

The Community Magazine Serving Red Oak and the Surrounding Area

Red Oak NOW

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M A G A Z I N E

November 2008

**A True
Craftsman**

**Staying in
the Loop**

**Heroic
Horseman**

**A Tower
of Strength**

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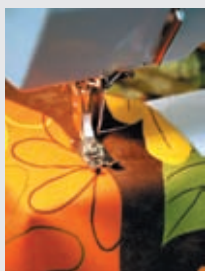
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Sewing is just one of the continuing
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Serving Red Oak and
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MAGAZINE

Editor's Note

Dear neighbors,

I just wanted to send a note of thanks for all of your great story ideas and for welcoming us into your home each and every month. It really touches our hearts when we go out into the communities and hear your kind words. With that, let me just say thank you friends and neighbors for supporting the entire team of *Red OakNOW*. We are honored to bring you each month's publication for they are dedicated to you, the heart and soul of the community.

May you all have a wonderful holiday season filled with love and warm memories.

Sincerely,

Diana Merrill Claussen

Red OakNOW Editor

P.S. Please feel free to send your story ideas to: dclaussen.nowmag@sbcglobal.net, and do not forget to vote on November 4!



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A Tower *of* Strength

— By Michelle Powe



Over the course of her 100 years, lived mostly in Ovilla, Ruth McElroy has taken the tremendous changes of the past century in stride — facing them with humor, grit and faith. She was born the same year that Ford introduced the Model T (1908). In fact, her family's first car was a beautiful, black Model T Ford. She remembers when her family first got electricity. "It was the most wonderful thing that ever happened to us," she commented. She first got indoor plumbing after she was already married and had a child.

Ruth also remembers her first television, only it did not really belong to her. It was a television in the town barbershop, and the barber brought it outside on Saturday evenings. "There was always a crowd in Ovilla on Saturday night on Main Street," Ruth said. People stood outside the barbershop, crowded around the television, watching *Amos 'n' Andy* and *Topper* and eating snow cones. Ruth and her husband, Marion (nicknamed "Mutt"), did not have a television in their home until 1960, when their daughter, Ann, went to work and bought them one. They did not have a telephone in their home until well after the television. If someone needed to make or receive a telephone call, there was one at the general store.

After all, Ruth was not concerned with extravagances. She has always lived a simple life characterized by hard work and



defined by faith and family. When Ruth was 11 years old, her mother died leaving nine children — the youngest only 8 weeks old. Ruth was the middle child, and she learned early to work hard. Ruth remembers picking cotton, caring for her younger siblings and working on the farm to help support the family. Her brother, Wilson, often said that Ruth could pick more cotton than any man in the field, despite being 5'3" and 99 pounds. She helped build fences and hang sheet rock; she drove a tractor and worked both in the fields and in the house — whatever was necessary for the family.

Ruth felt such a responsibility for her younger siblings that she did not marry and move out of her father's house until she was 27 years old and her youngest brother turned 16. Although her husband-to-be had proposed to her when she was 18, she would not accept that proposal for nearly 10 years. Mutt patiently waited for her.

Her strong love for her husband and family and her joyful nature seem to be why her memories are all positive and upbeat, even her memories of the Great Depression. "We always had plenty of food, even during the Depression,"



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Ruth said, "because my daddy raised everything and was a good provider."

After she and Mutt married, they ran a general store at the end of the Depression. "We had to count our pennies," she said, "but we didn't think we were poor. We were just happy as larks." Ruth's life philosophy is to make the best of it, whatever the circumstances. "I'm always happy wherever I am," she said. Her wise advice about turning 100: "Always enjoy the age you are."

"If you learn to trust in the Lord, you'll make it."

That positive life attitude, which saw her through so much adversity, is punctuated by a quick wit. When she learned that she is the same approximate age as the brassiere, Ruth quipped: "We've both been holding an awful lot for a long time."

Mutt seemed to be drawn to Ruth's positive nature and humor. Not only did he wait nearly a decade to marry her, but he also doubled his life span just to be with her. When he was about 30 years old, Mutt was told by doctors that he would not live to see 35. He had suffered from rheumatic fever as a youth, and the disease had severely and irreversibly damaged his heart. However, Mutt was determined not to leave his wife and daughter behind.

He turned to the Bible and found Psalm 90:10, which gave him inspiration. The Psalm reads: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten [70]; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Mutt concluded that he would not die at 35, but that he would live to see 70. He died in 1980 at the age of 70.

