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# Welcome October...

Hello NTFR readers, and welcome to the October 2017 issue. We are thrilled to feel the chill of the morning air, see the subtle change in the color of leaves fall brings and the lure of pumpkin spice-flavored items making their way back into our homes!



This issue we close the series on honeybees and their keepers. In the article “Celebrating the Triumphs and Understanding the Trials,” readers can learn the issues that arise for bees. That includes natural dangers that beekeepers can expect as well as those trials that come up unexpectedly. Red River Beekeepers Association president Kerry Roach guides us through each predicament and gives his advice on preparing your hives for various threats. Also, we discuss the triumphs of being a beekeeper and the sweet rewards.

They say talent comes in all sizes, shapes and ages. Kendal Fellegly of Sadler, Texas, may be small, but aboard her horse Fancy she is unstoppable. The duo, both 12 years old, have found great success in the western pleasure and English riding arena. Although Kendal is an average pre-teen, into sports and cheer leading, her aspirations are to one day train English horses. Read more in the article, “A Fancy Pair.”

The profile this month is a genuine, small town, Texas sweetheart with a tremendous talent. Mary Lane Watson is a life-long Jack County resident. At the age of 45 she took up art lessons and since has spent the better part of 20 years studying her art medium, oil painting. Her subjects vary from desert scenes, to wildlife, flowers, cactus, working cowboys, family portraits, Native Americans and much more. Read more about the artist in the profile article, “Bringing Light to Life.”

Rodeo lovers and poetry lovers look forward to each October for the annual Red Steagall Cowboy Gathering held at the historic Fort Worth Stockyards. Celebrating its 27th year, Steagall admits little has changed over the years; however, the goal is still the same: to represent the working cowboy and his family in the most authentic way—the folks who work cattle horseback bringing beef steak to the dinner table. Read more about the annual event held every fourth weekend in October in the article, “Gathering to Celebrate the American Cowboy — The 27th Annual Red Steagall Cowboy Gathering.”

As always, please email editor@ntfronline.com with any photo, event or article topics. We also advise you to check out our packed calendar for any upcoming events for your family to attend.

Until next month,

*Jessica Crabtree*

## ON THE COVER

Artist Mary Lane Watson has been painting more than 30 years. Starting later in life, the painter spent 20 years learning and researching oil painting. Since, her subjects have developed from scenes of the desert, family members, working cowboys, cacti, Native Americans and more. (Photo of Watson’s original painting by Jessica Crabtree)

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Cowboy Culture by Clay Reid offers you a monthly dose of humor. This month Reid recalls a horse accident that left him with multiple staples and stitches. Read more in the #September2017 #NTFR issue.

<http://ntfronline.com/2017/09/cowboy-culture-a...the-cowboy-world/>



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# MEANWHILE BACK AT THE RANCH

By Rayford Pullen | rcpullen@yahoo.com

Since I last checked in with y'all, we've had a few hurricanes, fires across the Northwest, flooding and several natural disasters across Texas and the United States. What's been amazing to me is the fact that folks from all walks of life and all parts of the country have stepped up and answered the call for help. It makes me proud to see all the folks who care about and help others they don't know and will probably never meet.

This is not new; it's just what folks like you do when others are down and out no matter the reason why. Way to go and thank you to all those who have shown up and helped whether it was through donations of time, energy or finances. Makes you feel better inside and that's where the action is.

Fall arrived earlier than normal this year at least temperature wise, and it was really a boom for cattle performance since forages were much more nutritious and, as a result, our cows look great headed into winter and our weaning weights were great. I haven't compiled this information on our herd yet but will be doing so in the coming weeks and will share with you in future articles.

Our fall calving cows and heifers have been really busy putting calves on the ground and so far, so good, and as I stated in earlier articles, calf birth weights are five or six pounds lighter in the fall than in the spring. I don't have a good explanation for that; that's just been our observation comparing same sire calves born in the spring and fall.

One thing I know for sure is that the weather is certainly more enjoyable in the fall verses the spring, which is actually the middle of winter.



As a producer, Pullen will be determining his cattle's winter feed needs, especially cattle going into the winter, keeping them in good shape. (Photo by Jessica Crabtree)

We have also looked closely at our antibiotic use in feed the past few months, and while we don't do much of this (feeding that is), we have done some in the case of some younger animals that have had issues.

While limiting antibiotic use is good for the industry in general, at least from the consumer perspective, it is a good reason for us to make a concerted effort to limit their use as much as possible.

In our efforts to do this, we have found several products offered as a replacement for CTC, which is a commonly used antibiotic in feed.

Our initial results have been quite positive, and the results I have seen from feed yard use have also been good.

So, if you routinely feed out your calves, and in our case bulls, visit with your nutritionist and take

a look at the alternatives because what the consumer is concerned about is something we need to address as best we can.

While it has to work for everyone, we need to know all the options available and be able to convey to our customers our interest in their concerns and what we are trying to do.

If you are like me, doing all we can to reduce stress, whether it be through handling, disease or nutrition, is the first step in reducing morbidity in the herd.

We all need each other. Let's all do our part to keep our product wholesome and this business profitable.

What's next? Spring calving cattle will be pregnancy tested with those open being culled from the herd. Fall born calves will be vaccinated for blackleg, IBR and dewormed at two to three months

of age and our fall bull battery will be tested for semen quality and bull soundness.

Mineral will be kept out, and we will be determining our winter feed needs and with our cattle going into the winter in exceptionally good shape, we can expect our fall calving cows to breed back quickly and our spring calving cows to be in better shape when they calve and breed back good, also.

Thin cows are slow breeders and as most of you know, that if you go into the winter with poor cows you'll come out of the winter with poorer cows and then before you know it your cows will be calving all over the board because of slow breed back.

Keep helping and praying for your neighbors. We all need a hand every once in a while. It's a wonderful time to be in the cattle business. Ⓞ



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# B-E-E-ING A BEEKEEPER

*Celebrating the triumphs and understanding the trials*

By Jessica Crabtree



Raising honeybees, like anything else, will present you with trials and triumphs, things that will fail while other parts will flourish. Now that we have established your needs as a new beekeeper and goals in the first year, we now discuss the things that can go wrong, why and how to fix it, as well as why things are going so well. For this we consult fellow beekeeper and Red River Beekeepers Association president, Kerry Roach.

## Challenges

Roach described honeybees as being "delicate creatures." If the colony is strong, as a colony of many bees, they are a unit. However, the individual bee is very susceptible to an array of frailties. That, in and of itself, is the challenge and what causes bees to die. Roach explained the challenge for the beekeeper is to minimize the adverse effects in nature. Contrary to popular belief, honeybees can freeze, drowned and fall victim to the natural effects of weather. When the elements strike, Roach said, "They [honeybees] have to fly and come back, and figure out where their hive is, where their place of safety is."

Additional dangers to the tiny creatures are wind, rain and flooding. Of course, like anything else, these insects are not without predators. "Honeybees are very tasty

and palatable to birds, animals such as bears and skunks, which are all natural predators," Roach described. Other predators include spiders, "Honeybees must watch for spider webs. Webs simply offer another natural danger." One of a beekeeper's largest challenges is minimizing those natural dangers as much as possible. Naturally, honeybees live between six and eight weeks. However, the worker bees literally work themselves to death.

Beekeepers in our state possess their own beekeeping challenges. That comes in the form of Texas' unpredictable weather. "In Texas, our main issue is heat in the summer. A beekeeper here must give proper ventilation to a hive. They can't just keep the box closed up. The hive needs air to circulate through it," Roach shared. This can be done by offsetting the hive boxes to create a space for air to circulate. Or a beekeeper may need to drill a one-inch hole in the main hive box to allow additional ventilation. Any holes added may be cause for rain to enter; however, it is necessary during the summer in order to provide adequate ventilation for cooling.

In northern states, beekeepers have to contend with ice, snow and much colder weather. In that case, hives must be kept buttoned up and insulated. Where there is

snow, experts recommend putting a hole in the side of the top hive box. This operates as an outlet or inlet above the snow for traveling bees. "Bees are fascinating! They keep and maintain the hive at 92 to 94 degrees at all times. Think: even when Texas is at 105 degrees in July and August and in the north when temps are subfreezing at one to 10 degrees. That's amazing," Roach laughed. As beekeepers in Texas, they address the heat by providing ventilation and water. While that greatly helps, bees are doing their part. They keep hive temperature down by evaporating water with their wings, which allows it to circulate through the air, almost working like an evaporative cooler.

## Additional hive challenges

Honeybees live only 42 to 56 days, during a regular year. A colony survives by those bees being replaced. That means the queen needs to lay eggs and all the other bees must maintain the population by doing their jobs. That is why Roach urges beekeepers to do routine hive checks, monitoring the fertility of the queen in the colony. "That means regular hive inspections. Frame by frame. Beekeepers must check the pattern of the queen's egg laying. It can be hard to see, but one can see the larvae." Roach went on, "You study her pattern and begin to assess

whether her pattern is hit and miss or is a solid pattern of brood." The beekeeper described the process, saying one can see very young larvae on the outside and can see new, meaning all things are good. If a beekeeper notices a hop scotch pattern, cells are hap-hazard, you can conclude the queen is unwell. "She has died or on the way to being replaced by worker bees themselves or by the beekeeper," Roach explained. In that instance, Roach continued with, "Bees may choose their own queen, or we as beekeepers may choose for them, a top quality queen. I think I would like mine to have the best there is." Such wonderful qualities can be found when buying a queen through a known supplier to replace the queen. Why would you bother the hive you may ask? The answer is because you want the hive strong and happy. As Roach put it, "Happy bees make more bees and make more and more honey!"

An additional challenge for beekeepers in the heat is continuing routine inspections of each hive, fully suited in proper gear. "For beekeepers it is a pain to don your suit, even in the 107 degree heat Texas has in late July and August. You may choose to go without, [a proper protective suit] at the risk of being stung," Roach said. **See BEEKEEPING page 14**

# BEEKEEPING

Continued from page 13

said. Elaborating, the beekeeper said, depending on the number of hive boxes, you may choose to check one hive per day, decreasing the amount of heat having to be tolerated in the hot protective gear.

## *The difficulties of an aging queen*

Like everything else, a queen will age. Typically, a queen's life span is anywhere from two to four years. During her lifespan, her fecundity, meaning her ability to produce and lay eggs, diminishes. As this happens and the queen dies, a beekeeper must be ready to act promptly. Why? Because remember, the queen controls the entire population. If queen-less for too long, the population will surely dwindle and die off. To have a thriving colony a beekeeper must maintain the population.

Without a queen, other issues will arise. That includes the female worker bees eventually laying eggs which are unfertilized. Those unfertilized eggs will grow and develop into drones (male bees). Drones and drone layers are seemingly worthless, offering no function except to suck honey and contribute nothing to the colony.

This, in and of itself, accelerates the deterioration of the hive. Roach said, past that point you can not introduce a new queen; the worker bees have taken over and think they're queen. This signals the death of a hive. When a queen passes or needs replacing, Roach said there is a small window of opportunity to act and save a hive. That is why regular inspections are so important.

## *A pest of a different kind*

Since the mid '80s, a new pest against the honeybee has developed. That is the *Varroa destructor*. It is an external parasitic mite that attacks the honey bees *Apis cerana* and *Apis mellifera*. Although they are small in size, not being much larger than a period or comma in print, their impact is lethal.

The Varroa mite can reproduce in a honey bee colony. Attaching itself to the body of a bee, the Varroa mite weakens the bee, sucking the bee's blood. In the process, diseases and viruses can spread, which can lead to infestation in the colony. This may take place in late autumn through early spring. If a hive is strong with a good immune system, the mite can be identified and handled. A test can be done to determine the relative number of mites in a hive.

In the event you have a Varroa mite infestation, a beekeeper must act fast. "They have developed some chemicals and a way to put them in a hive that will paralyze the mite but not harm the bee. The mite can't hold on and falls off to the bottom hive through a screen. The mites can fall through and can't get back up," explained the beekeeper. Again, this is another reason why Roach urges regular hive inspections and double checking for mites.

## *Concluding on pest and perils*

Roach added that ants—black and fire ants—like to invade a hive. In that event, again a strong hive is important to keep such a nuisance at bay. Otherwise a weak colony will fall to the mercy of the ants. The major issue is if ants take up residence in or around the hive. "Sprinkling cinnamon along the ground or base helps.

If your hive is elevated by stilts, put the base in water or oil solution," Roach recommended. Moths, mice and yellow jackets also annoy honeybees. Roach simply said all should be observed around your colony.

Lastly, for a colony to thrive, blooming plants must be available. Without any, the colony can not forage. Blooms are the very things

that keep them alive and strong, allowing them to produce honey and wax.

## *Victories within a colony*

As said before, for a beekeeper, the simple joy is to sit back and watch the honeybees do their honeybee thing. Roach recommends getting a pair of glasses or binoculars to watch them or even using a camera lens helps to get up close. "To me it is just fascinating to watch a bee loaded with pollen land, it is like a B-52 trying to land on an aircraft carrier!" Roach laughed.

The beekeeper said one may even observe the bees communicating, "Some are out there as guards, touching antennas and mouthpieces. Bees that have come in and are a new nectar source, you can watch them communicating and touching and dancing. Other bees can be seen out front fanning, forcing air in or out of the hive, creating air current. It's thrilling to sit and watch. That is the original joy of bee keeping."

Roach added, "Being in husbandry, a bee grower, watching and doing what's necessary, growing a strong colony is doing something!" Beekeepers work hard to create a healthy, strong colony. Roach said the added bonus is seeing their colony grow into a massive size. "You've done that! Protected them against bad weather. You've allowed them to live happily, safely. And the reward is in the spring, when the nectar is flowing and the super is full of honey," the beekeeper elaborated. When harvesting honey, beekeepers can expect to harvest many pounds of honey.

Once harvested from the hive, the honey is placed in a bottle. It can be consumed, sold and given as gifts to friends. Roach even suggested marketing your fresh honey, even setting some aside and making mead. Mead is the delicious counterpart of honey known as honey wine. "Mead is the oldest known alcoholic beverage. It tastes different than wine, because it is without fruit, but is made the same way," shared Roach. In addition to honey and its uses, a beekeeper has the added benefit of wax. Part of harvesting honey is the cells capped with wax. Beekeepers cut that wax off the top. That is what is called bee's wax. It gets processed, cleaned of any debris, and once pure, bee's wax is made into bee wax items. That includes lip balm, wax candles, salve, hand lotion, furniture polish, face cream, lubricants in types of black powder rifles and more.

Roach himself has added a new addition to marketing his honey with honeycomb pieces in the jar. "Back in the '50s, there was a time when you bought honey that way and would chew on the wax until it became like gum! I wanted to bring the bit of nostalgia back to those who bought my honey and could appreciate it."

## *In conclusion*

Roach said to enjoy all things bee-related. Cook with the honey. It can be a great substitute for sugar. Honey has other benefits, even being once used to help heal burns since it is a natural antiseptic, keeping burns from drying out. This was a method seen throughout World War I and II. Roach advocates for bees and their products. He advises beekeepers to share their knowledge with others, share honey and wax products with friends and sell to fellow honey lovers.

Thereafter, Roach said you have found a niche market and can create your own business, which he adds is a great and lucrative supplement to income. Roach informed, "Beekeeping is both challenging and rewarding. But if done right, it is an enjoyable venture that is sweet!"


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# RANCHING DOWN UNDER

By Samantha Hall

## THE BLACK OPAL OF LIGHTNING RIDGE

In the early 1870s a traveler who was passing over a ridge in North Western New South Wales came across the bodies of a farmer, a dog and 200 head of sheep.

The cause of death was thought to be lightning strike. The area where they were found came to be known as Lightning Ridge.

In 1873 the first black opal was found in Lightning Ridge.

It was not until 1903 that the high value of these stones came to be recognized and people started mining for them.

Because of the name Black Opal, people assume that the stone will be black and are often quite surprised when they see a black opal in all its colorful beauty.

The stones are called black opals as their base color is black or grey; therefore, the more vibrant colors stand out as opposed to the more common white opal.

Black opals are the most valuable of all the opals due to their mesmerizing vibrant play of colors and rarity of only being found in an out-back New South Wales town with a population of 1,826 people.

These prized opals bring prices of up to \$15,000 per carat.



