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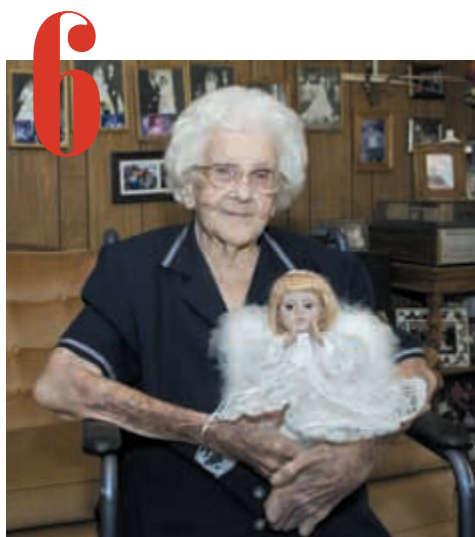
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Kelly Wolfe, Administrator

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Ennis NOW

Editor's Note

Seasons Greetings,

"Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning." Why do we love Christmas? Is it because everyone acts a little bit kinder, exhibiting a regard for their fellow man by offering a friendly smile, holding a door open, opening their pocketbook for the less fortunate? I think most have these feelings year-round, and are just glad to have the chance to show it. At Christmas, we are more aware of our blessings of family, friends and home. We are also much more willing to open our eyes to see the needs and hearts of others. The warm glow that enters our hearts at Christmas does not come from the glitter of twinkling lights, however sweet they are. It comes from the steady burning warmth of knowing we can make a difference in each other's lives. This year, try to keep a Christmas song in your heart all year: "Let every heart prepare Him room."

Merry Christmas,
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Ennis Editor



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A Century of Christmas Memories

— By Stephanie Brewer

Annie Martinek pictured with her six living children.

At only 100 years young, Annie Martinek, along with her children have enough Christmas memories to fill a steamer trunk. With seven children, 29 grandchildren, 59 great-grandchildren and 11 great-great-grandchildren and spouses, Annie's family has grown to easily have 150 in attendance at their annual Christmas celebration.

Annie and two of her daughters, Betty Macalik and Margaret Krajca, merrily reminisced on Christmas memories and traditions, ranging from Annie's childhood to the present. Not all traditions have been maintained, and many new ones have been created. Annie related one of her early childhood Christmas recollections: "My dad or one of my uncles would hide behind something, waiting for all the kids," she said. "Then they would jump out and surprise us. It was always a surprise and so much fun."

When Annie's children were young, Santa Claus came up to the house from the barn. "My oldest son, Milton, always knew who he was," Annie explained. "He would yell, 'Come on, Santa, come on!' while the younger children were clinging for dear life to my skirt, crying because they were afraid of Santa." After some


convincing, from Annie, they were all right with him, and soon grew to love his annual visit.

Margaret remembers stringing popcorn and making paper chains to decorate the Christmas tree. She still relishes the memory of an angel holding a silver star, which was placed atop the Christmas tree. "The prettiest tree in the pasture," she proudly said. "Dad and my brothers would go out about 10 days before Christmas and chop down the prettiest tree in the pasture."

Betty fondly recalled the significance of Dec. 6. "St. Nicholas, or 'Mikulash' as we called him, would come. He'd get the letters we'd written and put in a box on the front porch," Betty said. "We could hear rustling outside. We knew St. Nicholas had left us some treats, such as fruit, nuts and candy." Betty and Margaret both affectionately remember the handmade gifts their parents gave them — clothing from their mom, and their dad made cars and trucks for their brothers.

A custom from Betty's youth came to mind — Christmas Eve fasting! Whoever managed not to eat the entire day until Christmas Eve dinner would be able to see a golden pig. "I'm





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afraid I never saw that golden pig," Betty said. "She also remembered always having fish for dinner, along with a number of other dishes. Her brother, Emil Martinek, would make fudge, while Annie would make apple strudel with cherries on top and fruitcake. Betty never forgot the fruitcake, nor the after-dinner tradition started by her father. "There was always a bowl of fruit and nuts on the table," she said. "After finishing dinner, no one could get up from the table until my dad has his fill of nuts. He cracked and ate them very slowly, as I remember, but once dinner was over, the time we looked forward to the most had finally arrived — opening the presents. Even though we, as small kids, didn't have much money to spend, we always bought each other a gift. We ended the Christmas Eve tradition by attending midnight mass as a family."