Such determination for life has been passed from father to daughter. In

addition, the strength and support that Ruth has always exhibited became vitally important to the well-being of her daughter two years ago. In October 2006, Ann was diagnosed with stage 4 ovarian cancer. She was given less than two years to live. An only child, Ann was terrified that she would die before her mother and leave no one to care for Ruth. She initially did not tell Ruth the seriousness of her condition. Ruth's maternal instinct sensed the real danger, and she insisted on being told the whole truth. Weeks after her first surgery, still facing months of chemotherapy, Ann told Ruth the devastating truth.

Ann recalls the day vividly. "She did not even blink," Ann said. "She looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'Ann, God is not dead.' With those words still ringing in my ears, I am continuing the fight for life and am winning, thanks to a wonderful God, outstanding family and friends, and skilled doctors. My mother is a tower of strength for me."

Ann has now exceeded the two-year life sentence given to her by doctors and — looking and feeling healthy and vital — expects to live many more years. Ruth expects that of Ann, as well. Ruth said she prayed a lot for her daughter and is not surprised to see her doing so well. "If you learn to trust in the Lord," Ruth said, "you'll make it."

Lately, however, Ruth has been wondering about her own mortality and purpose. "For two to three years," she said, "I've wondered why the Lord has left me here." The reason seems clear: Ann.

Ann needed her mother to help her through the toughest challenge of her life. Despite approaching 100 years of age at the time of Ann's diagnosis, Ruth never doubted for a second her own fortitude or faith — or that which she had given her daughter. She never doubted her ability to help her daughter. She was, as Ann described, a tower of strength. Ann expects her mother to continue to be that tower of strength for her for some time to come, simply because Ruth knows no other way. **NOW**

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At Home With
Steve and Laura
Smiley

A Happy Home

— By Diana Merrill Claussen



When Steve and Laura Smiley bought their five-bedroom, 3,550-square-foot home, they never imagined they would end up needing so much space. However, the relocation to their country home was not only just what the Smiley family wanted, but inevitably needed. From the full length front porch complete with paddle fans and swing to the many beautiful glass-etched accents, this manor has many touches that make it perfect for the Smileys. “With the house, we got more space and the right price,” Laura said. “She liked the porch,” Steve added.

The family has lived in Red Oak for 25 years. When they first saw this particular home five years ago, they soon realized the original owner loved the color pink. “Everything they had in here was Mary Kay pink,” Steve laughed. “From the wall and tile colors to the marbles and paint, everything was pink.” Luckily for Steve, Laura was not a big fan of the color either, but the Smileys realized that within the pink-colored walls was their true home. Since they bought the house, they

have gradually been renovating the charming red brick split-level home. “The only pink that’s still in the house is located in the master bath and upstairs bedrooms,” daughter Melody shared. The rest has been painted, retiled, or replaced.

One aspect of the renovation can be seen upon entering the spacious home, where the seafoam green-colored entry is complemented with a feather scone and antique settee. Venturing into the open and welcoming living room is quite an experience for anyone who loves vaulted ceilings and plenty of light. There are many pieces which are not only dear to this family, but reminiscent of travels and adventures.

“We have a collection of scrap metal frogs over the entertainment center,” Steve pointed out. “I saw them at an art show in Connecticut. They reminded me of a place where we stayed during one of our trips to Jamaica.” “We used to go to Jamaica once a year,” Laura said. The living room is just one area of the home that represents what this family loves to do most — have a blast! “We spend a lot of time in this room,” Melody shared.

They also play many board games or just sit back and snooze on their comfortable, plush sofas — especially when watching TV. “We mainly watch a lot of movies,” Melody said. “During the holidays, someone usually falls asleep on the couch.”

For Laura, family time in the living room is the most important activity that takes place in the home. Located by the TV is another memento to remind her of family. “Above the entertainment center is my grandmother’s ceramic dog collection,” Laura shared. “When she passed away, the dogs



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were given to me.” Laura’s love of dogs is evident, especially when interacting with the family pet, Mollie. Mollie loves playing in the living room, and being a great hostess for the family’s company.

When entertaining during the holidays, Steve, Laura and Melody love playing songs and carols on the piano. They also get much use from the fireplace. “The first couple of years when we lived here, the fireplace is all we really used for heat,” Steve recalled. Having dinner by fireside is always a possibility, especially since the cranberry-

colored formal dining area is just a room away.