The stones are called black opals as their base color is black or grey; therefore, the more vibrant colors stand out as opposed to the more common white opal. (Courtesy photo)

The record price for a black opal was a staggering \$3 million for the 306 carat gem known as the “Royal One.” This opal was found by a miner at Lightning Ridge, keeping it a secret for 14 years. ©



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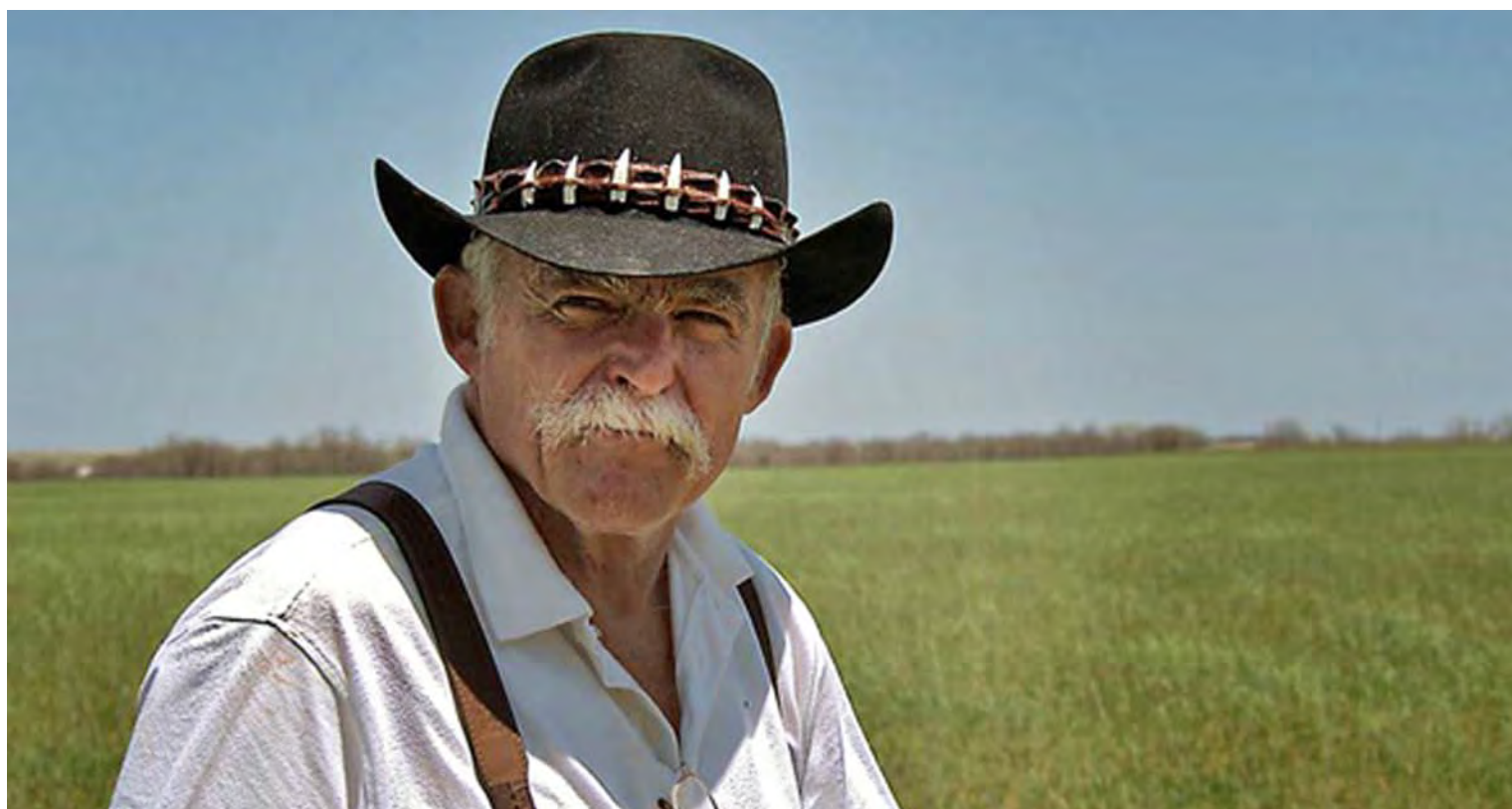
for reseach in cardiomyopathy, a debilitating condition that led to his stroke in 2013



# The Dr. McDonald Column

Steve McDonald, DVM

## *Screw Worms Are Where I Started*



Dr. Steve McDonald, was a former veterinarian in Clay County for more than 20 years. (Courtesy photo)

**W**hat drove me to be a vet? It all started when I was 13. My great-grandfather had a ranch in Young County. He owned about 400 head of cattle, all Hereford, and about a dozen head of horses. He calved in the fall, hopefully after frost.

Earlier calving, or a late frost, insured that the newborn calves would be infested with screw worms, the maggots of tropical flies that ate living flesh.

They would set up housekeeping in the fresh, raw navels of the baby calves and snack away. The adult flies couldn't survive the winter in North Texas, but would ride the southern winds from

Mexico every spring, arriving by early June at the latest.

If conditions were right, meaning a strong southwesterly wind, the flies might arrive by mid-April. A couple of days of this wind was all it took to bring on an early fly season. It was horrible. The cattle would have to be gathered and the babies would have to be treated on their navel with a vile-smelling concoction that would kill the maggots.

The ranch was in the Brazos River bottom and was very densely overgrown with brush. Some of the cows were as elusive as deer and were adept at evading capture, which meant that a smart

cow's calf might not be treated in a timely fashion.


Grandpa, for his part, kept searching until all missing cows were accounted for. Many days I was horseback during daylight hours, and I loved it.

My horse, a gelding named Tuffy, was good at finding hidden calves. I learned to watch his ears, as often he would point them toward a bedded down calf before I could see it.

Since the brush was so thick, Tuffy and I were often alone, awarding me the credit for many calves really found by Tuffy. No matter, I was hooked on cows and horses by then.

This was the first and last year I was allowed, or needed, to help. The very next year the Screw Worm Eradication Program was put into effect.

This program was the one in which sterile male flies were released in South Texas to mate with the females. The female flies produced non-viable eggs, bringing the screw worm scourge to an end.

My grandpa was forced to sell the ranch due to the deteriorating health of my grandmother, ending my short ranching career. My life took a lot of paths after that, but that experience took me to where I am today. 



# Starting from the Bottom

By Corsi Martin



Contrary to popular belief, being a cowboy has little to do with hats and boots and a lot more to do with heart and soul. Cowboys come from all over, in the form of all walks of life. Terrell Ryan Houston is living proof that there is much more to being a cowboy than what meets the eye.

Houston was born and in the vast suburbs of Oklahoma City, and was raised on the north side of town by a loving mother, whom he greatly admires.

"I was raised in a house full of women," Houston says. "I'm my mother's only boy and the baby."

Aside from growing up around women in his family, Houston took an interest in the stories he had heard of his great-grandfather, who was a rodeo cowboy in years past. Although he never got the chance to meet his great-grandfather, Houston naturally took a liking to horses and ranching.

Upon graduating high school, education was on the to-do list, but not among his passions. Houston later attended Langston University and Oklahoma State University before realizing that his heart simply was not in it. While he wanted to make his mother proud and complete his education, as his sister did, Houston was avid about pursuing a life in Texas that would fulfill his passion for horses and the outdoors. The life of a lawyer, doctor or policeman didn't suit him, so as soon as he

was able to, he moved to Texas.

"I knew that my dreams of becoming a cowboy and a world champion would start here," Houston says. "All I ever wanted in life was a house on a lot of land and a small pond with cattle and horses."

Being that Houston has heard so many wonderful stories of his great-grandfather and his rodeo days, it was rodeo that first sparked his interest. However, he would be introduced to the sport of cutting by way of his riding coach, Sarah Webb. Still unsure about the sport, Houston decided to enroll in a cutting clinic that was offered by Chubby Tuner, otherwise known as "Mr. NCHA." If the National Cutting Horse Association had a face, it would be Chubby's. When Houston became aware of whom he was about to encounter, he started doing his homework.

"I studied this man like I was about to meet Martin Luther King, like I was about to meet Allen Iverson," Houston says, "I watched him compete, I watched him speak, I studied his mannerisms. When I met this man, we worked and I just became a sponge. I felt like he embraced me like a son."

Houston's passion for learning was what sparked Chubby's interest in him, ultimately resulting in their undeniable bond. From then on, Chubby Turner became "Uncle Chubby" to Houston.

While Houston has networked within the

cutting horse industry, he has higher goals set for himself. Materialistic things such as winning buckles and owning the best horse are not as important to him as making an impact on someone else that will create an opportunity for them to chase their dream. Upon being asked about what major milestones he has achieved in his life, Houston offered a humble response.

"I can't say that I've had one just yet. Honestly, the opportunity to wake up every day and chase my dream is a major milestone for me," says Houston. "When I influence someone else to chase their dream, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity...then I'll say 'there's a milestone.'"

For so many cowboys, the lifestyle revolves around competition and winning. For Terrell Houston, the cowboy way of life is made up of hard work and the willingness to learn and push yourself. Riding has been a form of therapy in this young man's life and offers him a break from the reality of work, bills and other stresses brought on by life.

"Most folks do yoga or meditate, but I ride," Houston says. "I ride and nothing else matters."

While Houston admires the grit and hard work of his favorite rodeo and cutting athletes such as Trevor Brazile, J.B. Mauney, Fred Whitfield, Matt Gaines and Joe Howard Williamson, he is most intrigued by the guys who **See HOUSTON page 23**

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# Houston

Continued from page 20

come in second place.

They were good, and they performed well, but it just wasn't enough for first place, yet they still work hard to redeem themselves. It is that very mindset that inspires Houston to continue working hard to achieve his ultimate goal of helping others who stand where he has stood.

"When it's all said and done, I want to be able to provide a service to people just like me who don't have the access to things and want to be great," says Houston. "I want to be able to give people a place to ride, rope, cut, whatever they want to do."

Being a cowboy isn't about having the best of everything. Rather, it is about making the best come from what you already have and letting your passion take the lead. ©



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# A GROWING INDUSTRY

By Krista Lucas

**B**arrel racing is becoming increasingly popular in Texas and Oklahoma. There is an event to go to nearly every day of the week in this region, and there is something to choose from whether a rider is a beginner or a serious competitor.

Some events stretch over the course of several days, offering large amounts of prize money and awards, while other local jackpots may just be an afternoon of family friendly fun.

Either way, barrel races are seeing an increase in entries. A local jackpot may see more than 50 runners on a week night or weekend, even when there are other races going on in the same area. Recently, the Summer Shootout in Oklahoma City., drew 781 contestants over its three day event.

The barrel race, hosted at the Oklahoma City Fairgrounds, awarded \$10,000 added money plus four fully-tooled championship saddles.

The sanctioning body was Better Barrel Races, and the event offered an open race where entries ran in two qualifying rounds, with the top 15 in each division making it back to the short-go Sunday.

This year alone, the Summer Shootout paid out \$124,838 in cash. In the shootout round, the fastest time run that day in each division was declared the winner. Sharin Hall of Harrah, Okla., won over \$2,000 and a trophy saddle, walking away with the 1D shootout championship. The futurity trainer ran a 15.1 in the final round on her standout mount “Dreaming Of Foose.”

Loryn Barclay, riding “Last American Perks,” ran a 15.5 to win the 2D shootout. Linda McConnell on “Brooklyn Bridge Cash” ran a 15.7, winning the 3D championship and Ceri McCaffery improved her time to a 15.9 on “Famous Sum Beach” to win the 4D shootout.

Several locals qualified for the shootout round as well. In the 1D shootout, Erika Ashley of Bowie, Texas, rode her horse “Mitzi Would” and ran a 15.3 to pocket nearly \$800.

Futurity trainer Joy Wargo, Collinsville, Texas, ran her accomplished gelding “Smokin Koa Lena,” placing sixth in the shootout round. National Finals Rodeo qualifier Michele



The Kidd family with Wild West Promotions. (Photo courtesy of [www.wildwestpromotions.com](http://www.wildwestpromotions.com))

McLeod, Whitesboro, Texas, also qualified in the 1D shootout.

Professional barrel racer Tana Renick from Kingston, Okla., placed in the 2D shootout round on the stallion “Streakin Boon Dox.” The 3D and 4D shootouts saw locals Kirk Carter and Jaycie Shelburne run down the alleyway, too.

It was a busy weekend for barrel racers in Oklahoma City, but there is also plenty to choose from for those that choose to stay closer to home.

A local producer, Wild West Promotions, has hosted barrel races at Texas venues like Azle’s Wild West Arena, Fort Worth’s historic Cowtown Coliseum, Denton’s Diamond T Arena and right down the road at the Crossfire Arena in Whitesboro.

As the largest producer of premier barrel racing in Texas, owner Tammy Kidd prides herself in offering well-run events that pay well and award great prizes. Last year alone, the WWP payout was \$228,119.

WWP is a family run business and started after Kidd and her own barrel horse were injured at a rodeo. Kidd’s family has been very successful promoting in the motorcycle industry for over 30 years, and after three years of WWP, it has grown bigger and bigger each year.

“I just thought I would start producing and promoting barrel races,” Kidd said. “Racing is just in the Kidd blood.”

Her mother, Sandra, takes entries at the races, while her uncle, Gary, does timing and results. Kidd’s father makes every race flier and poster, and Randy Kidd and Colton Dugan are the “master draggers.” All are integral in conducting a barrel racing production smoothly and in a timely manner.

WWP races are becoming more and more popular. Kidd welcomes anyone to come enjoy the competition, no matter the skill level. Kidd’s races are organized and run in a professional manner.

She even ventured out more recently to produce a 4D pasture barrel race in Wichita Falls, Texas. Buckles were awarded to D winners after running the pattern in a large, open field.

This was in conjunction with the Crumpler West Dove Fest. Barrel racers can find upcoming WWP races on Facebook and at [www.wildwestpromotions.com](http://www.wildwestpromotions.com). Kidd is great about keeping everyone up to date on the details of upcoming events. Barrel racing is a rapidly growing industry and has something to offer everyone.

For full Summer Shootout results, visit [www.shootoutbarrels.com](http://www.shootoutbarrels.com).



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# SUBCHONDRAL *Bone Cyst*

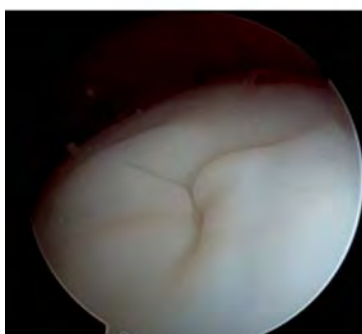
By Lauren Lamb, DVM

Last month we talked about osteochondritis dissecans (OCDs). This month we are going to talk about subchondral cyst, which is another type of bone disease commonly seen in horses. Unlike like OCDs, which are strictly a bone development disease, subchondral cyst can be developmental or acquired. Acquired means that the horse is not born with the cyst in their bone, but instead it develops secondary to an injury to the cartilage. Subchondral cysts are characterized as an area in the bone, usually adjacent to the joint surface, which is less dense and lined with an inflammatory lining. On radiographs the cyst will appear as a dark hole in the bone.

The cause of subchondral cyst is not completely understood. Two predominant theories have been supported by research. The first theory is called the hydraulic theory. With the hydraulic theory, the articular cartilage has full thickness damage, like a small split or tear.

Synovial fluid is forced into the cartilage defect while the horse is weight bearing. The fluid will place pressure on the subchondral bone, which will result in damage and necrosis of the bone. The subchondral bone is the bone directly beneath the cartilage. Ultimately, this damage to the subchondral bone will lead to a subchondral bone cyst.

The second theory is the inflammatory theory, which causes a cyst to form and enlarge secondary



This bone cyst in the stifle has a screw placed across it. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Lauren Lamb)

to cellular and molecular mechanisms of inflammation within the subchondral bone. Subchondral bone cysts are seen predominately, about 50 percent of the time, in the stifle.

The second most common location is the long or short pastern bone, around 25 percent. About 62 percent of subchondral bone cyst occur in males, both stallions and geldings. Thoroughbreds and quarter horses are the breeds most commonly affected.

The most common clinical sign is lameness in the affected leg. Joint effusion (excess fluid within the joint) may or may not be present. Joint effusion is more frequent when the subchondral bone cyst

communicates with the joint. Only 30 percent of subchondral bone cysts communicate with the joint. The pain causing the lameness is secondary to increased pressure within the cyst or increased inflammation in the bone around the cyst. The tissue within the cyst is termed myxomatous tissue. This tissue secretes inflammatory mediators that will dissolve the bone around the cyst.

Diagnosis of a bone cyst usually requires a combination of a thorough lameness exam and diagnostic radiographs. The lameness in the leg with a bone cyst will become worse with flexion of the joint adjacent to the subchondral bone cyst. Intra-articular anes-

thesia will improve the lameness in most cases. Radiographs are used to definitively diagnosis subchondral bone cyst.

Size does matter when you are talking about subchondral bone cyst and the prognosis for a horse to make a full recovery. Specifically, it is not the overall size of the cyst that matters, but the size of the articular surface that is damaged by the cyst. Cysts that involve a large articular surface area carry a poor prognosis for a full recovery; on the contrary, a cyst can be large but not involve a large area of the articular surface. A cyst with a small articular component will have minimal detriment on the horse's prognosis.

A multitude of treatment options are available for horses with a subchondral bone cyst that communicates with a joint. The least invasive is to simply inject the joint with corticosteroids. Injecting corticosteroids into the joint rarely results in the bone cyst healing and the lameness resolving long term. It will, however, relieve the lameness for a short period of time, two to eight weeks.

Another option is to inject corticosteroids directly into the bone cyst. Corticosteroids injected into the cyst will result in the cyst lining essentially dying. Once the cyst lining is gone, the bone cyst will fill in with regular bone. Corticosteroids can be injected into the cyst under ultrasound or arthroscopic guidance with the horse under general anesthesia. **See BONE CYST page 29**

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# Bone Cyst

Continued from page 26



Injecting the cyst with corticosteroids can have an 80 to 90 percent success rate.