The Martinek family Christmas celebration can easily have 150 in attendance. Pictured are those who shared Christmas 2002 together.

Another tradition spilled over from Betty's memory. "When we were little, there was a tradition from my mom's youth of going to our Grandpa and Grandma Martinek's house for Christmas," she said. "In the evening, came Santa and the devil with his chain. If you were good, Santa gave you a present, but if you were bad, the devil took you outside to deal with you. I was always good."

Annie's late husband, Joe, started another tradition after the birth of their first grandchild. "Dad wanted to give her something special from him," Betty tenderly explained, "so he gave her a dollar bill. Hence, the tradition started that after all the gifts were passed out, you lined up and he gave each grandchild, great-grandchild and

great-great-grandchild a dollar bill.” Joe did this until he passed away in 2000. “Mom still carries on the tradition every year,” Betty said, adding that her nephew, Billy, has kept every dollar bill he has received from his grandparents.



“We really like to keep it about family and that warmth of Christmas.”

Betty warmly recounted yet another tradition that began in 1999. “Mom gave each of us kids an angel that plays ‘Silent Night.’ So, since then, we begin our Christmas celebration by singing ‘Silent Night,’” Betty said. “Then one of the grandkids says the blessing.”

Due to the family’s growth, Annie’s family started having their annual Christmas gathering at the SPJST Hall in 2000, instead of at the family home. Annie’s six living children — Betty, Adell, Margaret, Annette, Marvin and Emil — plan the cherished event. Every year, the hall provides a large tree for the family members to decorate. One of Annie’s current traditions is carefully placing her favorite ornament, adorned with a photograph of herself and her late husband, on the tree.

“Grandma Martinek’s Christmas Bingo” is another, fairly new tradition fancied by granddaughter Melissa. The special family game is adapted with names, places and events pertaining to the family. The creative BINGO titles for the playing cards read: ‘best things about Christmas I remember,’ ‘family names,’ ‘grandchildren,’ ‘great-grand-

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children,' 'great-great-grandchildren,' and 'occasions celebrated at grandma's.'

"We always begin our Christmas with a meal of turkey, dressing (my personal favorite) and all the trimmings," Betty explained. "We each bring our favorite dishes and desserts to share. Santa is due to arrive at 2 p.m. We always gather up the children and begin singing carols. It's our tradition to wind up the singing with 'Here Comes Santa Claus' as he enters the



Santa makes a special appearance each year at the Martinek Christmas party.

room. Santa always says a prayer with us before he starts handing out the gifts. Mom has a special chair for Santa to sit in, and as your name is called, you go up, sit on Santa's lap, talk to him a bit and then you get your present," Betty continued. "His favorite question always seems to be, 'Were you a good little boy or girl?'"



Through the years, Annie's children have always gathered together to celebrate Christmas with her.

As the years have gone by, Annie's children have married and had children of their own. Yet they still always celebrate Christmas together, just as if they were at the Martinek homestead. "We really like to keep it about family and that warmth of Christmas," Betty lovingly expressed. "It's about being together, watching the kids play, visiting with everyone, laughing, singing and eating. That's what we like to do." **NOW**