Accented in rich colors, the dining room is furnished with a beautiful antique dining set and is centered by Dupioni Indian curtains. Many Asian treasures from Steve’s travels accent the area. Besides eating at their dining room table, the family also uses it to help those in dire need. “I volunteer with Meals on Wheels and donate to the North Ellis County Outreach. We separate many of our donations and clothes on the table,” Laura explained.

From the formal area to the large but cozy kitchen, the Smileys agree this room is where many of the family festivities usually begin. “It’s fun to sit around and cook something,” youngest son, Jackson, said. “Mom taught us all how to cook,” Melody added. The Smiley children learned how to cook for just about any occasion. “My first job was as a chef, and I later owned a deli and catering business,” Laura shared. During the holidays, she is always creating many good and hearty soups and comfort food.

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"With raising three kids, we ate at home a lot," Laura said. "Eating together is something we've always done as a family, and it's a lot of fun," Melody added. During the Smileys' many parties and gatherings, the black-tiled kitchen island seems to get the most attention. "Everyone in the family comes to the house and gathers around the island," Jackson said. "The island is also where I chitchat while I cook," Laura added. She will also give her kitchen guests bites of her dishes as she garnishes and sets them out along the entire length of the very long counter.

With oak cabinetry and floors, the kitchen is complete with a sunflower-accented breakfast nook and is the ultimate sunlit retreat. For a relaxing way to unwind, all one has to do is simply venture from the nook to the backyard. The patio features a large arbor with breathtaking views of horses in a meadow and a plethora of wildlife. In the mornings, it is quiet



and peaceful and Laura enjoys spending time relaxing in nature. "I come out here to sit and watch the dog chase the wild rabbits," she said. "I also enjoy watching the horses and the flock of guinea chickens that roam around."

Since moving to the home, Laura has also started a garden. "She grows spearmint and wintergreen," Melody said. "She will then make tea and throw the leaves in." Laura wanted to grow tomatoes one year, but, "They didn't grow very well," she said. During the fall a few years ago, Laura carved a pumpkin in the spacious



backyard and then used the seeds to start their very own pumpkin patch.

When it comes to their country home, "Living here is just tranquil," Laura expressed. Year-round the Smileys love to share their out-of-town getaway. "We like to entertain and do a lot of barbecue eating and playing," Laura said. "We have plenty of room and great neighbors, so we can do what we want [host big events] and nobody cares." The Smiley family truly lives up to their name, for they are a family filled with happiness, laughter and much fun. **XXX**

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A True Craftsman

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

The art of “tinkering” has almost become nonexistent in today’s times. However, at 67-year-old Jerry Thompson’s workshop, scrap and contemporary craftsmanship are both alive and flourishing. “I am known as ‘The Great Improviser,’” Jerry shared. “I’ve always enjoyed making something out of nothing or trying to figure out a better and easier way to do something.”

When Jerry was a child, he would look for scraps in junk piles and then make something out of them. Then in the ’60s, Jerry’s craftsmanship and skills reached a new level. “When I was working with my brother-in-law I learned to weld,” he said. Later, “A friend showed me how to bend metal with a sheet brake to make neon signs.” Jerry’s boss encouraged him to learn more about welding, so he started practicing more on his own. One day, he decided to practice the skill using a piece of galvanized steel.

“That’s when the shop started getting smoky,” he recalled. “My boss then came out of his office and told me to never weld galvanized steel, because it can poison your lungs. You can use it, but it’s the hardest material to work with.” After learning this valuable lesson, Jerry went to welding school in Waco and took welding and drafting classes. “I eventually got to where I could weld a little bit and later had a chance to do underwater welding,” he said. With a laugh, he explained that he



decided not to pursue this opportunity because, “I never saw a reason why someone would need a sign underwater.”

The classes not only helped Jerry to polish his skill, but also to broaden his artistic ability. “I’ve been building signs since 1960,” he shared. “I also used to make detailed scale-sized sketches by hand to create the lettering for the signs.” The art of creating hand lettering was time consuming, so it is now done mainly by computers. “The computers cut down on the labor time considerably,” Jerry said. “I fought computers for a long time and still even have my old brushes, but they just don’t compare to computers.”

