp Colmesneil  
*OCTOBER 26*

**Huntsville**

Bob Seager Tribute at the Old Town Theater  
*OCTOBER 26*

**Palestine**

Hot Pepper Festival/Downtown  
*OCTOBER 26*

**Nacogdoches**

The Ghosts of Millard's Crossing  
*OCTOBER 26*

**The Woodlands**

Ricky Skaggs at Dosey Doe, the Big Barn  
*OCTOBER 26-27*

**Paris**

24th Annual Festival of the Pumpkins/Downtown  
*OCTOBER 26*

**Pasadena**

Pasadena Mistletoe Market  
*OCTOBER 26*

**Montgomery**

Trick or Treat in Historic Montgomery  
*OCTOBER 26*

**Greenville**

Gene Wason at Municipal Auditorium  
*OCTOBER 26-27*

**Canton**

Trick or Treat on Main Street  
*OCTOBER 31*

**Houston**

2024 International Quilt Festival/G R Brown Convention Center  
*OCTOBER 31-NOVEMBER 3*

# NOVEMBER

**Tomball**

Bellamy Brothers at Main Street Crossing  
*NOVEMBER 1*

# CALENDAR

## **Beaumont**

An Evening with the Gatlin Brothers/Jefferson Theater  
**NOVEMBER 1**

## **Houston**

Collect A Con/G R Brown Convention Center  
**NOVEMBER 2**

## **Vidor**

Gene Watson at the Oaks Event Center  
**NOVEMBER 2**

## **Nacogdoches**

Dia de Los Muertos: Day of the Dead  
**NOVEMBER 2**

## **Houston**

Marc Anthony at the Toyota Center  
**NOVEMBER 3**

## **The Woodlands**

The Gatlin Brothers at Dosey Doe, the Big Barn  
**NOVEMBER 4**

## **Houston**

Bonnie Raitt at Hobby Center  
**NOVEMBER 6**

## **Port Arthur**

Death By Disco/Bob Bowers Civic Center  
**NOVEMBER 7**

## **Tomball**

Marty Haggard Tribute to his father, Merle Haggard at Main Street Crossing  
**NOVEMBER 7**