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Keeping up With the Joneses

— By Kelly Kovar

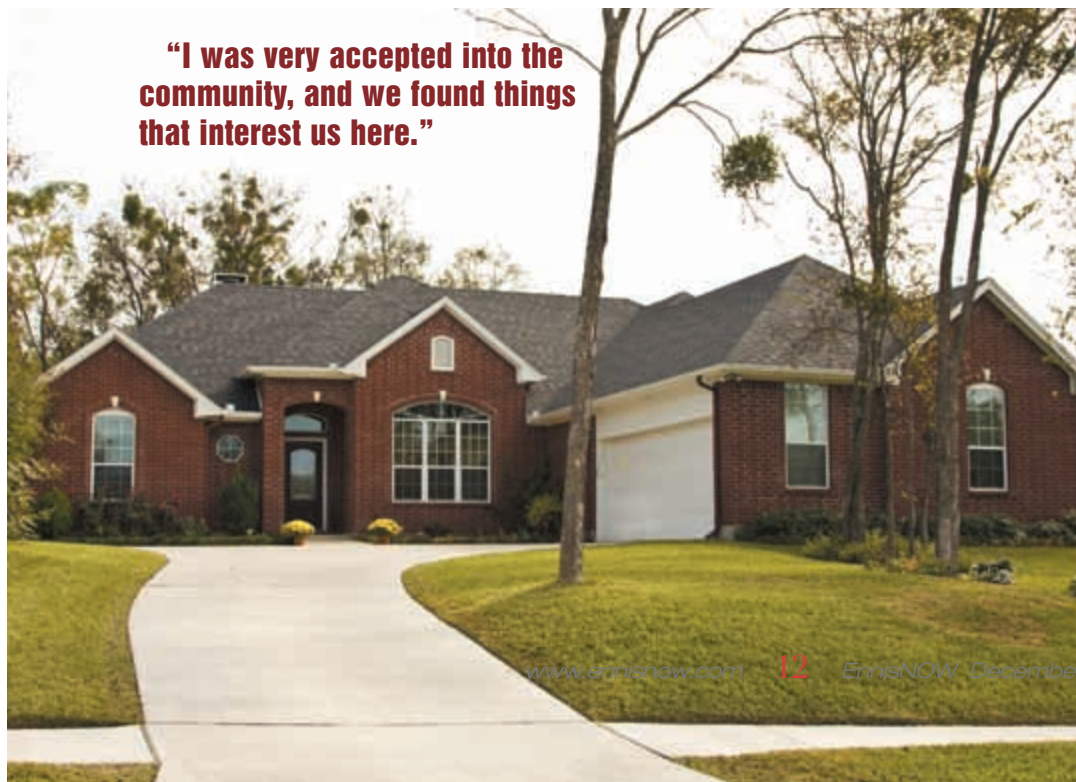
If Gus and Katherine Jones' lives were a Christmas package, you could open it up and see inside to the things that fill their hearts and minds. Their home is, in fact, a microcosm of their life together. Their house and their marriage are a careful and congenial blending of their interests and personalities. "When Gus and I married, four years ago in May, we decided Ennis would be where we would live," Katherine said. "It has been great. I was very accepted into the community, and we found things that interest us here."

Harmony and balance are the first things noticed when entering via the beveled glass front door of their traditional, red brick home. A brick from Gus' grandparents' former home in Normangee, Texas, where he spent summers as a boy, is incorporated in the archway. It hints at



At Home With Gus and Katherine Jones

"I was very accepted into the community, and we found things that interest us here."



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the appreciation for family and heritage that are within. Gus likes neutrals, but you cannot help but believe Katherine's taste might lend itself to a fierier palette. Her solution is to decorate in colors that sooth the eye —neutral carpets, wall colors and fabrics, yet her neutrals are often bold or deep. She relies on texture to add another layer of comfort and luxury to the surroundings. Details like a textured carpet underfoot, the warm sophistication of leather couches and softly draped, claret-colored panels at the windows bring depth and life to the living room.

The living room is tastefully



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personalized with family memorabilia and photos. A bench in one alcove was bought at the Waxahachie courthouse auction. "I told Gus I had to have that bench; I probably sat on it," Katherine said, referring to her position as an investigator with Ellis County Child Protective Services.

Above the bench is a display of mementoes from Gus' grandfather's World War I service in the Canadian military.

Nearby, crosses collected during world travels, as well as from local vendors, offer a lively mix of color and design. A special one was made by Katherine's son, Geoffrey, now 17. Another favorite was made by a glassmaker in Denmark.

A stained glass fire screen brings drama to the fireplace. "We love music and artwork, and we don't have a lot of wall space, so we have been very innovative in incorporating it here,"

Katherine said.

Gus and Katherine favor many similar interests and enjoy pursuing them together. Their respect for each other is obvious. They do not interrupt or talk-over each other. They are calm and measured in conversation, yet it is



obvious they both share a passion for what matters in life. Their kitchen is watched over by a large decorative sign, which says, "I am the vine, you are the branches." It is interesting that its home is the kitchen, because it reflects the fact the couple takes great care to feed both their bodies and souls with worthwhile food.

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They attend Waxahachie Bible Church. "I have learned more in the last five years going there than I have ever learned," Gus mentioned. Gus is Catholic, and, though Katherine was brought up Baptist, she went to a Catholic high school. "There are some occasions that call for the comfort of that tradition," Katherine explained. "We go to St. John for special occasions. Or when we are traveling," Gus added, "you can go to a Catholic Church

anywhere in the world, Germany, Denmark or Prague, and you know how to do it."