Some cysts are unstable and have a tendency to collapse when corticosteroids are being injected into the cyst. When this happens, none of the corticosteroid is retained within the cyst. For horses with an unstable cyst, arthroscopic debridement is a better option, rather than injecting the cyst. Arthroscopic debridement entails the horse being under general anesthesia and the cyst contents being removed. This therapeutic technique is used as a last resort and carries a 30 to 70 percent success rate.

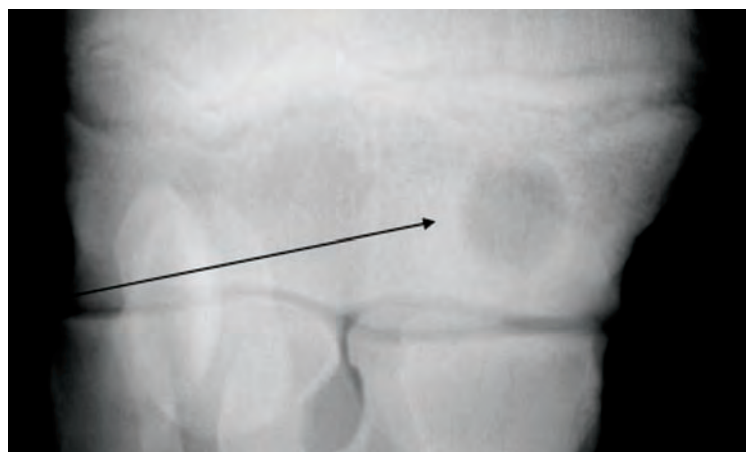
The final therapeutic option, for cysts that communicate with a joint, is to place a bone screw across the cyst. This technique is the newest therapeutic technique for treatment of bone cyst. It is

used mainly in stifle bone cyst, but can also be used to treat cysts in other joints.

The results from the screw technique are similar to injecting the cyst directly with corticosteroid, around 70 to 80 percent. The screw can be left in the horse with no detrimental effects on the horse's training.

Treatments of cysts that do not communicate with a joint have only one therapeutic option. A drill is used to make a hole into the cyst from the outside of the bone, not thru a joint. Once a hole is made into the cyst, a bone curette is used to debride (remove) the contents of the cyst. The skin over the drill hole is sutured closed and the leg will remain bandaged for 14 days. This therapeutic techniques carries a high success rate.

In summary, subchondral bone cyst can be a bone developmental



(Top to bottom) This stifle bone cyst is located in the medial femoral condyle. This bone cyst in the distal radius does not communicate with the joint and will need to be drilled and debrided with a curette. (Photos courtesy of Dr. Lauren Lamb)

disease, where the foal is born with a bone abnormality, or they can be acquired, secondary to an injury to the cartilage and subchondral bone in a joint.

The most common clinical sign

is lameness, followed secondly by joint effusion. Subchondral bone cyst has multiple treatment options. Most carry a good prognosis for your horse to return to full athletic soundness.

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# EQUINE SUPERSTARS & EVERYDAY HEROES

By Janis Blackwell

## “Magnum”

This month Equine Superstars and Everyday Heroes salutes not only a great horse but a great crossing of bloodlines.

Our outstanding Everyday Hero is “Call Me Magnum” known in the barn as just “Magnum,” named for the character made famous by Tom Selleck.

Sadly, our tribute is delivered posthumously but does not diminish the exceptional personality and qualities that made him a hero and that live on in his full blood siblings.

Magnum’s story starts when owners Beverlene (Swenson) Combest and Bob Combest of Electra decided to purchase and breed some great quality paint horses.

They bought a stud named “Go Rocket Go,” a grandson of “Go Man Go,” and crossed him with a mare named “Golden Button” by “Bud Chubby” by “Chubby.” “Golden Button’s” barn name was Cover Girl—dubbed that for the unusual markings around her eyes that looked like makeup.

With a cross between the running blood of “Go Man Go” and the old foundation cow horse from “Chubby,” they felt they couldn’t go wrong, and they certainly did not.

They got exactly what they had hoped for, speed with gentleness and cow sense. Magnum was the first colt out of this cross, and they were so pleased with the results that they raised many more out of them.

In Beverlene’s words, “These

colts were super easy to break, super gentle, always wanting to please, with no mean bone in their bodies.”

The sire, “Go Rocket Go” was more than 16 hands and “Cover Girl” was only 14 hands, but the cross yielded a good-sized, stout built horse ready for whatever job you asked of him.

“Go Rocket Go” had a ROM in heading and heeling with points in calf roping, barrel racing, pole bending and steer stopping, —evidence enough of his versatility and ability, qualities that he handed down to his offspring.

As you listen to Beverlene talk about him, it is evident that Magnum was and still is her all-time favorite, and with good reason.

He was big and stout (weighing in at more than 1,400 pounds) but athletic enough to perform well in team roping, pasture roping and all the cow work he was asked to do.

He was equally at home in a parade with Christmas lights hung on him or a small child climbing up his leg to get on.

Beverlene related how her nephew, Riley Swenson, was always wanting to ride him, so they put Magnum in a pen right beside the house and told Riley that if he could get on, he could ride him.

Then she watched and waited with a camera. The picture with this article (page 32, top photo) is both testimony to Riley’s determination and Magnum’s kind and gentle nature. Magnum was only three at that time. Later he became

**Continued on page 32**



Reagan Taylor with Magnum.  
(Photo Courtesy of Beverlene Swenson Combest)



# Magnum

a calendar pin up.

The photo (page 31) of Reagan Taylor getting a “kiss” from Magnum was entered in and won a contest for photos to be used in calendars. Look out Tom Selleck, there’s a new Magnum in town.

All his life, Magnum helped those who wanted to rope learn how, babysat whenever needed and earned his keep working in the pasture.

Beverlene shared that while helping to work cattle one day, Trevor Lalk and Scott Freeland had worn their horses out trying to load an extremely large cow into the trailer who was having no part of it and was completely dead weight.

As she put it, “before anger issues began to set in,” she asked if they wanted her to try with Magnum. She took the rope and dallied up, kicked him once and dragged the cow into the trailer, no problem.

Bob passed away years ago and the breeding program stopped, but Beverlene still has a full-brother to Magnum, Cinco, and a full-sister Skittles (both barn names) who display the same cow working and performance abilities with the quiet kindness of Magnum.

One can only assume that it is because of this great crossing of bloodlines discovered by Bob and Beverlene.

Here’s to another fine example of an Equine Superstar and Everyday Hero, Magnum. Good job y’all and happy trails.🐾



Riley Swenson getting on Magnum. (Photo courtesy of Beverlene (Swenson) Combest)



Magnum in the cow pen with Cassidy Young aboard. (Photo courtesy of Beverlene (Swenson) Combest)





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# COWBOY CULTURE



BY CLAY REID

Hello folks. Welcome to another edition of Red-neck Chronicles by the ever lovable Clay Reid. Of course it's deadline time and I am scrambling to get my content in before the boss lady raps a knot on my head. Be easy on me. I am slow and stupid, but my desire has been hard to find lately.

Anyway, as I was walking around the house trying to inspire myself to sitting down and starting as well as finding motivation on my topic, I stubbed my toe, and for whatever reason it spurred a memory of a visit to the Dan Trigg Memorial Hospital in Tucumcari, N.M., many moons ago.

I was working for Singleton Ranches on a place that used to be owned by Dr. Dan Trigg. I let my temper get the best of me, and after a bunch of calves ran off from the herd, I decided that one, if not all, of those midget bovines were going to feel the wrath of my 30 foot leash that is sometimes called a lasso.

I took to those suckers cussing and a crying and a spurring and a whipping. I was madder than a hornets' nest because it was getting dang close to dinner time, and I was so hungry I could have ate a horse. I believe they call it being "hangry" these days. You call it what you will, but nothing ever good comes out of it.

We were moving these pairs up the mountain to a new pasture, and we were short handed to start with and even more short handed when our boss man decided that he wanted to pretend he was John Wayne in the movie "Red River."

You see he had his old lady drive the cake truck and sook these cows, and me and my old buddy

Cody Jack followed behind pushing them along. Well, boss man thinks for some reason he has to be on point leading the cake truck.

The problem was they were heading out way too fast, and the cows were hauling you know what to keep up with the truck while all the calves were being left behind for me and Cody to do our best to keep them pushed up with their

You see, the edge I baled off of was as steep as the scene in "The Man from Snowy River," but there was WAY more rocks and boulders. I am pretty sure you couldn't drive a toothpick up my hiney with a sledgehammer at this particular moment.

The last thing I remember was catching the calf down toward the bottom. We don't know ex-

place.

When the doctor came in I asked him about Dan Trigg and told him I was working on his old ranch when the wreck took place.

He said, "Well, I wouldn't brag about it. He was not well liked in these parts." I thought, well, that's odd, so I had to inquire just why he wasn't well liked. Apparently they liked him enough to name a dang hospital after him.

He goes on to tell me the story of the infamous Dan Trigg.

Dan Trigg, as the story goes, was told by his father that if he completed medical school he would be given his part of the Trigg Ranch right after he graduated, which Dr. Trigg did and never practiced medicine one day after taking possession of the 70,000 acres he was promised.

He also goes on to tell me that back in the '50s The only hospital was in either Albuquerque or Amarillo, both were about three hours away.

It turns out that Dan had a mistress who lived in the house below his and his wife's house at the ranch. Well, after vanishing one night, he and she got into an argument, and the mistress shot him with a 30-30 rifle and he almost bled to death before they got him to Amarillo to the hospital.

After he recovered, he went to the people of Tucumcari and told them he would match them dollar for dollar if they built a hospital. Well, they did, and they even named it after him, but he never gave them a dime. Now all this is coming from some hotshot doctor while I was in a groggy state so take it with a grain of salt, but I thought it was worth sharing.

Let 'er buck. ®

*I was madder than a hornets' nest because it was getting dang close to dinner time, and I was so hungry I could have ate a horse. I believe they call it being "hangry" these days. You call it what you will, but nothing ever good comes out of it.*

Clay Reid

mamas. This proved to be an impossible task, a task that also led to me letting my temper cost me a trip to the emergency room.

After a while the bunch of calves finally scattered on us and some broke to head back down the mountain. For a minute I tried to get around them, but they were hell bent on out running me to the bottom. I do not like to lose, and that was just what I was doing so I decided to cheat. I broke out my twine (rope) and built me a loop. The race was on.

At first I thought the calf was gonna follow the road back down, but that apparently would be WAY too easy. So he baled off the side running 9-0 (90 mph) with me in hot pursuit. I ain't gonna lie; when me and my pony Bob cleared the edge and was headed down...well I was no longer "Hangry" but I was committed.

actly what happened, but when my buddy Cody found me he said I was just standing there in a little opening with a lost look on my face.

I had a broke wrist, a cracked jaw, a really messed up ankle and all kinds of hide removed from forehead and face.

My horse was a few hundred yards away grazing with a broke rope hanging off the saddle, but the calf was never to be seen again as far as I know. Cody helped me up onto my horse then led me like a little three-year-old at the rodeo parade back to the house. This is how I ended up at the Dan Trigg Memorial.

As I am sitting there in the hospital waiting to be treated, I thought it was pretty cool to be treated at the hospital that was wearing the name of the ranch that had put me there in the first



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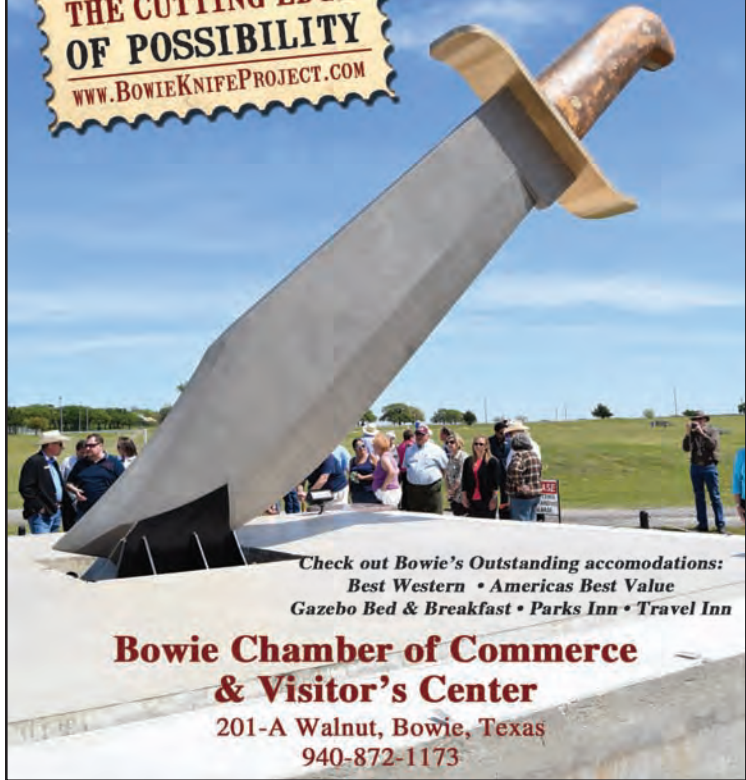
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## THE TOWN THAT DISAPPEARED

By Judy Wade

East of Byers in northern Clay County, a thriving community once sat at the intersection of FM 171 and Old Fort Sill Road. Today, a modern brick home on one corner, fields and pasture on the others give no indication of the rich history Benvanue brought to the region.

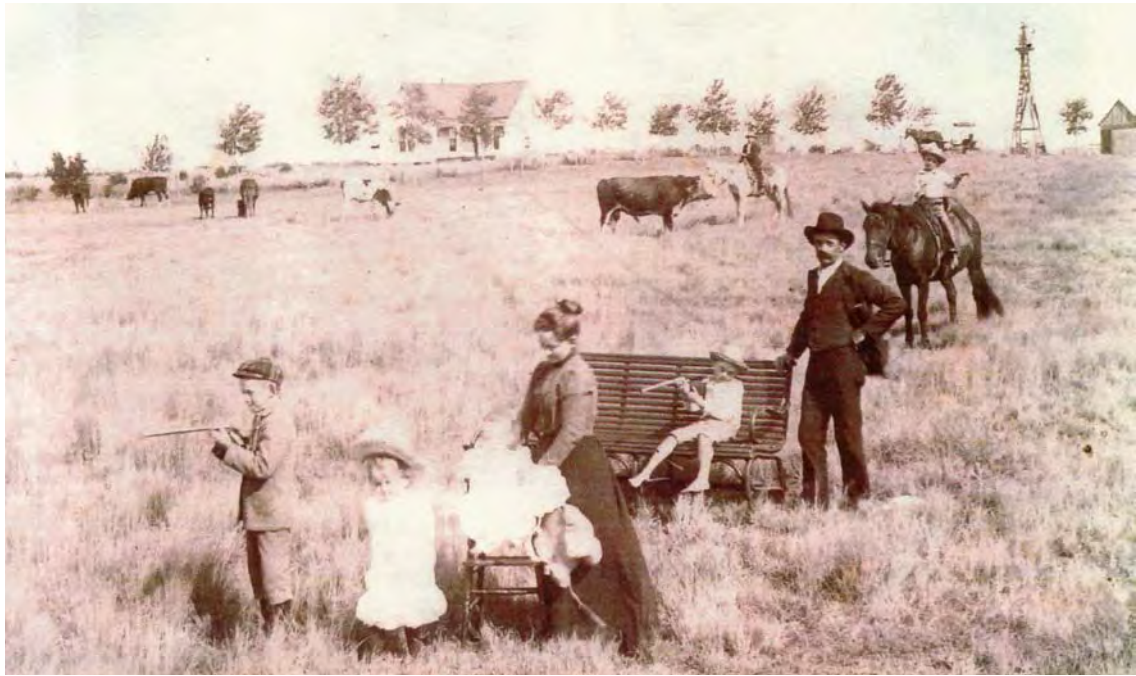
Henry Whaley was the first to settle in the area. In fact, he was the first permanent white settler in Clay County. Born in Tennessee, he enlisted in the army at the onset of the Mexican War. He returned to his home and began farming and ranching, married and had one son. In 1860 he began moving his family west.

His wife died along the way, and he settled in Cooke county, again farming and ranching until again enlisting in a frontier defense regiment, seeing combat in several campaigns against the Indians.

In 1869 Whaley settled in north Clay County, constructed a stockade and hired about a dozen employees to farm, care for livestock and provide protection against Indians.

He was soon selling several thousand bushels of oats annually, principally to the U.S. Army who used Fort Sill Road to transport supplies between Fort Sill in Indian Territory and Fort Richardson in Jacksboro and Fort Belknap near Newcastle, both in Texas.

Indian raids continued. In 1873 one of Whaley's employees was killed, and one Indian was killed. In 1874, another raid resulted in all of Whaley's horses being stolen and driven into the Wichita Mountains. Among the horses was a mule, which returned to the ranch four months later.



The Grogan family in the early 20th century. (Photo courtesy of the Clay County Jail Museum)

Among Whaley's employees were John and Lena Kilmartin. Seeking government employment, Kilmartin became an Army scout at Fort Sill. Lena stayed at Whaley's ranch as housekeeper along with their young son. In July 1876, a Sergeant Charlton and two scouts, Stillwell and Kilmartin, were sent to investigate the theft of horses. The trail led them into Texas at a point on the Big Wichita River, where they camped for the night.