Since he began creating signs, Jerry’s craft has progressed and branched out. Through his workshop, he works with many different materials while using multiple mediums and creating a variety of useful and artful items. There are picture frames, 20’ x 40’ billboards, truck trailers, bicycles, bed frames, yard art, scrollwork, neons, lit Plexiglas and household accessories. “Every time I start on a project, another one comes up,” Jerry

said. “I just got a lot of stuff, and I love working.”

He works with a variety of materials, from steel and aluminum to coppers, vinyl and Plexiglas. “I lay out ideas for my crafts in my head,” Jerry explained. “I guess I am an artist in the respect that I like to create things. I’m not much into detail and do so many different things that I tend to overextend myself.”

For a brief period, however, Jerry’s work came to a complete stop. “It began with my left arm twitching,” he said. “Then it came to a point where I couldn’t hold nails and had to have my wife, Kay, hold them for me.” Within a short time, Jerry’s speech started to slur and he was taken to the hospital. “They found my carotid artery was 99 percent blocked,” he continued. “That is what caused me to have a stroke. It was also the first time I had ever been in the hospital.”

Jerry’s recent ultrasound showed his health to be improving. “I consider myself fortunate that I was given the chance to correct a few things,” he reflected. “The stroke was a wake-up call for me. A lot of guys don’t usually

make it." He is also thankful to continue to create his crafts. "I love what I'm doing," Jerry added. "My dad was a bricklayer and always told me if I found something that I liked to do, I'd never have to work a day in my life."

Jerry creates work in his workshop year-round, "though it is easier to work outside in the winter when it's cooler," he said. Jerry still has a few aftereffects of his stroke but does not allow them to keep him out of his shop or stop him from working. "My left arm feels funny," he said. "When I play guitar it is sometimes hard for me

**"I am known as
'The Great Improviser.'"**



since I lost most of the feeling in my index finger." Jerry enjoys playing bluegrass and gospel on his guitar and is learning to play the Dobro Kay bought him for Christmas.

Although Jerry is living his dreams, he still has many more plans he would like to see fulfilled. "I would like to get a travel trailer and find a place in the country where I can do my crafts and go to shows," he said. "I gotta work because I just can't sit down." **ARTS NOW**

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Heroic Horseman

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

One would not peg local gent Rich Isbell, in his black felt hat, cowboy boots and spurs, as a cheerleader. For local children, however, this lifelong cowboy is not only that, but so much more.

"I originally lived in Texas in the 1950s," Rich shared, explaining that he was an orphan who got his first shot at rodeo riding at the age of 15. "Later, I went into the service and when I got out, [I] went to work for a dude ranch and competed in rodeos again." Rich mainly competed in bareback bronc riding and continued to compete after he started his family. "I had my daughter on a pony when she was 2 years old," he said. "When she was 4, she started competing." When Rich married his second wife, Judi, in 1982, he encouraged his stepson, John, to ride. "John later won at the California State Horse Mastership competition," he added proudly.

In 2006, Rich made the decision to leave California and return to Texas after Judi passed away. He missed her and had a rough time moving forward. "I didn't want to leave California, but everything there reminded me of my wife," he shared. "We had been married for 28 years, and every day was a honeymoon. Judi and I would dance competitively and even around the house. Any day we didn't dance was a lost day." Judi was the person who cheered Rich on when he and the children competed. "We were a really close family, but my kids understood I couldn't stay," he said.

After arriving in Texas, "The first thing I did was buy myself the horse Judi always wanted me to have," Rich said. That horse is his palomino mare, Skip. "When I first saw Skip, I knew I had to buy her," he added. "She is just a sweetheart."

Since acquiring Skip, Rich has been riding and competing with her all over the area. He and his daughter participate in the Cedar Hill Saddle Club and Lonestar Cowboy Church. Rich can also be seen riding Skip from his home to McDonald's for his morning coffee. Rich and Skip are inseparable friends.

It is amazing how much Rich rides, even after 23 surgeries.



He and Skip participate in competitions, equestrian "play days" and horseback lessons, where Rich uses Skip to teach local children how to ride. "I've always been involved with helping kids, from my own kids to nieces, nephews and now my grandkids," Rich shared. "It's always been something I enjoy doing because I see something good that always comes out of it."

Through the church's Little Wranglers program, Rich and Skip teach children to ride and many other lessons. "Getting kids involved with animals gives them more self-esteem and they learn more responsibility," he explained. Some of the children who take lessons are as young as 3 years old. However, "Anyone from the community can come and ride in our programs," Rich smiled.