## **Lufkin**

Titanic at the Pines Theater  
**NOVEMBER 8**

## **Houston**

Fab Four: A Tribute to the Beatles/House of Blues  
**NOVEMBER 8-9**

## **Galveston**

Kelly Willis at the Old Quarter Acoustic Café  
**NOVEMBER 9**

## **Kirbyville**

Kirbyville Country Music Show/Palace Theater  
**NOVEMBER 9**

## **Corsicana**

Bob Seager Tribute at the Palace Theater  
**NOVEMBER 9**

## **Galveston**

The Righteous Brothers at 1894 Grand Opera House  
**NOVEMBER 9**

## **Henderson**

Heritage Syrup Festival  
**NOVEMBER 9**

## **Pasadena**

Pasadena Nutcracker Market/Convention Center  
**NOVEMBER 9**

## **Houston**

Old 97's at the Heights Theater  
**NOVEMBER 10**

## **Tomball**

Billy Joel Tribute at Main Street Crossing  
**NOVEMBER 10**

## **The Woodlands**

J.D. Souther live at Dosey Doe, the Big Barn  
**NOVEMBER 13**

## **Houston**

An Evening with Greensky Bluegrass/White Oak Music Hall  
**NOVEMBER 14**

## **Lufkin**

Dancing with the Stars 2024/Pitser Garrison Civic Center  
**NOVEMBER 16**

## **Kingwood**

Kingwood Harvest Market/town Center Park  
**NOVEMBER 16**

## **Houston**

Cyndi Lauper at the Toyota Center  
**NOVEMBER 16**

## **Livingston**

Trade Days at Pedigo Park  
**NOVEMBER 16-17**

## **Lufkin**

Nutcracker Magical Christmas Ballet/Temple Theater  
**NOVEMBER 20**

## **Houston**

Kacey Musgraves at the Toyota Center  
**NOVEMBER 21**

## **Nacogdoches**

Holiday in the Pines/County Expo Center  
**NOVEMBER 21-23**

## **Tomball**

Deena Carter at Main Street Crossing  
**NOVEMBER 21**

## **Beaumont**

Dwight Yoakum and Gary Allan at Ford Park  
**NOVEMBER 22**

**Carthage**

Linda Davis at Texas Country Music  
Hall of Fame  
*NOVEMBER 23*

**Paris**

Christmas in Paris/Love Civic  
Center  
*NOVEMBER 23*

**Tomball**

Neil Diamond Tribute at Main  
Street Crossing  
*NOVEMBER 24*

**Houston**

Usher at the Toyota Center  
*NOVEMBER 27-30*

**Jasper**

13th Annual Christmas in the Park/  
Sandy Creek Park  
*NOVEMBER 30*

**Galveston**

Nutcracker Market at Moody  
Gardens  
*NOVEMBER 30*

**Lufkin**

Santa Claus Express at Texas  
Forestry Museum  
*NOVEMBER 30*

# DECEMBER

**Corsicana**

A Prairie Little Christmas/Corsicana  
Opry  
*DECEMBER 2*

**Tomball**

Bob Seager Christmas Tribute  
Special/Main Street Crossing  
*DECEMBER 3*

**Houston**

Justin Timberlake at the Toyota  
Center  
*DECEMBER 4*

**Lufkin**

Suzy Bogguss-A Swingin' Little  
Christmas/Pines Theater  
*DECEMBER 5*

**Livingston**

Community Concert/Polk County  
Commerce Center  
*DECEMBER 5*

**Sugarland**

Christmas Tree Lighting/Sugarland  
Town Square  
*DECEMBER 6*

**Galveston**

A Christmas Carol/Grand 1894  
Opera House  
*DECEMBER 6-7*

**Canton**

Tinsel Christmas Market/Civic  
Center  
*DECEMBER 6-7*

**Galveston**

Dickens on the Strand  
*DECEMBER 6-8*

**Colmesneil**

Birthday Party for Jesus/Victory  
Camp Colmesneil  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Beaumont**

The Nutcracker-Celebrating 53  
Years/Julie Rogers Theater  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Canton**

Snow Day Festival/Downtown  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Nacogdoches**

28th Annual Jingle Bell Run  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Huntsville**

Huntsville Christmas Fair  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Conroe**

2nd Annual Christmas Market/The  
Icehouse Conroe  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Magnolia**

The Magic of Christmas Parade of  
Lights  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Fairfield**

Fairfield Hometown Christmas  
Celebration  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Nacogdoches**

Nine Flags Christmas Festival  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Marshall**

Wonderland of Lights Christmas  
Parade  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Woodville**

Rotary Breakfast with Santa  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Corsicana**

Jingle Bell Jog/YMCA of Corsicana  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Newton**

Newton Festival of Lights  
*DECEMBER 7*

**Conroe**

Run the Reindeer 5K/Lone Star  
College Conroe Center  
*DECEMBER 8*

**Houston**

Yo Yo Ma in Concert at Jones Hall  
*DECEMBER 9*

**Tyler**

Lonestar Gun and Knife Show/W.T.  
Brookshire Center  
*DECEMBER 9-10*

**Tomball**

Doug Stone at Main Street  
Crossing  
*DECEMBER 12*

**Lufkin**

A Christmas Story at the Pines  
Theater  
*DECEMBER 13*

**Tyler**

Miracle on 34th Street/Braithwaite  
Theater  
*DECEMBER 14*

**Huntsville**

Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys/  
Old Towne Theater  
*DECEMBER 14*

**Kemah**

Christmas Boat Parade/Kemah  
Boardwalk  
*DECEMBER 14*

**Gladewater**

Yule Viking Festival  
*DECEMBER 14*

# CALENDAR

## **Houston**

Holly Jolly Holiday/Jones Hall for the Performing Arts  
*DECEMBER 14*

## **Kirbyville**

Country Music Show at the Palace Theater  
*DECEMBER 14*

## **Palestine**

Breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus/Nickel Manor  
*DECEMBER 14*

## **Tomball**

Gene Watson at Main Street Crossing  
*DECEMBER 20-22*

## **Conroe**

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory/Crighton Theater  
*DECEMBER 22*

## **Galveston**

Santa Hustle Galveston Kids Dash/Seawall Blvd  
*DECEMBER 22*

## **JANUARY 2025**

## **Galveston**

Townes Van Zandt Tribute at the Old Quarter Acoustic Café  
*JANUARY 1*

## **Tomball**

Prince Tribute at Main Street Crossing  
*JANUARY 3*

## **Lufkin**

Gloria Gaynor at the Temple Theater  
*JANUARY 3*

## **Beaumont**

SETX Whiskey Festival/Civic Center  
*JANUARY 4*

## **Huntsville**

Elvis Tribute at Old Towne Theater  
*JANUARY 4*

## **Galveston**

Battle of Galveston Walking Tours/Downtown  
*JANUARY 4-5*

## **Kirbyville**

Country Music Show at the Palace Theater  
*JANUARY 11*

## **Tomball**

Wade Bowen at Main Street Crossing  
*JANUARY 14*

## **Lufkin**

Kim Cruse at the Pines Theater  
*JANUARY 16*

## **Galveston**

The Life and Times of the Temptations/Grand 1894 Opera House  
*JANUARY 17-18*

## **Humble**

Hops N' Hot Sauce Festival  
*JANUARY 18*

## **Marshall**

The Music of Sam Cooke/Memorial City Performance Hall  
*JANUARY 19*

## **Houston**

31st Annual MLK Parade/Downtown  
*JANUARY 20*

## **Tomball**

Hayes Carll at Main Street Crossing  
*JANUARY 23*

## **The Woodlands**

Loretta Lynn Tribute at Dosey Doe, the Big Barn  
*JANUARY 23*

## **Huntsville**

Radney Foster at the Old Towne Theater  
*JANUARY 25*

## **Henderson**

Henderson Main Street Mardi Gras  
*JANUARY 25*

## **Tomball**

Woodstock Experience/Main Street Crossing  
*JANUARY 25*

## **Pasadena**

Junk Hippy Winter Show/Pasadena Convention Center  
*JANUARY 25*

## **Marshall**

Shenandoah at Memorial City Performance Hall  
*JANUARY 26*

## **Houston**

Houston Auto Show 2025/NRG Center  
*JANUARY 28-FEBRUARY 1*

## **Tomball**

Bee Gees Tribute at Main Street Crossing  
*JANUARY 30*





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