The next morning, Kilmartin suggested they ride to Whaley's ranch, spend the night and get a good home cooked meal before returning to Fort Sill. Lena prepared an excellent meal, but ruined the atmosphere by raging at her husband.

Apparently the reason for the quarrel was that Kilmartin wanted her to return to Fort Sill with him, and she refused.

Charlton and Stillwell took their blankets outside, a distance from the house, to sleep. They were soon joined by Kilmartin, who spread his blanket near the back door. Charlton and Stillwell were awakened about dawn by a gunshot. They jumped to their feet in time to see Lena, with a pistol in her hand, turn from Kilmartin's bed. They ran to his assistance but were too late. He died from a bullet wound to the head. The two buried Kilmartin nearby.

Lena was indicted for murder in October. Strangely enough, of the seven people called to testify at the Grand Jury hearing, Charlton and Stillwell were not subpoenaed. Lena pled "not guilty" by reason of self-defense and was acquitted.

Court records show the verdict was based partly on her poor health and claustrophobia, which confinement would have

worsened. Whaley worked hard on his land for nearly 30 years and made huge amounts of money. He lost most of his land due to his fondness for alcohol and ended up alone and virtually a pauper during the last years of his life, subsisting on a pension of \$8 a month granted on the basis of his Army service. He died on Dec. 28, 1898, and was buried in Benvanue Cemetery.

Meanwhile, the community of Benvanue was growing. Many families settled there after crossing the Red River on the ferry from Fort Sill Road. One of the most influential was R.F. Grogan.

In 1874, his family and John Downing and his family came to the Charlie area from West Virginia. They soon relocated to Whaley's ranch for better protection from Indians.

Grogan first entered into the **See BENVANUE page 39**

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# Benvanue

mercantile business in 1881 at age 19, first building a one-room store and Post Office, bringing lumber by wagons and ox teams from Sherman. The Post Office opened in 1884, and mail arrived by mule four times a week from Fort Sill. A stage line connected Benvanue with Henrietta 17 miles to the south.

A cemetery (once called Byers Fields later renamed Benvanue Cemetery) was established.

Grogan also operated the ferry just north of his store on Red River. In 1888 he married Miss Marie Jones, who came to Texas to teach school. They bought a 360-acre plot from the government and established a home.

The first school was a dugout about 16 feet square and had an enrollment of about 17 students. The first teacher, Col. J.B. Hopkins, came from Kentucky and was said to be a brilliant man and scholar who could speak seven different languages.

A wooden school house was built later near Bailey Creek and the enrollment increased. The school's large cement cellar is still in use by descendants of the Harding family.

The first preaching in the area was by Methodists and one of the first organized services was conducted in 1877 by Bishop Fitzgerald of Nashville, Tenn., who was with a hunting party and happened to stop at the Grogan home for a drink of water. Finding that preaching in the area was a rare thing, he assembled all the neighbors and their children and held service in the Grogan home.

A few years later, a camp meeting lasting several weeks was held under a huge brush arbor. People came from Jack, Cooke and Young Counties.

Grogan saw the need for a building to hold church services and was instrumental in getting

a Methodist Church built in Benvanue.

Benvanue continued to grow. In 1878 a Mr. Roundtree built a cotton gin there, the first in Clay County. It was reported that the cotton seed was piled so high the gin itself could not be seen. After the cotton was ginned, it was hauled to Sherman and Gainesville to be sold.

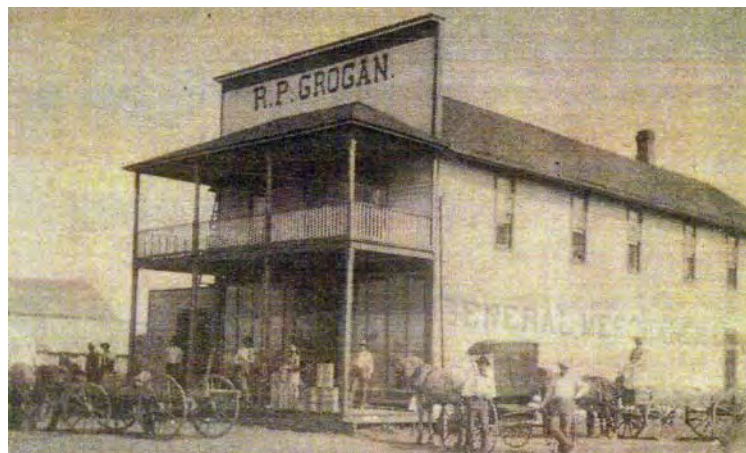
Grogan himself later built another gin, ginning from 100 to 200 bales each year for about 10 years. Henry Harding opened a blacksmith shop and other businesses sprang up.

By this time, the community boasted a population of about 100. Some of the early settlers were the families of Dunn, Harding, Henderson, Stine, Flake, Zachry, Reedy, Haney, Smith, Smyers, and Crutchfield. Many are buried in the Benvanue Cemetery and some still have descendants in the area.

Grogan's mercantile business grew to the point that he built a new two-story structure. In 1895 he saw the possibility of trade across the Red River and established a second store at Sugden I. T., in what is now Jefferson County. He built the first telephone line in this area, connecting his stores in Benvanue and Sugden. He eventually sold the first store.

The turn of the century saw the beginning of the end for Benvanue. Officials of the Texas and Oklahoma Railroad decided to bypass the community and run the line through Byers, a newly established town three miles to the west.

Once the decision was announced, residents and businesses abandoned Benvanue and moved to Byers. The Methodist Church building was moved to the new town site, and ever the entrepreneur, Grogan opened a mercantile in Byers.



(Top to bottom) Grogan's store. (Courtesy of the Clay County Jail Museum) The Benvanue School cellar. (Photo by Judy Wade) Benvanue Cemetery. (Photo by Judy Wade)

Postal service was transferred in 1904, and by 1910 few buildings and fewer residents remained. The school building remained standing until the 1940s, but by 1984, no trace of the community

remained on county maps.

*(Thanks to Lucille Glasgow and other volunteers at the Clay county Jail Museum in Henrietta for their help in researching the archives.)* ©



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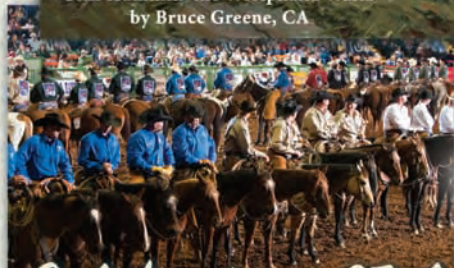
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Oh fall, how I've missed you! For me, October is all about pumpkins-pumpkin spice lattes, pumpkin patches and pumpkin pie! So, naturally, I love warm color tones and I've got some good options for y'all. I am drawn to orange tones this month. A light weight hoodie, the perfect plaid tunic and a fabulous kimono are shown above, just to get you started. Check out my website for more fall goodies at [www.jessesjewelz.com](http://www.jessesjewelz.com).<sup>TM</sup>

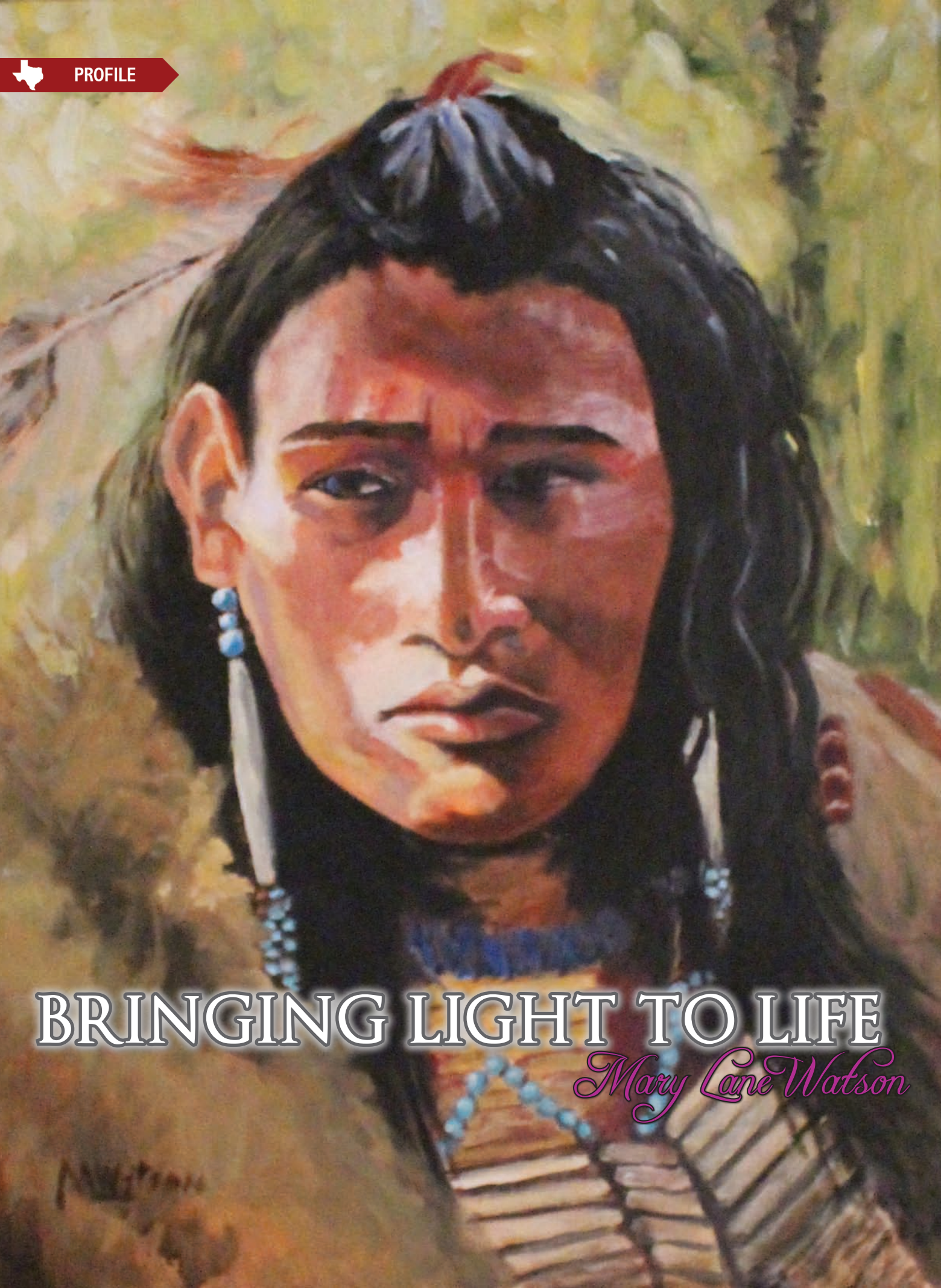
See you at the pumpkin patch,  
*Jessica Kader*  
*Ecclesiastes 3:1*



PROFILE

# BRINGING LIGHT TO LIFE

*Mary Lane Watson*





As, so to speak, "life happens," we as busy people tend to let the things we enjoy or aspire to be fall to the wayside. Dreams diminish, life becomes about "what if's" and opportunities are bypassed. As C.S. Lewis said, "You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."

At the age of 45, Mary Lane Watson ventured into art. Never having had a previous love for art, Watson said she never doodled as a child, just in her adult life developed an urge to paint. Her childhood aspirations centered around sports.

Watson was born and raised in the rural Jack County town of Antelope. Antelope is a small community near the intersection of Loop 187, U.S. Highway 281, and Farm to Market Road 175, 25 miles northwest of Jacksboro in the northwestern part of the county. Current census places the population at 65, even though that seems boastful.

Antelope is one of the oldest active communities in Jack County. The town received its post office in 1858 and for much of its existence, was centered around agriculture, particularly ranching for its fertile soil and proximity to the West Fork of the Trinity River, which made for a great supply point for cattle trails.

Although the town seems desolate today, Watson remembers attending school there, along with the filling station, hotel, churches and Bolton Grocery where, "You could get some good old bologna."

At the town's peak, population exceeded 300; however, the town never flourished in the 20th century, despite oil discoveries. Population continued to decline, as Watson put it, "The Post Office went, and then we lost the school in 1971. It consolidated with kids going to either Midway or Jacksboro." Watson believed the loss of both did the town in, saying "time changes everything."

The Antelope native's roots run deep in the town. "My great-grandfather, Rit Christian and wife Lou came from Missouri. They had seven children and built the Christian Ranch," Watson informed. Although exact years are unknown, the home Rit Christian built still stands today, a home where multiple generations were raised, including Watson's grandfather Paul Christian and mother, Margaret Christian Conner. The Christian Ranch remained in the

family for years, until it sold recently.

Watson was raised in a picturesque white home, with a sun room off the back and long windows perfectly complementing the front porch, awning and pillars. The home was built by the town doctor back in 1885 and is in close proximity to the school. Watson even labeled her raising as "idealistic" saying, "It was a great way to be raised. We she and one sibling, brother David walked everywhere we went." Watson attended Antelope school.

Her father, Clarence Conner was an electrician by trade and a baseball lover, playing in the Triple A- New Mexico League. Born during the Great Depression in Antelope, Watson said the family relocated for a short time to Borger, Texas, where her father worked on the Panhandle refinery of Phillips.

Returning to Jack County, Watson started at

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***"Kay [Franklin] once told me, 'people think you're born with the ability to be an artist. Yes, some are, but most aren't.' I was so happy to hear her say that." Watson said if you work hard, and study, anyone can learn to paint and use color.***

***~Mary Lane Watson***

---

Antelope school during the fourth grade, where she eventually graduated. Watson added there were two grades per room. Class attendance averaged eight a class, with children commuting from even smaller communities such as Markley, Post Oak, Shannon and Oakland.

"I remember we had good teachers. I loved sports, basketball and softball. That was my life," Watson explained. A fond memory for Watson was game days, "We were in the district with Byers, Petrolia, Goldburg and Midway. So many lived too far to drive home and back, so they would come home with me." Watson remembers walking down to Bolton Grocery for bologna to feed her and fellow players before the game, "That was just the way my mother was."

Watson first met her husband at Antelope School. A few years older, Weldon "Puddy" Watson was also an Antelope/Shannon native

raised by his grandparents, his grandmother affectionately dubbing him with the nickname "Puddy." The two dated off and on in high school; however, Watson's senior year, she said, "He talked me into going steady." The two married in September of 1956.

Upon marrying, Watson was introduced to horses and cattle. Hardly having any animals except chickens, she fell in love with horses and the family's method of working cattle horseback. The majority of Watson's life has been spent in Jack County, only straying for short amounts of time when Puddy was in college, and again for a job in Wichita Falls and later Midland.

The two brought into the world a daughter and son, Leslie Watson Benton and Mark Watson, another generation raised in Antelope. Watson is blessed with two grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Watson acted as the quintessential housewife and mother for years. In 1983 her children were grown and had moved away from home. The oil boom was dwindling. That is when Puddy was offered a position in Midland, which he accepted. "It was like a vacation. We lived in 'The Saddle Club' apartment complex with two pools and two tennis courts," even splurging on a Jaguar car. It was a far cry from the tiny town they were used to. Watson explained she learned the city by attending garage sales. Even saying, "We went wild. That was the first time we got cable, a king-sized bed, ate out constantly and played racket ball every day." Then, at the age of 45, Watson acted on an instinct, to try art lessons. "I wanted to do two things, learn Spanish and start art lessons," she laughed. She stuck with art lessons, never learning Spanish.

Planning on living in Midland five years, the couple moved back after only two in 1986 when Puddy's father passed away. Thereafter, Watson began hunting a new art teacher, taking lessons in Bowie, Wichita Falls and Graham before finding one she really liked. "The best teacher I had was Kay Franklin from Graham. She taught in Wichita Falls at various locations. She was a great teacher and artist. She believed in painting in nature," Watson shared.

She even traveled to paint in such places as Turner Falls in Oklahoma, Canyon De Chelly and Monument Valley in Arizona, which Wat-

**Continued on page 44**



## BRINGING LIGHT TO LIFE

*Mary Lane Watson***Continued from page 43**

son described as "very difficult."

Watson spent 20 years learning, 15 under the direction of Kay Franklin. Not having any prior influences, the artist developed a love for color and what light would do. "Kay [Franklin] once told me, 'people think you're born with the ability to be an artist. Yes, some are, but most aren't.' I was so happy to hear her say that." Watson said if you work hard, and study, anyone can learn to paint and use color.

The artist admits painting did not come to her easily; it was challenging. Her first painting in 1984, in her choice of mediums, oil, was a cabin hidden in a blanket of snow at sunrise. As she grew as a painter, Watson learned she put the most detail in the focal point to drive the eye there first.

After, she added shadows or what she calls "local color." That is color in the trees, such as brown for the trunk and green for the leaves. "At first you start lightly and add to it, thin to thick. For me, the hardest thing to learn was color temperature, showing depth through color in paintings, turning a two-dimensional canvas into three-dimensional with depth in color temperatures," she explained, adding, "In painting you have cool and warm colors. Far colors are cool, closer are warm; it is a push and pull."

Watson admits she spent years delving into research and studying the various methods used in painting. The artist squashed the common thought of color straight from a can or tube, "You don't just use color straight from a container; you have to grey them down, otherwise they're too bright."