Through participating in many of the church's events, this 65-year-old, former state of California Reserve Champion winner is back to competing. According to Rich, it is hard to not be a part of it once it gets in your blood. "Sometimes, I feel I can still get on a rodeo horse, and I want to do just one more [bronc] ride, but my body won't let me. So, I am beginning to rope and have been learning and competing in team penning events, too. Skip and I get out there and just

try to do our thing. We both have a lot to learn, and we're having fun at it."

After being involved with horsemanship for 49 years, Rich is thankful he can teach others the sport he loves. He is also glad to be able to help children accomplish the things they are striving to achieve. "It also helps me to give of myself from what I have learned," he added.



"If the kids need help or advice, I'll do anything I can do to assist them," he said. "I love to see the kids work their heart out." Rich believes in encouraging children to reach their fullest potential through praise and positivity. "No matter who you are, if you are participating in something and you have someone to cheer you on, you always feel better and do better," he expressed, still remembering how good he felt when Judi cheered for him.

Besides riding and sharing his love of rodeo with children, Rich attends Red Oak High School football games and is a devoted fan who cheers from the stands. "California football wasn't like Texas football; you would never see a packed stadium like you do here," he said. Since moving back, Rich has faithfully shown up to almost every Red Oak game with his bag of bugle and cow horn noise makers, earning him the beloved nickname, "Cowboy Rich."

Whether participating in the stands or in an arena, Rich is getting back to living life. As he said, "Getting up on a saddle and riding is nature's way of saying slow down and look at the world." **NOW**



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Making Today Good

— By Sandra McIntosh

Loved ones no longer need to feel guilty when it comes to caring for the senior members of their family thanks to Red Oak Health & Rehabilitation Center, conveniently located off Interstate 35 at 101 Reese Drive. “With a two-family-member income, there’s no need to feel guilty about not being able to sit at home as the 24-hour caregiver,” the facility’s administrator, Helen Atkinson, said. “The quality of life for the whole family can become stressful during these times.”

One of the many goals of the center is to make the transition to assisted living one that is comfortable for the whole family. “The question that is always asked is, ‘How can we make today good for everyone?’” Helen added. “Families are always involved in the activities we offer,” Elizabeth White, the director of nursing who has been with the Senior Care Consultant facility for the past three years, interjected. “Generations have changed over the years. The baby boomers feel we offer a product or service. They want to make sure they’re getting what they’re paying for.”

The 144-bed facility generally operates at 90 percent capacity or above. Twenty-four beds make up the secure unit that is mainly reserved for individuals who have been diagnosed with dementia and/or Alzheimer’s disease. The Medicare rehabilitation unit also consists of 24 beds. “This unit is designed for short-term residents,” Elizabeth said. “We teach people how to rehab back to life at home or rehab to be independent within the facility. We also have our own home health care that goes to the home to continue the rehabilitation process.”

Red Oak Health & Rehabilitation Center is definitely keeping up with technology by offering Nintendo Wii, the newest video game on the market, both in the rehabilitation



Taking care of your loved ones is at the top of the priority list for Director of Nursing Elizabeth White and Administrator Helen Atkinson.

wing and in the activity department. “People who used to never come out of their rooms are venturing out to play games on the Wii,” Helen said. “Competitions are fierce!”

The facility has been at its present location for six years, moving from their original home in Ferris, Texas. Several long-term employees, as well as residents, made the move, too. With close to 200 members on staff, quality care is paramount. “The quality of care is so important,” Helen said, as Elizabeth nodded her head in agreement. “Nothing else counts without this firm foundation.” Special classes are offered to nurses aides, while the facility has also partnered



with Navarro College. "Students do their clinical time here," Helen explained. "LVNs commute from Waxahachie and RNs travel from Corsicana."

Since nursing is the largest department within the facility, it makes Helen and Elizabeth's past years of experience in the medical field invaluable. Helen's tenure as a registered nurse started back home in South Africa. "I didn't start long-term care until coming to the States in 1978," she said. Elizabeth came on board with 13 years experience as a nurse and six years as a nursing director. Needless to say, their experience has been very helpful when it comes to operating a successful center. "It's good to still have a little self-doubt," Elizabeth said. "You need to always stay humble enough to hear what others around you are saying, especially since we're a business centered on people."