In Watson's paintings, she works to show what light does to any subject, "In paintings you're seeing light in the morning, mid-morning, high-noon,



afternoon and evening. Whatever and wherever the light source is determines shadows." Shadows and reflections are another part of painting that is very difficult Watson says.

A huge portion of encouragement comes from her husband, Puddy. "When I've been discouraged before, he pushed me on. He is my biggest encourager and critic. He has a good eye and perspective."

Throughout the past 35 years, Watson has completed countless paintings to which

she can not give a total number. All are done on various sizes of canvas, in oil; however, Watson has used acrylic. Acrylic does dry faster, but she prefers oil. Her

subjects come to her in the form of pictures, people, places and animals. Her husband would say the artist has a fondness for the Southwest, horses and desert. The painter has produced paintings of Indians, her donkey named "Georgia," delicate photos of family members such as her daughter,

Watson admits her style of painting differs from her former teachers. "I paint what I see and the way I see it: precise. My teachers would tell me not to give too much away in detail." Where some paint more abstract, Watson paints with great detail, eerily life-like depictions of her subjects.

Every piece takes a different amount of time, and typically the artist works on multiple pieces at a time, allowing the oil to dry. Revealing some she starts, and may never finish. Her husband is quick to say, the quickest painting she ever

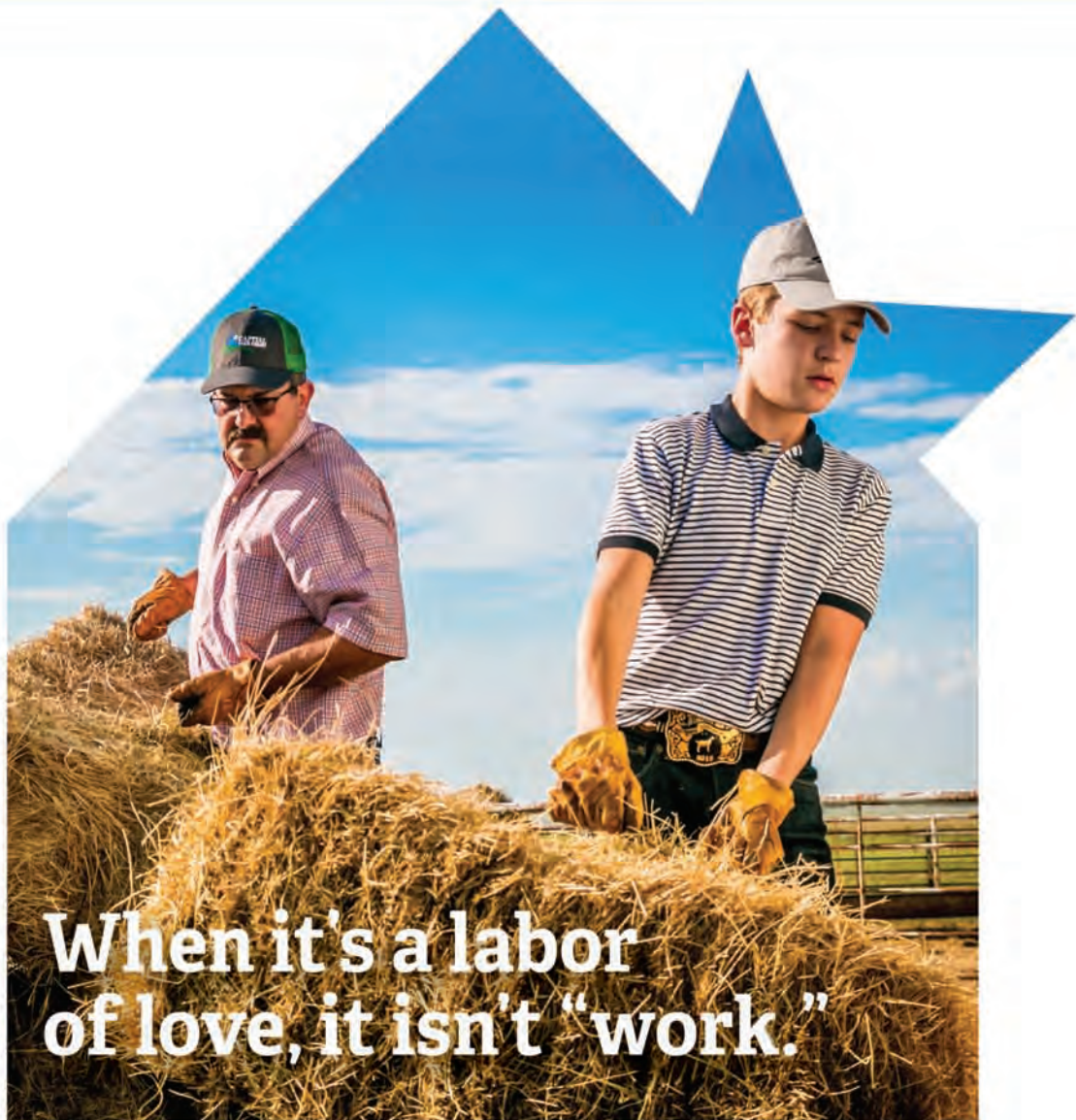
***"At first you start lightly and add to it, thin to thick. For me, the hardest thing to learn was color temperature, showing depth through color in paintings, turning a two-dimensional canvas into three-dimensional with depth in color temperatures," Watson explained, adding, "In painting you have cool and warm colors. Far colors are cool, closer are warm; it is a push and pull."***

***~ Mary Lane Watson***

son, and niece, chickens and roosters, landscapes, backyard settings, elk, quail, her mother, husband, even self-portraits of past photos.

finished was one of her mother. "I felt that was one of the only I ever felt truly inspired to paint. I just flew through it."

**Continued on page 46**



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# BRINGING LIGHT TO LIFE

## Mary Lane Watson

Continued from page 44

Watson's first studio was a 20-foot diameter oil tank Puddy stuccoed and added a top and bottom floor to. Today Watson paints in a pristine studio built for her by her husband, a great craftsman in his own right. It is spacious with ample light. There she teaches private painting lessons once a week for three to four hours. "It is a very unusual thing to find lessons one on one," Watson explained. Watson elaborated saying, it allows the student the undivided attention from the teacher.

She added, "Like anything, the teacher usually learns more than the student." Asking the artist if she has a favorite painting, her answer is she likes them all. In painting, the artist said you are constantly looking for the magic brush, which leads to every painter's fascination with brushes and why they are all typically "brushaholics." However, every brush is different, soft made from synthetic or stiff made from boars' bristles.

Among the exceptional pieces of art in her studio are various ribbons from local art shows, some first, second and third. "I don't know why, but I always found art shows to be stressful. I guess because so many felt the need to say they liked my art. I wondered if they all really thought that."

There are very few paintings the artist has duplicated. Why? Because, she said, "The second is never as good. I once heard painting is problem solving; by the second there is nothing left to tell."

Every piece created by Watson is adorned in a beautiful frame and signed. Throughout her artistic career, she has used various signatures, "Laney," "Mary Lane" and mostly recently "M.L. Watson."

Whether it's a painting of a tractor, cowboy in the rain, Brahman bull, market in Santa Fe, Longhorn lying in bluebonnets or a tank full of lily pads, Watson is an artist with an eye for detail. She is her own worst critic, and a humble woman, unaware of her enormous talent. Although she says she is not your "typical" artist, her work speaks for itself.

If interested in art lessons, call 940-923-8267 to ask space availability. Watson is proof you can do anything you dream to, no matter the age, experience level or resources.®



PHOTO DETAILS

(Page 46, clockwise) Watson and brother, David. Watson as a young girl. The artist outside her studio. Watson at age 18. (Page 47, clockwise) A painting Watson envisioned from a place in a creek, adding the cowboy, dog and cattle. A piece Watson painted for her mother. An elk photo full of color. Watson inside her studio among the multitude of her paintings that grace her walls. A young Indian boy and dog and young squaw above, a fascination and love for the Native American culture can be seen throughout her paintings. A cowboy in the rain, one, to the painter that resembles Elvis. (Photos of Watson's original paintings by Jessica Crabtree)





# LACEY'S PANTRY

By Lacey Newlin



## Pumpkin Spice Popcorn



There is nothing that aligns itself more with the autumn season than pumpkins. Pumpkin spice foods make perfect seasonal treats for parties and other events to add a touch of fall to your get together.

- Lacey

Time: 20 Minutes  
Serves: 20

**Ingredients:**

- 4 quarts popped popcorn
- 3 tbsp butter
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tbsp water
- 1/4 tsp vanilla

- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pumpkin pie spice

**Instructions:**

Line a baking tray with parchment paper. Place popcorn in a large bowl. In a saucepan, melt butter over low heat together with the sugar, water, vanilla, salt and pumpkin pie spice; cook and stir over low heat until sugar

is dissolved. Pour butter mixture over popcorn onto the baking tray.

Bake in oven, uncovered, at 300 degrees Fahrenheit for 10 to 15 minutes. Stir mixture every three or four minutes. Take out of the oven and keep stirring the mixture every few minutes.

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At 12 years old Kendal Fellegy is taking the equine world by storm, she and her 12-year-old paint mare, "Fancy Sneakers" also known as Fancy.

In a short amount of time, the horse and rider have come leaps and bounds, conquering goals and earning several awards.

Kendal has been riding four years and is a seventh grader at S&S (S and S Consolidated Independent School District) in Sadler, Texas. In a recent interview, we learned more about Kendal and her best pal, Fancy.

#### How did you get started riding horses?

"My mom [Dawn Fellegy] rode cutting horses. My cousin showed as well. The more I saw it the more I wanted to do it, too," said Kendal. Mom, Dawn Fellegy added, "When she was eight, Kendal showed interest in riding. She started turning back for us and did well. That was when we pursued something a little safer than cutting, pleasure horses." Also, Dawn has to give credit to the Sulphur Springs Youth Group saying, "It really started there. Angie Middleton helped us tremendously through the youth group!"

#### What discipline do you do and what is your favorite?

"I show in Western Pleasure and English. My favorite is English, because my horse is more of an English horse. She's a very easy, good mover." Kendal explained.

#### What are your favorite shows to compete in?

"One of our favorites is the Paint Horse Congress Show in Tulsa," Dawn Fellegy said. Other favorite shows include the Junior World Paint Show in Fort Worth as well as the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo every January and Hunt County Horseman Association Show in Sulphur Springs.

#### What are some of your greatest accomplishments?

"We jumped right into things; Kendal's very

# A Fancy Pair

By Jessica Crabtree

## Kendal Fellegy & "Fancy Sneakers"



Kendal and "Fancy Sneakers" aka Fancy at the 2017 Paint Horse Junior World Show in Fort Worth winning a scholarship during showmanship. (Courtesy of Dawn Fellegy)

first big show was the APHA World Show. She rode hunt-seat and finished in the Top Five. After that she was hooked!" Dawn answered.

Other accomplishments for the young horsewoman included High Point at Tulsa, Okla., at the 2017 Pinto World Show in Tulsa winning her age division, 11 and under.

Also reserve champion at the APHA Youth World Show in 2017 and reserve champion At Congress in 2016.

"What I am so proud of for Kendal and Fancy is, in Fort Worth, Kendall had to move up during the last world show putting her in the 13 and under division

In her first big show Kendal tied for first in Showmanship, and had to do a tie breaker. Kendal ended up Reserve Champion," mom Dawn shared.

**What horses are you competing off of?  
See FELLEGY page 52**

# Fellegy

Continued from page 51

"I have a gelding named Jack, a Shetland pony named Flicka, and my show horse is my mare named 'Fancy Sneakers,' but we call her Fancy," Kendal said. "Fancy is a registered Paint," Dawn shared, adding "This year was the first time for Fancy to show in both Pinto and Paint shows."

"The two [Kendal and Fancy] work well together; they make a good team," Dawn said. The key, you ask. She followed with, "The key is she [Kendal] spends a lot of time with the horses."

Basically they become one. Almost like a dance partner, they've learned enough to know each other's next move. The two have grown a lot together."

### How much do you practice?

"I practice everyday," Kendal said. Dawn added, "We usually get patterns a week in advance and practice each." Dawn continued, "All of her [Kendal's] free time is spent at the barn. We have to pry her away. Sometimes she wants to even sleep down there. She really enjoys it and we all have fun together!"

### Who are your idols or people you look up to in the equine industry?

"Megan Vanderslice," Kendal answered. Kendal shows with a team known as the MVP (Megan Vanderslice Performance Horses). Vanderslice is the team's coach. Dawn said the group pushes Kendal to watch and learn from others, creating a great environment.

### What do you want to be when you grow up?

"I want to grow up and train English horses. I really like it. Also go to college," Kendal described, joining the show team and show at the college level, of course.


Kendal's mom admitted college is a constant subject at shows. In fact, Kendal herself has scholarship winnings that went into a

scholarship fund in excess of \$700 so far.

Dawn explained, "The money stays in the fund until Kendal is 18. Then the money can be used at any college of her choice."

### Other than showing horse, what other interest do you have?

"I like sports: volleyball and cross country. I am also a cheerleader," Kendal shared. Mom said Kendal is very involved in school, even saying "During the school year we burn the candle at both ends; however, all summer is about horses."

Kendal and Fancy have many more miles to make, shows to compete in and patterns to maneuver. At such a young age, the mature young lady and her horse are off to a fantastic start. We wish her great luck with all her future endeavors. 



(Top to bottom) Kendal and Fancy during the 2017 Paint Youth World Show in Fort Worth. Kendal at the Pinto World Show in Tulsa, Okla. along with some of the girls on her show team MVP. (Photos courtesy of Dawn Fellegy)

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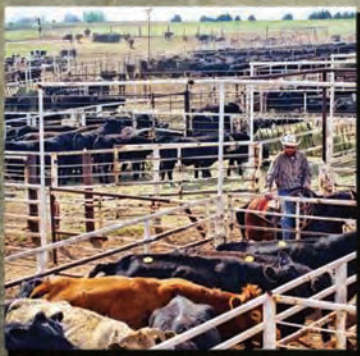


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# Red River Station

By Shannon Gillette

Long before it was the jumping off point of the Chisholm Trail, the area that became known as Red River Station had been well traveled for thousands of years. Near the junction of Salt Creek and the Red River, the mighty Red makes a distinct bend to the north.

This natural detour pushes the current to the south bank creating a favorable crossing point. This crossing was used for centuries by huge herds of buffalos, Native Americans and much later by hundreds of thousands of Texas Longhorns.

In 1857, a few families tried to push the envelope of the frontier and settle in the area. They were pushed back by raiding Indians. By 1860 they had managed to fend off the hostile attacks and put down roots and build a few structures. Some of these adventurous souls were the Grayson, Cardwell, Boren and Quillan families.

In July and August of 1861 the Texas authorities sent a company of State Troopers or Rangers under the command of Captain Brunson to help defend against the continuing advances of the disgruntled Indians. The camp or station was first known as Camp Brunson.

By December of 1862, the company had undergone a reorganization, placing Captain John Rowland in charge. It is estimated that approximately 50 families sought refuge within the confines of the stockade. Rowland was re-assigned to south Texas in 1864.

Not too long after Rowland's exodus, the Chisholm Trail was in full swing. The trail led to Kansas from all points in Texas, herding Longhorn cattle to market. The

feeder trails in Texas converged along the way, creating a funnel effect by the time it reached the Red River in Montague County. The first herds crossed at Red River Station in 1867. By 1870, it was a prominent crossing.

It is difficult to imagine what the area must have been like during the heyday of the Chisholm Trails. The dust, not to mention the odor, caused by thousands of milling cattle must have been intense at times.

The Red River has always been a temperamental beast, sometimes smooth as silk and a furious raging swell at others.

Mark Withers was a cowboy who traveled up the trail on more than one occasion. In his later years, he wrote down some of his memories of the time. He described one exceptional incident that occurred at Red River Station in 1871.

It had been raining for days when "We came up west of Gainesville and had just crossed into Montague County when we began to hear cattle belling. It was far off, but it never stopped. It was like a wall of sound, two or three miles wide.

It continued through the night and grew louder as we drove on north the next day. By landmarks I recognized, I knew that with conditions normal we were still two days from Red River Station.

In the afternoon, we saw cattle ahead of us, two or three big herds, and by the way they were spread out we knew they were being held.

We stopped where we were and I rode on alone to find out how bad the situation was. I knew it must be the river that was holding things



Historical marker commemorating the Civil War era outpost. (Photo courtesy of Tales N Trails Museum)

up, but wasn't prepared for what I saw and was told.

Some wild estimates put the number of cattle concentrated there at 75,000. I believe 60,000 would be more accurate."

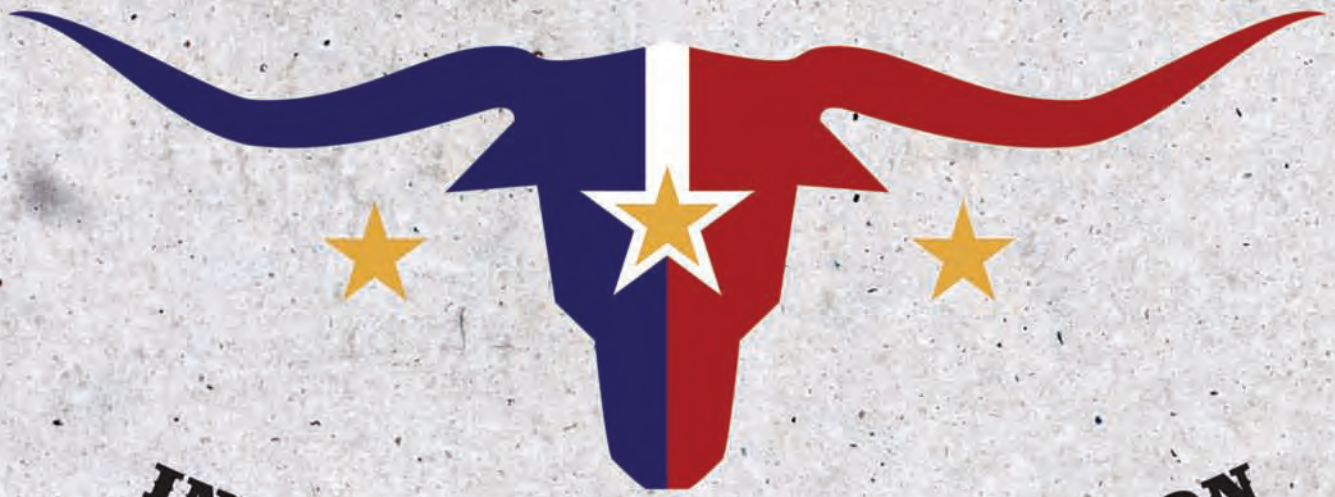
He goes on to describe the scene when he reached the Red River. "The litter of heavy brush and broken trees sweeping by gave you the feeling that, for hundreds of miles, everything that grew or lay along both the North Fork and

the Prairie Dog Town Fork had been plucked out by the roots and sent swirling and bobbing down river, leaving both branches of the Upper Red scoured clean."

The next day the rain stopped. Several anxious cattlemen attempted to cross the swollen river. At least two human lives were lost as were several dozen head of cattle. So, the wait continued.

Withers described the chaos **See STATION page 57**

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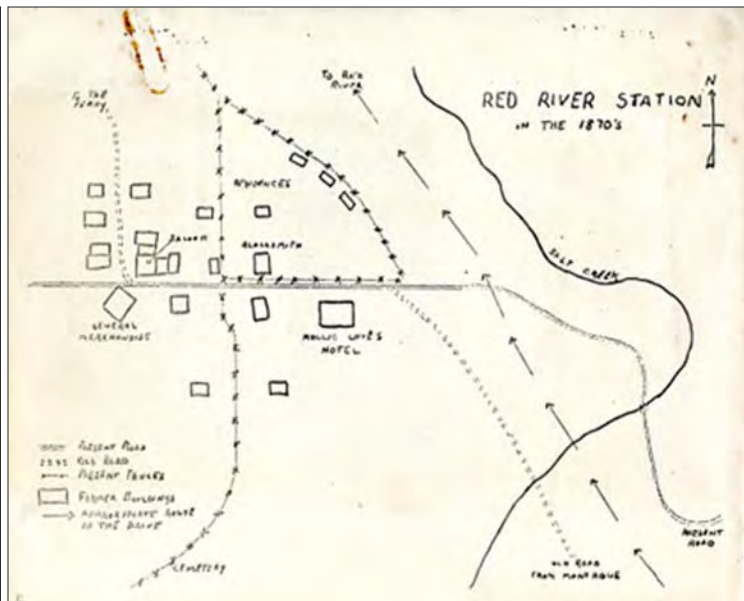
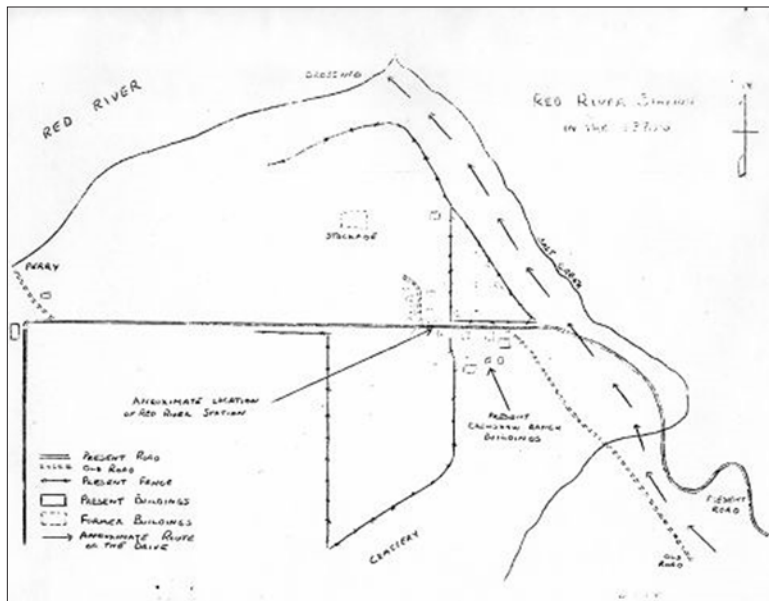
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(Left to right) Both maps show the approximate location and layout of the Red River Station. (Photos courtesy of Tales N Trails Museum)

# Station

Continued from page 54

that ensued, “Two nights later, with the weather continuing fine, a herd got up and started to run. It carried another herd with it. It was only the beginning. In no time at all they were all running and milling.

It was after daylight before we got them held, and we had a tangle of cattle and brands on our hands that would be hard to describe. In my personal experience, I never knew a man on the ground being run over by a Longhorn, but when a steer went down in a jam like that, he seldom got up.

We all had losses that night, some of them pretty heavy. The only way we could unsnarl that mass of cattle was to go to work as though we were on a roundup, everyone cutting out his own stuff and holding his cut at a safe distance. It took us 10 days to get them straightened out. When it was our turn to cross the river, it was mill pond.”

As with any new enterprise, the law of supply and demand soon became apparent. Several businesses were established to aid the influx of cattlemen who traveled

up the Chisholm Trail. Between 1870 and 1871 at least 12 blocks containing more than 100 lots were sold.

A post office was established under the name of Salt Creek. The first post master was L.N. Perkins. Among the first registered voters were Montague county pioneers, Henry Heaton, Alexander Boren, Isaac Boren, J.M. Grayson, and Tom Cardwell. The name was changed to Red River Station in 1884.

About a half a mile west of town, Henry Heaton ran a chain ferry. Heaton was described as “a veteran freighter without any previous knowledge of the river. He was further handicapped by a wooden leg.

“He was a cantankerous individual who ran his ferry to suit himself, the tolls he charged rising and falling with the various stages of the river.” Others who were said to run the ferry after Heaton included Miles Yates, Rev. W.P. Fitts and John Gilbreath.

J.S. Love and his wife Mollie purchased lots 10 and 11 in block one of the new town. They built a

two-story hotel. It is said that Mollie was known by every cowboy on the trail.

Her kindness was documented in several letters home. She was known to feed the hungry regardless of their ability to pay. She often nursed the sick back to health as well.

Other businesses that were established included Tom Pollard’s Saloon and Trading Post, W.S. Thurston’s General Mercantile, several blacksmiths and leather repair shops. A school was formed in the basement of J.M. Grayson’s home. Even after a building for the school was erected, it was always known as the Grayson School.

Circuit preachers traveled to Red River Station to spread the gospel, meeting in different homes in town.

Red River Station’s demise can be attributed to three different, but equally devastating events. First was the end of the Chisholm Trail. As the railroads made further advances across the frontier, the need to drive cattle to market became obsolete.

The seasonal influx of cattle-

men through Red River Station dwindled. The second event was Mother Nature in full force. In the early 1880’s the small town was severely damaged by a tornado, destroying several of the businesses in town.

With the decline of patrons already in effect, several businesses chose not to rebuild. The final event that led Red River Station to the ghost town category was the decision by the railroad to bypass it as a stop, choosing Nocona instead.

Today there isn’t much left of old Red River Station. The land where the community once thrived is now privately owned. The cemetery, which had been neglected for decades, has been reclaimed and cleaned up.

Throughout the years, two historical markers have been placed in the vicinity of Red River Station, one by the state of Texas the other by the Boy Scouts.

In 2010, a Chisholm Trail marker was also placed, with the hope that the importance of Red River Station to Texas history will always be remembered.

# COWBOY CUISINE

BY STEVE STEVENS



## Smokestack Restaurant

History, a Ghost Town and the Best Dang Buttermilk Pie!

About 40 miles west of Weatherford, Texas, on Interstate 20 is the one exit town of Thurber.

You can't miss it, as you will see the giant brick smokestack on the north side of the highway. As best as I can tell, all there is in Thurber, or I should say what is left in Thurber are two restaurants, a museum, a few random buildings, an old church and a cemetery. In one of the old brick buildings that was once the town mercantile store stands the Smokestack Restaurant.

The other day I had to drive to Thurber to pick up some cedar stays to do some fence work, or better explained, they would be for the 15-year-old ranch hand named Hoss who is working for us. We have been really lucky: he is becoming a top hand.

I drove past this big smokestack and saw across the road from it was an old brick restaurant. So cedar stays had to wait, as I couldn't miss the opportunity to check out this cool looking joint. As I walked in, I realized I was in a historic small-town food heaven. The restaurant is decorated in authentic antiques. The wall is covered in its historic past, and the nostalgia leaks through the brick walls, that were once made in the town of Thurber.

It didn't take long after sitting down to realize this is a special place. Food is cooked to order and everything is homemade with a pretty extensive menu with everything from fried chicken livers to rib eye.

So I ordered the fried pork chop



Fried pork chop, mashed potatoes and famous homemade roll

that comes with a garden salad and choice of mashed potatoes, French fries or baked potato and their famous homemade rolls. It also came with a side of beans and green bean mix.

So let's just start with the homemade rolls, just like grandma made. I was asked what salad dressing I would like and she told me the ranch and honey mustard were made in-house. The honey mustard made me eat every last green on the plate, not to mention it came with Texas size croutons. It was super yummy.

The fried pork chop was large and perfectly cooked. I could only eat about half of it, mostly because it was so big, but also the mashed potatoes were delicious

with homemade gravy. So I ate the whole bowl before I even started to do damage on the pork chop.

Now I have to tell you I was full, but just because I care so much about the readers, I ordered a piece of their homemade buttermilk pie that was served warm. I don't want to go up to cowboy heaven before my time is up, but after experiencing the Smokestack's buttermilk pie, I can say I would have died a happy man.

One thing I really liked was when I got my leftovers to go, they put an extra fresh roll with it. It's the little things that count in life, right?

When you are done eating, you can burn off a few calories and walk across the road and read up

on the historical smokestack that watches over this wonderful restaurant like a guardian angel.

I would also recommend that if you really want to make a trip of it, go across the highway to the Thurber Ghost Town Museum and study Thurber's rich history. At one point it was the largest town between Fort Worth and El Paso. If you are into Texas history, this place is a must see.

I think it is important to take in our historical relevance whenever we get a chance and celebrate those who came before us laying the road, or should I say brick, for us all. Oh, yeah, and while you are doing that, you might as well get a slice of a dang good buttermilk pie. ☺

**Beans and green bean mix**



**Historical smokestack**



**KING EDWARD CIGARS**



**Buttermilk Pie**



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**SEPTEMBER**  
**SEPTEMBER 9 –**  
**NOVEMBER 11**

**COWBOYS, COWGIRLS & SOME INDIANS AT PDNB GALLERY**-154 Glass St., STE.104 Dallas, Texas 75207. The cowboy culture will be the theme of this group exhibition, with photographs by Bank Langmore from the 1970s. Also included will be photographs of the contemporary cowboy that work the “big outfit” ranches in the United States. These are by Bank Langmore’s son, John Langmore. A documentary film and a book will be released on John Langmore’s exploration next year. Local Dallas photographer, Chris Regas, will be included with his unique images of the mythical cowboy. Added selections from Jeremy Enlow’s recent series, Cowboys of the Waggoner Ranch, will remind us that the cowboy’s career is not so permanent after the expansive ranch was sold. Vintage rodeo photographs from the 1940s by John Stryker are also part of this exhibition. One of the rodeo photographs features Gene Autry in his Flight Officer military uniform, standing next to Everett Colborn of Dublin, Texas, who is mounted on a horse. Do not miss your opportunity to view this unique gallery! For more info call 214-969-1852 or email [info@pdnbgallery.com](mailto:info@pdnbgallery.com).

**SEPTEMBER 29**  
**VINTAGE MARKET DAYS “FALL AT THE FARM”**- NRS Event Center, 309 CR 4228, Decatur, Texas. As the season changes, enjoy it with your family at the Vintage Market Days “Fall at the Farm.” Admission is \$10 Friday (early buying event) and \$5 Saturday and Sunday. Hours are Friday from 10 a.m. to Sunday 4 p.m. Children 12 and under are free. For more information call Rachel Chronister at 918-906-0746 or visit [vintagemarketdays.com](http://vintagemarketdays.com).



**WICHITA MOUNTED PATROL TEXAS TRUCK AND TRACTOR PULL**

**SEPTEMBER 30**  
**MONTAGUE COUNTY CHILDREN’S FAIR**- Montague County Cowboy Church, 1600 FM-455, Montague, TX 76251. Make plans to attend the Children’s Fair Sept. 30 in Montague. There will be numerous churches in attendance with games, prizes, food and much more. Call 940-841-0345.

**OCTOBER**  
**OCTOBER 6-7**  
**WICHITA COUNTY MOUNTED PATROL TEXAS TRUCK AND TRACTOR PULL**-WCMP Arena, Wichita Falls, Texas. Advanced tickets are available at Cavendar’s and The Browse Shop for \$8. At the gate for \$10 Gates open at 7 p.m. Kids six and under are free. For more info call 940-636-8145.

**OCTOBER 6-8**  
**SECOND MONDAY**- 414 Pelham St., Bowie, TX, 76230. For more info call 940-872-4180.

**OCTOBER 7**  
**DENNIS CHAROLAIS’ FALL EDITION BEEFGENE BULL SALE**- Sulphur Springs Livestock Commission, Sulphur Springs, TX. Sale starts at 1 p.m. Call Eric Dennis 940-841-2792 for details.

**OCTOBER 7**  
**GUIDED TOUR OF THE NORTH TEXAS HORSE COUNTRY**- DATCU Parking Lot, 216 W Mulberry St., Denton, TX 76201. Throughout this tour, you’ll be able to experience one of the largest and most diverse concentrations of horse farms in the world. The guided tour visits two premier horse ranches, includes lunch, and gives the visitor an up close and personal look at the equine industry. \$40 advance ticket or \$45 day of (cash only). Advance reservations are required. Tour recommended for ages 13 and up and does not include horseback riding. The tour is from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call 940-382-7895 for more information.

**OCTOBER 7**  
**ROBSON RANCH WOMEN’S CLUB HOLIDAY MARKET**- Robson Ranch Clubhouse, 9400 Ed Robson Blvd., Denton, TX 76207. Start your early Holiday shopping with over 50 vendors selling unique crafts and gifts. Proceeds benefit Our Daily Bread & Refuge for Women. Holiday Market starts at 9 a.m. and goes to 7 p.m. Call Gayle Coe at 940-262-3395 for more information.

**OCTOBER 7-8**  
**SULPHUR RIVER SADDLERY’S 20TH ANNUAL FARM EQUIPMENT AND HORSE AUCTION**- Hagan-sport, TX. Sale starts at 10 a.m. on Saturday to sell equipment, gates, panels, tools, trailers, tractors and all types of implements. There will be a Cowboy Church service at 9 a.m. with catalog horses at 10 a.m. and non-catalog horses to follow. To consign call 903-632-5458

**OCTOBER 7-8**  
**27TH ANNUAL WILBARGER REGIONAL CRAFT SHOW**- Wilbarger Auditorium, 2100 Yamparika St., Vernon, Texas, 76384. If you are a crafter, bring your family and friends out to the show Oct. 7 through Oct. 8. Call Rita Lingnau for more information at 940-553-3266.

**OCTOBER 10**  
**PARKER ANGUS RANCH SALE**- The Ranch ENE, Waurika, OK. Sale starts at noon. Selling 100, 18 to 20-month-old Angus bulls, 39 spring calving bred cows, 32 spring calving bred heifers, 13 fall calving bred heifers and five open yearling heifers. For details call 580-313-0248.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## OCTOBER 13-31

**TERRIFYIN' TEXAS-** "The Perry" -Graham Regional Theatre, 521 Elm St, Graham, TX 76450. Be 'spooked' and 'scared' Oct. 13 to 31 in Graham. Fridays at 7 p.m., Saturdays at 7 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. Come hear storytelling at its finest. Listen to tales of the scary and sometimes funny stories about our local area. Mostly true folklore that will enlighten, inspire, and "terrify." For more info call **940-532-1252**. For tickets visit [grahamregionaltheatre.com/our-season/](http://grahamregionaltheatre.com/our-season/).

## OCTOBER 14

**FALL FEST-**Graham Downtown Square, Graham, Texas. Bring the family out to enjoy games, activities, live music and food. Hosted by Open Door Christian School call **940-549- 2339**. Tickets are 50 cents each. [www.opendoor-graham.com/fall-fest](http://www.opendoor-graham.com/fall-fest).