The facility has earned the trust of a community that extends further than the Red Oak area. Residents interested in a happy place to call home have traveled from as far as California, Colorado and New Mexico. For more information on Red Oak Health & Rehabilitation Center, please call (469) 552-0500. "We're just people you know," Elizabeth said, "caring for people you love." **NOW**



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Staying in the

Loop

— By Mary Pritchard

Even though she says she is still a novice, Regina Salik started sewing when she was 8 years old. When continuing education courses were offered at Red Oak High School last spring, Regina was the obvious person to teach quilting and sewing because she is the home economics instructor at the school. "I started making my own clothes when I was 10," she said. "My mother and grandmother quilted, so it came naturally. In the last four years, I've really gotten into it. I keep up with all the latest technology and ideas and already have a waiting list of 20 when the class begins again in spring 2009."

This continuing education course lasts four weeks. Other classes available will be Digital Photography, Computer Help 101, Auto Care for Ladies, Sewing 101, Nail Care and Word-Excel. "In Sewing 101, Janet Allen teaches basic sewing education, and I teach basic quilting, where the students make a wall hanging, a lap quilt or a twin bed quilt," Regina noted. "Last spring, we met on Tuesday nights from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. It was a big success." As soon as dates for the spring classes are determined, they will be posted on the school Web site and advertised in *Red OakNOW* magazine.

In Regina's high school apparel classes, her students make quilt blocks as a project choice, but they must also make a garment. "I'm open and resourceful with my students," she said. "They can tell me anything." She also runs a tight ship. They need to have a sewing objective for every day of the week, so by the end of the week, a preset goal has been reached and the students can see their progress. Regina tells her students, "I want



people to come up to you and ask, 'Where did you buy that?'" regarding the garment they have sewn.

Regina keeps up with trends and the latest techniques. "I am very technological, always searching for the latest ideas that will keep the students' interest," she said. "The clothes they sew need to look professional and modern. So in our second semester of textiles and design, we use computer software called Wild Ginger which produces a pattern that fits the individual perfectly. The student then designs their own patterns by choosing different options. We have a lot of technology in our department."

According to Regina, guys are better sewers, possibly because of the construction aspects of sewing. "They like to make pajamas," she said. "I have guys in all my classes."

"Sewing students learn the construction techniques that can be used in any kind of sewing," Regina continued. "It's a skill for life. They learn to look critically at clothing in stores and recognize whether the construction is good or shoddy before they buy."

Students get to present their creations at a fashion show where they invite other classes to attend. "The food classes serve hors d'oeuvres, too," she added. "It's a good advertisement for the Family and Consumer Sciences Department." Regina also encourages the use

of posters, brochures, fliers and display tables to catch the interest of other students. "Two of our students went on to the Art Institute in Dallas two years ago and took fashion



Education NOW

design," she commented.

Regina also "stays in the loop" with quilting, too. "I take quilting classes all the time," she said. "In Midlothian, I go to Quilts 'n More. They do Block a Month Club, which is easy and the ladies there are great. If you are a novice, Thomas Sewing Center in Mesquite is a good one. Suzy's Quilt Store on Old Town Square in Garland is good as well. Common Threads in Waxahachie specializes in Civil War reproduction prints, but they also have others."

People who are starting out do not need fancy equipment, just a utility sewing machine and a pair of scissors. Regina recommends visiting the local library for quilting books and area book stores that offer many great choices. "On Saturday mornings, quilting is on TV, and I'm doing a Block a Month quilt online," she said, referring to the many quilting Web sites.

Some good patterns, Regina said, can be found in magazines such as *Quilts*, *Quilt It*, *Fons Porter Easy Quilts* and *McCall's*. "Quilt-maker has artsy quilts. *Quilter's Home*," she continued, "is done by a guy and has really good articles about what's going on in the quilting world all over the United States."

Regina also had a tip for new quilters: "Don't get caught up in all the commercialism," she stated. "A lot of the time, you can go online and get a pattern if other options seem too expensive. In some cases, you don't pay anything and you work at your own pace."