## OCTOBER 14-15

**SECOND POSSUM KINGDOM CATMASTERS - CAT-FISH TOURNAMENT - Possum Kingdom Lake, Graham, Texas.** Tournament will be from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sign in for the tournament is Oct. 13 at the PK Chamber of Commerce 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Guaranteed first place winnings is \$20,000.

## OCTOBER 14-16

**COWBOY MOUNTED SHOOTING-** Events Center, 301 Wilbarger, Vernon, Texas, 76384. Do not miss the fast-paced event for all ages. Call the office at **940-552-7362** for more information about the event.

## OCTOBER 20-21

**8TH ANNUAL RED RIVER BBQ BATTLE & BACON FEST-**Covered Events Center, 301 Wilbarger, Vernon, Texas, 76384. For more information, call Christina Donelson at **940-552-2564**.



## OCTOBER 21

**TARRANT COUNTY SHERIFF'S POSSE SECOND ANNUAL TRINITY TRAIL RIDE-**Fort Worth Stockyards, Fort Worth, Texas. Get ready to ride! Check in starts at 7 a.m. with ride out time 9 a.m. Lunch will be at approximately 12:30 p.m. Door prizes will be drawn during the lunch. Entry forms and details can be found at [www.tcsptx.com](http://www.tcsptx.com). Mail entry forms to PO Box 164342 Fort Worth, Texas, 76161. Entry fee to the trail ride is \$50. That includes chuck wagon lunch, entertainment, door prizes and silent auction. Call **817-914-2620** for more info.

## OCTOBER 27-28

**FORT BELKNAP DAYS-** Fort Belknap, Graham, Texas. A living history event with 19th century demonstrations including a blacksmith, chuck wagon, candle making, spinning and much more. Friday evening in Barracks B there will be an Officer's Ball with music form a live string band. 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 27 is education day All schools are welcome to attend. Saturday, Oct. 28 is public day open to the public. Food

vendors and novelty vendors will be on-site. For more information call **940-846-3222**.

## OCTOBER 28

**DENTON'S DAY OF THE DEAD FESTIVAL-** Industrial Street District, Industrial St., Denton, TX. This event takes place on Hickory and Industrial St. Denton's Day of the Dead Festival captures the very essence of Denton's artistic spirit: a true collaboration of the eclectic art and music community that only the northernmost tip of the golden triangle can provide. As is the artistic scene in this ever growing "little" town, Denton's DOD Festival is a wonderful smorgasbord, paying homage to many of fall's treasures such as cooler weather, the harvest, the celebration of Dia de los Muertos, and all things Halloween. Denton's DOD Fest includes Denton's original Halloween Cabaret "Cirque du Horror," as well as Denton's very own Coffin Races and a lantern-lit twilight parade all help make this event truly magical and one you won't soon forget. Come in costume and enjoy any of these activities. Event begins at 11 a.m. and goes until 9 p.m.

## OCTOBER 27 - 29

**2017 RED STEAGALL COWBOY GATHERING-** Historic Stockyards, Fort Worth, TX. Do not miss this celebration of all things cowboy. Buy your tickets at [www.RedSteagallCowboy-Gathering.com](http://www.RedSteagallCowboy-Gathering.com).

## OCTOBER 28

**"RIDIN' FOR THE BRAND COWBOY CHURCH ANNUAL TRADE SHOW-**5926 FM 455, Sanger, Texas. Ridin' for the Brand Cowboy Church will host its annual trade show on Oct. 28 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. A wide variety of items will be available. For more information, contact Roger Marsh, Pastor, at **940-367-4940**, [rogerftbcc@gmail.com](mailto:rogerftbcc@gmail.com), or [www.RidinForTheBrand.org](http://www.RidinForTheBrand.org).

## OCTOBER 28-29

**OKTOBERFEST-**301 N. Ash Street, Muenster, Texas 76252. Stein Hoisting Competition at area bars with finals on Saturday at Festival at 5:15 p.m. Best Dirndl and Lederhosen Contest Saturday at 2:45 p.m. Wiener Dog Race on Sunday at 2:15 p.m. Heritage Park Pavilion opens Saturday 10 a.m. to midnight and Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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# On the Road with Dave Alexander




**H**owdy Texas Music Fans! Every now and then, usually on my way to buy hay or pick up feed for the horses, I see a rig with a saddled horse in it, usually a covered open-air stock trailer.

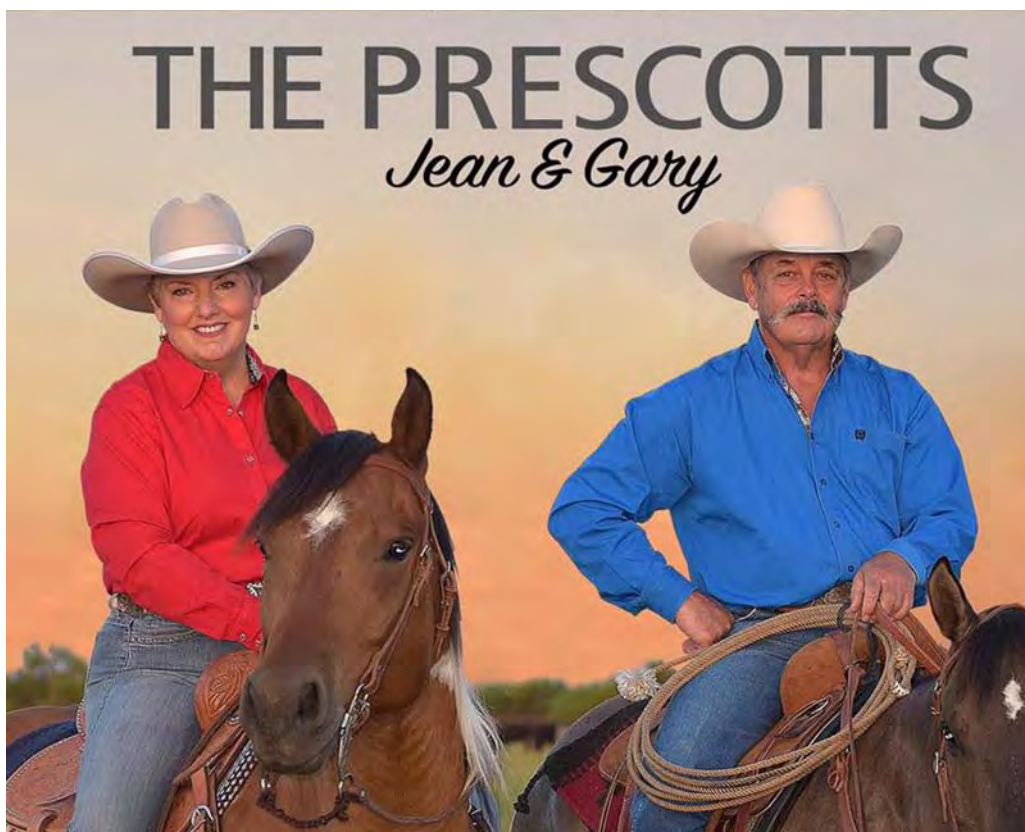
Once in a while I'll see a man with a little larger brimmed hat than most. Often his jeans are tucked into the tall shafts of his boots. His weathered chinks will hit just below the knee. Not a common sight for most of us to see, but they're out there: working cowboys. They are living in a world few will ever know, a world consisting of primarily four factors: grass, water, cattle and sky.

Having spent my early life idolizing my Grandpa, a cattleman who could ride with the best of them, it's easy for me to recognize the lifestyle and tradition of these men and women whom we call "working cowboys."

My friends Jean and Gray Prescott have dedicated their lives to making music for these people. That's right. They even have their own style of music and there are folks, like the Prescotts, out there who make a living playing it for them. Oh, you won't find it on your car radio, at least not in these parts, but you will find it throughout Texas and in the west if you know where to look.

The Prescott's latest CD, "Satisfied Hearts" is a prime example. Packed with excellent musical renditions of the cowboy way of life, this 15-song disk is perfect.

Happy trails...



## *Dave's upcoming shows:*

*10/12 Ruidoso, N.M., with Tracy Byrd  
and Asleep at the Wheel*

*11/28 Gainesville, Texas, Celebration  
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# GATHERING TO CELEBRATE THE AMERICAN COWBOY

## *The 27th Annual Red Steagall Cowboy Gathering*

By Jessica Crabtree

Every fourth weekend in October, cowboys, their families, poets, their families and overall western lifestyle lovers forge the trail to Fort Worth to the historic Stockyards for the annual Red Steagall Cowboy Gathering. For 27 years, Red Steagall and his associates have been hosting a three-day event to showcase the cowboy way of life at its finest. This includes poetry, youth contests, chuck wagon cooking contests, a three-day ranch rodeo, a wagon train, trade show, live western swing music and much more. The event is attended by as many as 40,000 people annually. Known as one of the largest cowboy gatherings, fans travel from all over the world to attend.

The event was created 28 years ago when Jaylynn Burkett and John South approached Steagall with an idea. Both worked for the Ag Extension Service at the time and wondered if Steagall would get involved with a cowboy gathering held in the historic Stockyards of Fort Worth. Other than being a fan of the western way of life through agriculture and country music, why would Steagall want to be involved you ask. Steagall answered by saying, "In 1985 the whole world of country music fell apart and took a different direction. As I like to say, that was the year, 'Sad songs and waltzes quit selling.'"

That same year Steagall searched for a new platform to present his music, which led him to attending the first annual Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nev. "I fell in love with the people and the art form," Steagall admitted. At this time, he'd written and recorded nearly 200 songs; however, the singer/songwriter was hesitant to write poetry, afraid it would take away from his creative time to write songs. Steagall started writing poetry and did not write a single song for five years. In turn, he traveled to various cowboy gatherings and western swing festivals sharing his talents. So when Jaylynn and John came up with the idea for a Fort Worth cowboy gathering, Steagall immediately felt that the Historic Fort Worth Stockyards would be the obvious place for the best cowboy gathering in the country, and he considered it an honor for the event to bear his name.

Along with the help of Jaylynn, John and Don Edwards, sponsors were contacted, locations were secured, and the Red Steagall Cowboy Gathering and Western Swing Festival was off and running. The chuck wagons competed on the lawns of the Cowtown Coliseum and Livestock Exchange Building. The first two years the dances were held in Billy

Bob's Texas and the poetry sessions were held in the exhibit building across from the coliseum. Twelve teams competed in the ranch rodeo. The first event kicked off with one obstacle: rain. "The rain started on Friday and by Sunday evening we had gotten 11 inches. Every time the cooks started to build a fire, it would rain and extinguish it. There were open fronts on a couple of buildings on the east side of Rodeo Plaza. We were able to build fires under the roof and the cooks completed the competition."

Very little has changed in the past 26 years. The fundamentals are the same, including the date and location. As Steagall said, "We have and will always present a real western experience, one you can come to and step back in time 100 years. You will get a sense of heritage and spirit as well as meet liked-minded people who love the western lifestyle." On top of it all, the Cowboy Gathering is a family event, something for all ages to enjoy.

The event offers a variety of scholarship opportunities each year. In the beginning, scholarship recipients were single mothers "trying to get a foothold" in life. The program was developed and administered by the Ag Extension Service. In each of the first two years, six scholarships were awarded to single ladies, "Those recipients all went on to a trade school, were able to get a job and got off welfare," Steagall explained. "We are very proud of all of those ladies."

Through the years other scholarship programs have been implemented. Today their scholarship program awards children who compete in a youth poetry contest. Notices are sent out to schools in advance of the event. Winners of the event seem to come from the same schools each year. Steagall attributes that to the teachers. "These teachers take it seriously with curriculum that encourages children to write poetry about the west."

Entries are typically from the metropolitan area, with categories in two age groups: eight through 12 and 13 through 18. However, in recent years the majority of the winners have come from schools outside the metropolitan area. In some years, the contest has had in excess of 2,000 poetry entries, some of whose authors only see the visions of

**Continued on page 66**





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# COWBOY GATHERING

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cowboys through books at the library, never once in real life. Of the entries accepted, a committee narrows the entries down to the top 10 in the two age groups. Those 20 finalists attend the cowboy gathering and present their poems to an audience and judges. Scholarships are awarded to the first and second place winners of each division.

Steagall recalls the very first year of the contest, "The winner was a young girl who had never seen real cowboys, only read about them. She told the judges the furthest west she'd ever been was the city limits of Fort Worth. She wrote about how proud she was to know her African-American ancestors contributed to the settlement of the west and contributed greatly to the livestock industry of Texas." That young lady went on to receive a degree from Rice University.

Steagall said, "This scholarship program is very effective. Deserving young people are given the ability to attend a school of their choosing as they endeavor to continue their education." Just

within the last week, Steagall received two calls from past recipients entering graduate school. Youngsters with musical talent also are encouraged to enter the youth fiddle contest, a recent addition to the highly successful event. Steagall said the contest is a huge draw for audiences. The winners of the youth fiddle contest receive scholarships as well.

Within the last 25 years the chuck wagon cooking contest has developed into a major event. These chuck wagons enter the Stockyards from Main Street Friday at noon. They set up on the lawns of the Coliseum and Livestock Exchange Building and begin cooking. On Oct. 22 a wagon train leaves from Jacksboro headed for Fort Worth by way of Perrin, Mineral Wells, Weatherford, Azle and finally the Stockyards. These are horse and mule drawn vehicles with outriders who thoroughly enjoy the ride as they advertise for the event. Fort Worth was the final supply point for the trail herds before crossing the Red

Continued on page 69

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**Continued from page 66**

River into Indian Territory along the Chisholm Trail. "Our event does everything possible to stay as true to the cowboy heritage as we possibly can." For example, records were obtained from local grocery suppliers listing all the items bought by the chuck wagon cooks.

Not only are the chuck wagons authentic, chuck wagon cooks must dress properly. They cannot compete with any food stuff that wasn't available during that time period; therefore, typical seasonings the cooks are allowed to use are salt, pepper, garlic, clove and cinnamon. Steagall continued, "Wagons must be made from time period material as well. For instance, they did not have Phillips screws back then nor plywood." Steagall also explained every chuck box is different. "These are authentic wagons equipped with a chuck box. The style of the chuck box is determined by the cook.

If the cook was short, things he needed would be down low; if the cook was tall, he was able to use the upper part of the chuck box. No two chuck boxes are the same," the cowboy poet elaborated. As Steagall put it, "Each wagon must be equipped and ready as if to pull out for the Red River crossing and onto to the railheads in Kansas."

Once the wagons make their grand entrance at noon on Friday, the event is in full swing. On average, there are 30 vehicles that participate in the wagon train and 19 chuck wagons compete in the cooking contest. This includes Texans as well as cooks from Georgia, Alabama, Oklahoma, Kansas and elsewhere.

In addition to the ranch chuck wagon contest, a separate contest highlighting the youth is held on Sunday morning. Young people age eight to 18 have a chance to showcase their skills with Dutch oven cooking, hosted by the ranch teams.

Last year's winner has entered



Steagall reciting a poem, opening the nightly rodeo performance. (Photo by Jessica Crabtree)

again for her last year, since she turns 18 this year, and after years of interest in cooking spurred on by these contests, has decided to pursue a culinary career.

A huge part of the three-day event is the live entertainment. Steagall described this package as "the best in the area: singers and poets who have something to offer the cowboy way of life." In the past, famed western swing group "Asleep at the Wheel" entertained people with their swing music. Steagall and his 10-piece western swing band, The Boys in the Bunkhouse, keep the dance floor full with distinguished guests, Leon Rausch, Jason Roberts, Jake Hooker and Bobby Flores. Each year the featured artists get better and better.

One group, the special Quebe Sisters, have grown to be international stars. New entertainers include Mikki Daniels, Haley Sandoz and Krysten Harris. Veteran performers on the main stage this year are Don Edwards, Dan

Roberts and Jeanie Prescott. Good old-fashioned, true to the core western swing music can be heard all weekend.

Also local poets and singers present their work during the Invited Poetry session on Saturday morning. This allows poets and singers from the immediate area a chance to present their works about cowboys, cowgirls, ranching and more.

The ranch rodeo is made up of 14, five-man teams. Ranch rodeo events are bronc riding, team sorting, calf branding, maverick branding, and wild cow milking. There's even mutton bustin' for the kids. As the 14 teams are announced and ride into the arena, as is the custom, all cowboys remove their cover. All come from various areas across the state. Steagall enters the arena horseback to open the night's performance.

As the enchanting sound of a single fiddle plays in the background, Steagall recites a poem he saves specifically for the evening

with words such as, "The cowboy is a man of integrity, loyalty, work ethic and man of pride for our way of life." Steagall added this event's goal is "to present and celebrate the life of the men and women who work cattle horseback providing beef steak for the dinner tables of America."

Awards for the chuck wagon cooking contest are given Sunday afternoon about halfway through the rodeo and the champion ranch rodeo team is announced Sunday after the final performance.

Being authentic in every aspect of the event, Steagall explained the importance as, "We try hard not to celebrate the Hollywood-invented fast draw contests, mounted shooting contests, etc. Those, too, are great events with a large public following; however, they do not necessarily depict or celebrate the life of the American cowboy or cowgirl."

When speaking of the event and the people it represents, Steagall uses words such as "honest, hardworking family men and women." The event itself has created a following of its own, with dedicated fans traveling from states far away to attend because they believe in the lifestyle and western way.

When not listening to live music or poetry or visiting the chuck wagons, spectators may also want to partake in the trade show for one-of-kind items and trappings that, too, depict the western way of life whether a print of a famous painting, Navajo rug, latest fashion trend in western elegance or piece of turquoise jewelry.

This year's dates are October 27th, 28th and 29th. For directions, event schedules, and visitor information and to purchase tickets visit [www.redsteagallcowboygathering.com](http://www.redsteagallcowboygathering.com). Note—buying tickets early saves you money, and you better get them while you can. This event is a Texas-sized, authentic showing of all things cowboy no one should miss.🐾

# Grazing North Texas

## Frogfruit

By Tony Dean

**F**rogfruit is a perennial, native forb that creeps along the ground, rooting at the nodes, and can form dense mats several feet in diameter. The plants rise only three to five inches above the ground but may have runners up to three feet long.

Leaves are thick, one to two inches long and 3/8-inch wide, and are toothed from the middle to the tip of the leaf.

Tiny white flowers form a ring around a flower head. Then the head elongates to a one inch cylinder or longer. Frogfruit has a four-angled stem.

Frogfruit can grow in almost any area in Texas and on many soil types. While it can grow in dryer soils and likes good drainage, it needs additional moisture to survive the hottest months.

It can be found almost anywhere in a pasture but is often located in depressions and near water sources.

Frogfruit is used as forage by livestock and deer. I recall an instance when I was moving cattle from one pasture to the next on a Jack County ranch.

As I opened the gate, I stood by a beautiful green plant of switchgrass, which I expected to be immediately grazed down. The cattle walked right by the switchgrass and stuck their heads in a small patch of frogfruit a few feet away.

Frogfruit is considered a good riparian colonizer and is also well liked by butterflies.

It is such an interesting little plant that it is also popular as an addition to native plant gardens. ©

Frogfruit usually grows only three to five inches tall and is considered an evergreen in warm to temperate zones. (Photos by Tony Dean)



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# Confessions of a



By Andy Anderson

## Swamp Donkeys and a Sasquatch

It's 5 a.m., on this cold December morning. I'm sneaking through the house quietly, careful not to wake the house. I gather my hunting gear, fill the thermos with coffee and head out the back door, climb into my truck and head out down the road to the deer stand. Because I hunt on my own land, I pack light, just the basics: rifle and ammunition, coffee, a snack and binoculars.

It's about 30 degrees and not a breath of wind. I park about a half mile away and walk into the stand. As I'm approaching the hunting area, I can hear movement in the woods to my left, about 15 yards away. I think to myself, must be a opossum or armadillo. I try to keep walking, but my mind will not stop wondering what it is that seems to be following me. I can't stop thinking about what's out there making all that noise. It has to know I'm here, and it's not scared of me.

So, I take out my mini flashlight and shine it into the woods. I can still hear it, but I can't see it. The forest area is dense, over grown with underbrush, and briars. The ground is littered with all the leaves from the trees. It's getting louder and closer. I hold my ground shining the light intensely in the area of the sound. Then it stops, no sound. All I can hear and feel is my heart beating hard and the exhale of the air from my lungs. Then, a little rustle in the leaves, a crack of a twig, and there I see it, an armadillo.

As a smile begins to raise and a sense of relief comes over me, a loud crash is heard. The sound of large limbs breaking and the distinct indication of something very large running through the woods away from me breaks the silence about the woods.

I'm startled. My body becomes warm all over, my eyes focused, hearing intensifies. I drop my gear bag, shine the light in the direction of the sounds. The armadillo flees for its life as well. It runs right at me, hits me in the left leg, bounds straight up nearly doing a back flip and hits the ground running. Almost as quickly as it started, it was over.



Hunter, Andy Anderson describes a past early morning hunt that kept both his mind and heart racing. (Courtesy photo)

Birds are still chirping, calling an alarm. Clearly they didn't know what was going on either.

Whatever that was big and couldn't have been cattle, I didn't have any at that time. No livestock at all. Now my mind was really restless. I think to myself, pigs, had to be pigs. The dark is fading to pink now. I've wasted enough time dealing with this. I need to get in the stand quickly. I grab my bag and start heading to the stand.

As I settle in and things begin to quiet down, the new day is just beginning to show itself. The feeder is about 60 yards out front of me and still has an hour to go before it drops some corn. Birds are beginning to emerge from their night's slumber.

I can just faintly see a few birds in the low brush, fluttering from limb to limb, chirping and interacting with each other. Without warning, the birds burst from the brush in a flurry. They were so close I could hear the wind from their wings as they pass by.

Then I hear it behind me: short, deliberate steps, the leaves on the ground crunching,

limbs breaking and falling from trees, hitting the ground. An image of a monster buck with a set of antlers so big, it can't walk through the woods without breaking off limbs fills my mind. It's just pink outside. I can see about 25 to 30 yards now. I'm looking, search for this buck of a lifetime. I can hear it; man it's close to me I think to myself. Afraid to move and make noise, I sit still, my head on a swivel. I don't hear it anymore.

A few minutes goes by. It's getting a little brighter outside. I can see about 40 yards now and the silhouette of the feeder begins to emerge from the night. Birds and squirrels are making their way around, creeping towards the feeder. I'm relaxed, focused on watching a couple of squirrels play tag while thinking to myself if that wasn't a deer, what was it? I begin to replay the encounter in the woods walking in.

Then I see something, faintly, in the dark, moving through the low brush. It's not a deer, what the heck is that? It's got to be six to seven foot tall. It's not human, or so I convinced

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When something is moving in the darkness of the brush, Anderson realized that his mind is his own worst enemy. Things that seem large and scary, may just be your neighbors mule. (Courtesy photo)

**Continued from page 73**

myself it wasn't. But maybe it is. I wonder if it's a poacher coming in. Then it drops down, like how a horse lowers its head. Nope, it's not a human. It's not a deer, too big. Now running down the check list in my mind of what it could be, I still just can't make it out.

My mouth begins to dry out. I'm thirsty, I'm jumpy, but I don't want to move. It's getting a little brighter out, and I can see a little better now. I think man, just a few more minutes, and I'll have good shooting light. I haven't seen 'it' move in a while. The feeder is clearly viewable now. Just then the feeder begins to sling corn and whatever was in the woods close by spooks. Busting brush and moving fast, I could only catch a glimpse of a large bodied animal. It's gone; I can hear it running away, the sounds fading in the distance.

I sit back, confused. What the heck was that I ask myself. An hour or so passes, the warm sunlight begins to warm the air and the new day is born. I get my coffee out, fill the cup and relax a little. Watching the birds and little critters go about their morning, stealing corn from under the feeder, I can't help but keep thinking about that monster in the woods.

Time passes by. It's around 10:30 a.m. now, and not one deer arrived for breakfast, but I'm hungry. So I decide to call it and head in for brunch. I gather my things, open the blind door and there it is, standing not 20 yards from the blind, we lock eyes, starring at each other, the biggest bay mule I had ever seen. His name is Oscar. He belongs to my neighbor down the road. I laughed out loud and realize that my mind is my own worst enemy. ©

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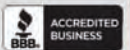
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# NIGHTHAWKS

By Russell Graves

Cruising down a crunchy backroad just after sunrise, the dust from my tires drifts high in the air behind me. The wind is still and after a long, protracted span with little rain, the land is dry. Even at 8:30 a.m., the air is already stifling, and it's going to be a hot day.

Up ahead, I see a familiar sight: sitting still atop a ragged and weathered cedar post is a nighthawk. Trying his best to stay camouflaged, the bird sits quietly atop the post. Its stippled coloration of blacks, grays and browns helps it blend into the post. If I weren't specifically looking for this species of birds, I may have never seen it. It is one of those unique species that lives amongst us, but probably few ever notice it. I ease up next to it in my truck, kill the engine and proceed to press the button that brings my camera to life. A couple of dozen pictures later, I leave the bird behind and begin looking for more as summertime in Childress County is nighthawk season.

Beautiful yet mysterious, the nighthawk comes out to feed in the evenings and roosts during the day. Therefore, if you don't know what you are looking for, you might just miss them even though they live amongst most all Texans.

Scientifically speaking, the nighthawk isn't really a hawk, but it belongs to a family of birds called nightjars. Nightjars are characterized by long, pointed wings, short legs and short bills. In Texas, species such as whip-poor-wills, poorwills, pauraque, and the common and lesser night-hawks are all part of the nightjar family. Also called goatsuckers,



Photo by Russell Graves

this family of birds was once thought to feed off the milk of goats.

While the nighthawk is a common bird, they are sometimes hard to find. Even though the common nighthawk is found over all of Texas and most of North America and the lesser nighthawk is found in southern Texas, they are still hard to casually observe. They are secretive, extremely well camouflaged and are mostly active at dusk and during the overnight hours.

For members of the scientific community, the bird's secretive nature makes it hard to determine population dynamics. As such, it seems that ornithologists are divided on whether their populations are increasing, decreasing, or stable. However, most studies in Texas do indicate a slight decline in the number of sightings over the past quarter century.

In size, the bird is roughly the same as a mourning dove. At about eight and one-half to 10 inches long, the bird is overall slender in

build but has a prominent head. Adult birds weigh two to four ounces and they have a wingspan of about two feet across. Their long, pointed wings arch toward the posterior of the bird when in flight and have a distinctive white bar that runs across the width of the wing's top and underside about two-thirds of the way down the wing from the body. An ancient bird, common nighthawk fossils from the Pleistocene era and up to 400,000 years old have been unearthed in Texas.

When active, they fly erratically as they dive and perform breakneck maneuvers to catch airborne food such as mosquitoes, moths and other flying insects. While they use other senses to help find their prey, the nighthawk relies heavily on their large eyes that provide excellent nighttime and lowlight vision. As such, they are most active on moonlit nights so they can see their prey better. Because of the visual sensitivities, they do not hunt during the day. Instead, they stop their nocturnal

flights early in the morning to roost and rest before taking flight again. While roosting, they rest motionless and blend in to their surroundings. Often I'll find them resting on a horizontal mesquite limb to stay out of direct sun, but, curiously, I'll most often see them setting on fence posts in direct sunlight.

Research conducted on the common nighthawk in the 1950s showed that nighthawks are very adept at controlling and lowering their body temperature. By placing the birds in jars and in direct sunlight, the experiment showed that even as the ambient temperatures began to rise around the bird, it was able to reduce and maintain its body temperature by gular fluttering (a type of panting by which birds can regulate their temperature).

The research concluded that, "...the nighthawk resorts to this evaporative cooling to withstand the extreme temperatures with which it is faced is not with-

**Continued on page 78**

# NIGHTHAWKS

out complications. Temperature control of this nature means an extravagant amount of water loss in areas which are typically very arid...”

“For the birds with which we were dealing, this is comparatively easy. They avail themselves of water from the Colorado River. In the evening hundreds of them can be seen on the horizon, all flying toward this source of water. The flight toward the river may continue for almost an hour and a half, and it certainly represents movements of individuals from some distance away. For birds in other areas, the answer may not be so simple, although there is the chance that they, too, may avail themselves of distant sources of water. However, if surface water is not accessible for considerable periods of time, they must survive on the moisture they obtain from their food, either directly or by means of metabolic water.”

In the arid climate of the Permian Basin, I am on assignment to shoot photos of desert wetlands. On the edge of the Chihuahuan Desert near Fort Stockton, a small complex of springs and cienegas lie smack in the middle of a vast, flat desert. Horizontally brown in every direction, this country is dry and, by my accounts, must be a tough place to live for the wildlife that clings to these patches of hardscrabble ground.

I am here to photograph a backyard-swimming-pool-sized wetland and the rare fish that inhabit it. Thirty minutes before sunset, however, dozens (maybe even 100) nighthawks arrive above the wetland and circle it — awaiting their turn to take a drink from the cienega whose liquid flows from a spring in the karst rock below the pond’s surface.

The top of the water was like glass, and the sight is remarkable as nighthawks wildly drop from the sky and level out in time to

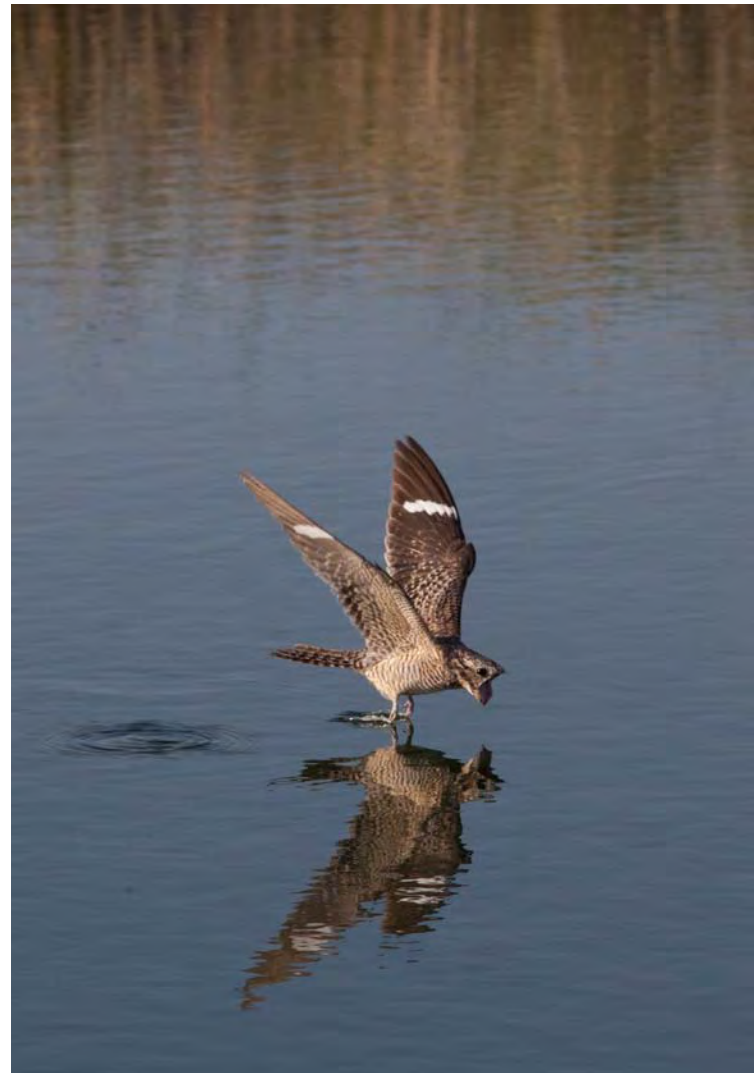
skim the water with their giant mouths agape taking in a drink as they fly past.

For probably an hour I watch bird after bird take a drink from the pond before they escaped to the desert beyond for a night of feeding on insects. No doubt that in such a dry climate, the scene is repeated over and over again each evening and has been for as long as there’s been water here.

Occasionally, a nighthawk dives from a high altitude and as he pulls out of the gully of the dive, I hear a deep bellowing sound that’s made from air rushing through the wing and feather configuration of the bird. Hearing that sound reminds me of when I first moved to Childress and was teaching high school. A student in one of my agriculture courses spoke about the “bullbats” that he saw flying around his house. While I’d never heard that term used before, it turned out that bullbat is a colloquial term that some call the nighthawk. According to sources, it gets its name for the bellowing sound the bird (which can be mistaken for a bat) makes when it dives during courtship. Some describe the sound as being reminiscent of a bellowing bull.

After the aerial courtship takes place in the summer and the birds breed, the female lays her nest of two eggs on the ground, in stumps or sometimes on a broad wooden fence post. Instead of building nests, they lay their eggs in shallow depressions and rarely add any additional materials. In urban areas, flat gravelly roofs are their preferred nesting sites. A female will only lay a single nest in a breeding season. While the female sits on the nest, the male feeds the female while she incubates her clutch and assists in brooding the babies once they hatch.

While I’ve never found a nest, I have found new hatchlings just hours after they pecked their



Recently, Graves was assigned a photo shoot in the desert wetlands, specifically the arid climate of the Permian Basin. On the edge of the Chihuahuan Desert near Fort Stockton, a small complex of springs and cienegas lie smack in the middle of a vast, flat desert. This scene of a bird sweeping in for a drink was a repeated pattern. (Photo by Russell Graves)

way from their eggs after a 16 to 20 day incubation period. The small, lemon sized birds were as perfectly camouflaged as their parents. While I photographed the young nighthawk, its mother sat motionless just a few yards away and watched me as I carefully photographed her.

I was lucky to find a nighthawk so young, as they grow quickly on a diet of regurgitated insects provided by their mother and father. By three weeks of age, they take flight and begin hunting

themselves. After a month, they leave their parents’ care.

All summer long, nighthawks take to the evening summer sky to eat thousands of insects per flight. As cooler weather comes along they’ll begin their migration to warmer climates. By April or May of the next year, the birds return to their summer breeding homes and begin the cycle anew: catching flying bugs and laying hidden nests to propagate a new flock of nighthawks to take to the nighttime Texas skies.®



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