During the fall, Regina attends The International Quilt Festival in Houston. "The festival is the nirvana of quilting. It's fantastic," she said. "While there, I attended a denim quilt workshop. The festival also features exhibits, classes and mini classes." Although art and silk quilting with Japanese patterns are displayed at the show, as well as the latest quilting trends, "I prefer the old-fashioned patterns for myself," Regina said. **NOW**

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Red Oak Deputy Fire Chief Tim Birdwell, Red Oak Fire Chief and acting City Manager Eric Thompson and County Emergency Management Coordinator John Patterson, top left, reviewed maps of Chamber County. Tucker and Parker Navarro, top center, showed off the candy they collected during the Ovilla Heritage Day Parade. Brenda Bené, fourth grade teacher at Shields Elementary, top right, was chosen as the Red Oak ISD superintendent's Teacher of the Month for September. Students at Shields, second row left, celebrated Grandparent's Day by inviting their grandparents to lunch. The Wallace girls, third row left, visited Glenn Heights. Shay Overstreet and daughter, Tatyana, second row left center, shopped during the Fall Craft Fair. Prosperity Bank, second row right center, held a pillow and toiletries drive to benefit North Ellis County Outreach. The ROHS football team, bottom right, played hard during the homecoming game. The senior class of Ovilla Christian School, bottom left, supported the Dallas Cowboys with their float during the Ovilla Heritage Day Parade.

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In 2005, Carol's family and friends encouraged her to enter her tomatillo sauce in the Texas State Fair cooking contest. To her amazement, she not only won first place in the salsa category, but she also won the high honor of Best Overall for all Tex-Mex entries. "I was extremely surprised," she expressed, "since it was my first (and last) contest to ever enter."

Carol loves to bake, but desserts are her favorite, "especially if they include chocolate!" she exclaimed. Just as Carol's mother taught her how to be a great cook, her two daughters, Kyndal and Amy, are blessed to have received the same valuable lessons. Carol proudly said, "They are very happy that I've taught both of them to be great cooks also." **AMY**

To view more of your neighbors' recipes, visit our archives at www.nowmagazines.com.

IN THE KITCHEN WITH CAROL HAVERON

CAROL'S ORIGINAL TOMATILLO SAUCE

State Fair of Texas 1st Place Prize winning recipe in 2005

1 bunch cilantro
1 lb. husked tomatillos
7 cloves peeled garlic
4 jalapeños, unstemmed
1 Tbsp. salt
2 avocados, peeled and pitted
Wash and drain cilantro. Tear off stems where there are no leaves; set aside. Wash tomatillos; cut into quarters and set aside. Put garlic cloves, jalapeños and salt in blender; chop until blended. Add small amounts of cilantro and tomatillos, blending after each addition. Add avocados and pulse a few times to mix.

GERMAN CHOCOLATE CAKE

Carol's great-grandmother's recipe.

1 box German chocolate cake mix, prepared per instructions.
ICING:
3 egg yolks
1 Tbsp. flour
1 cup sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
1 12-oz. can evaporated milk

1 stick (1/2 cup) butter
3/4 cup pecans, chopped
1 cup coconut
1 tsp. vanilla
Bake a German chocolate cake using a mix. Freeze cake for at least a few hours before icing so it is extremely moist. ICING: Beat egg yolks; set aside. Mix flour, sugar and salt and stir into milk; add butter. Cook over low heat until melted. Slowly stir beaten egg yolks into the mixture. Add pecans and coconut and cook until thick, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and add vanilla.

BANANA FLAXSEED MUFFINS

1 1/4 cup whole-wheat flour
1/2 quick oats
1/2 cup ground flaxseed
4 tsp. flaxseed
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 cup 1% or 2% milk
1/4 cup honey
1/4 cup canola oil
3 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla

3 mashed ripe bananas
1/2 toasted pecans or walnuts, chopped
1 1/2 cup frozen berries (I usually use raspberries, blueberries and blackberries.)
Mix all wet ingredients; then add all dry ones, adding frozen fruit last. Spray muffin pans with Pam or Crisco with flour; pour mix into pans. Bake for 15 - 20 minutes at 325 - 350 F.

BAILEY'S IRISH CREAM

3 eggs
5 Tbsp. Hershey's chocolate syrup
1 1/2 cups cold strong coffee
1 Tbsp. vanilla
1 pint heavy whipping cream
1 can Eagle Brand Milk
2 cups Old Bushmill's Irish Whiskey (must use this kind)
Put eggs, Hershey's chocolate syrup, coffee and vanilla in blender. Blend for 30 seconds. Pour into a large bowl. Put whipping cream, Eagle Brand Milk and whiskey into blender; blend for 30 seconds. Pour in bowl with other mix. Stir together; pour half into blender and blend together for 30 seconds, slowly adding more until all is blended. Enjoy! Pour into nice glass bottles and give as gifts!

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How Can an Annuity Help Fill Your Retirement Income Gap?

— By Nickie Weyrauch

Your retirement income gap is the difference between the money you will have and the money you will need for retirement. Social Security and company pension plans may not be sufficient to support a comfortable retirement.

One additional retirement savings option is an annuity, which is a contract between you and an insurance company. The insurance company invests your money for you, and, depending on the terms of your annuity, you may receive a regular payment based on the success of the investments. Since income on annuities is not taxed until withdrawn from the contract, annuities can be one tool you might use to save for retirement.

The following are some ways an annuity can fill the gap:

- An annuity can provide you an option to receive a guaranteed stream

of income payments for as long as you live.

- There is generally no limit to how much money you can contribute to annuities, either in one lump sum or periodic payments (although, the insurer may limit maximum contributions in a particular annuity and certain limitations and exclusions apply).

- You decide how often and for how long you will get your money back.

- There may be death benefit options that allow you to leave money to your beneficiaries without the costs and delays of probate.

- The gain on annuities is tax deferred; you pay no taxes on what you earn until you withdraw the money.

However, distributions taken prior to annuitization are generally considered to come from the gain in the contract first. If your contract is annuitized, a portion of each payment will be considered taxable and the remaining

portion will be a non-taxable return of your investment in the contract, which is also called the “basis.” Once the investment in the contract is depleted, all remaining payments will be fully taxable. If the contract is tax-qualified, generally, all payments will be fully taxable. Distributions prior to age 59 ½, may be subject to an additional 10 percent federal tax penalty

- Since the gain on annuities is tax deferred and they usually offer a competitive interest rate, your money has a chance to grow quickly. Your annuity could, in the end, be worth more than a non-tax-deferred investment that is offering a slightly higher rate of return.



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November 2008

Community Calendar

Every Monday

Celebrate Recovery meeting, First Baptist Church of Red Oak, 103 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-3591. www.redoakcelebraterecovery.com.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

Alcoholics Anonymous meeting: 7:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 600 Red Oak Rd. Nonsmoking. (972) 617-9100.

Thursdays

Gamblers Anonymous meeting: 8:30 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 600 Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-9100.

First and Third Tuesdays

Red Oak Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m., 207 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-3577.

Every Wednesday

Family Story Time: 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. (469) 218-1230. www.redoakpubliclibrary.org.

Wednesdays and Thursdays

Senior Citizens Club meeting: 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., 207 West Red Oak Rd. Games, exercise and activities. (972) 576-2777.

Second Thursday

American Cancer Society Support group meeting: 7:00

p.m., First United Methodist Church, 600 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-9100.

Third Thursday

American Business Womens Association meeting. www.abwa-empoweringwomen.org.

Last Thursday

DeSoto Art League meeting. www.desotoartleague.com.

First Saturday

Red Oak Fire Rescue CPR classes: 9:00 a.m. Call early to register. (469) 218-7713. www.redoaktx.org.

First Friday

Worship Jam: 6:30 p.m., Bubba Que BBQ's front porch.

November 1, 2

The King and I performed by the Waxahachie Community Theatre at the Chautauqua Auditorium in Waxahachie. www.waxahachiecommunitytheatre.com.

November 2

Contemporary Christian music artist, Leeland, will be the special guest for both the 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Sunday services at The Oaks Fellowship.

November 7, 8

WWII Re-enactment, parade and USO dance: 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 p.m., downtown Waxahachie. (972) 937-2390.

November 14

Ovilla Christian School's annual partner's auction, "A Night at the OCS Corral." Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Dinner: 6:00 p.m. Expo Center, 2300 W. Hwy. 287, Waxahachie. Preregistration is required. Tickets may be purchased through November 7. Contact klivingston@ovillachristianschool.org.

November 19

The Ellis County Christian Women's Connection's monthly luncheon, Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 W. Hwy. 287. The cost is \$13, inclusive. Nursery vouchers are available for those with young children. Please contact either Kay at (972) 937-2807 or Mary at (972) 937-9984, or e-mail Kay at windchime@charter.net by Sunday, November 16.

November 22

Speak Up For Kids CASA 5K Fun Run/Walk, Getzendaner Park, Waxahachie. (972) 937-1455.

December 5 - 7

Bethlehem Revisited, behind Central Presbyterian church at 402 N. College St., Waxahachie. Live nativity. Free Admission. (972) 937-2390.

For more community events, visit our online calendar at www.nowmagazines.com.

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