In addition to "soul" food, the Joneses take special care with meals as well. "We both like to cook; we like to entertain," Gus said. "When customers come to town, this is a very comfortable house to entertain them in. Everyone ends up in the kitchen," he said. "The kitchen is really the focal point of our house." It has dramatic dark cabinetry

with glass-fronted doors and black leather bar stools. The stainless steel backsplash and warm-tone countertops blend with golden yellow walls.

"Our whole house is built around the disparity in our heights. Gus is 6'6" and I am 5' tall," Katherine pointed out. "We have extra tall cabinets in the kitchen for Gus and a pull-out shelf for me to use for cooking." Two eating areas provide plenty of dining space for guests. The breakfast room is decorated with a whimsical collection of vintage musical instruments. "We just like the way they look and the more beat up, the better. The dining room's Duncan Phyfe set was my grandmother's and then my mother's."



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In addition to their demanding careers, Gus and Katherine both take time to give to their community. Gus has been on the board of United Way, served as an executive member of the Chamber and is on the Economic Development Committee. Katherine is the president of the board of Helping Hands and involved with the Ennis

Arts Commission, also. "Our belief is that you don't join an organization to have your name on the letterhead; if you can't commit time, effort and sweat equity into it, then don't do it," Katherine said. One of their favorite things to do together is delivering food to the elderly on their Meals on Wheels route.

With Christmas just around the corner, the Joneses already have the house ready for the holidays. "When I close the dishwasher on Thanksgiving Day, we open the attic, and I put all my ornaments on my tree. Some of them are ones my son made in school. Some were ones I made as a child," Katherine said. "Every year, Gus and my son, Geoff, have to listen to the stories." Katherine collects Santas and nativities, and she puts trees

in several rooms. "I have my diva tree in my bathroom, with pearls and crystals." Even the pets, Sable the black Manx, and Junior and Missy, the dogs, get in on the festivities, with new collars every Christmas. "Christmas around our house is very 'family'; it is very nostalgic."

Holiday entertaining may spill out onto the patio. "We have a lot of

parties where there is overflow to the backyard seating areas and fountain," Gus said. Roses and colorful zinnias give way to an area for tomatoes and herbs, wild grasses and wisteria, and bluebonnets, in season.

"We love this house, and we love Ennis," Katherine said. "We really try hard to shop, eat and entertain ourselves in Ennis, and people are always amazed at what we can come up with." **ENNISNOW**



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Setting the Stage for Santa

— By Kelly Kovar

Christmastime brings out the artist in everyone, as we create a wonderland of holiday decorations in our homes. We all strive for just the right touch, with the goal of making a special environment for our yuletide celebrations. “The first thing to do is set up your tree, fluff it, and take out all your decorations,” Nancy Swindell said. Nancy, along with friends, Carol Rejcek and Helen Pechal, decorate not only their own homes, but several others around town.

Carol and Nancy brainstorm together. “We take everything out and categorize and look for a theme,” Carol said. “It usually ties in, because people have collected over the years, and their personality is in their collections. Harriett Adam’s decorations are whimsical and warm — lots of little elves and monkeys. She has one big tree



and we put everything on it. It is very pretty.”

Do not try to make your decorations look like everyone else’s. Nancy tries to find a theme in each household’s decorations that reflect the family’s taste and history. “At the Ventura’s house, Joanne Ventura’s decorations included vintage items, such as handmade foil and needlepoint ornaments,” Nancy said. Joanne enjoyed seeing ornaments she had forgotten about added to their tree. “I just kept putting more and more on the tree, and Sam Ventura would see me climbing up and down that ladder like a monkey, and say, ‘Are you putting more on that tree?’ The more it got loaded, the better it looked.”

A tree needs a special topper, and Nancy recommends using something unique and personal. “I used Joanne’s white ostrich plumes as her tree topper. It is a very Victorian look, and Joanne leans toward Victorian



ARTS NOW



things. You can never have too many tree lights." Even on pre-lit trees, Nancy likes to add additional lights.

The placement of the tree is important. "Joanne's tree was situated in the entry; when you walk in the front door, it is next to the stairway and the piano." The peach-colored balls that went with Joanne's colors, mingled with her Victorian ornaments. "We carried the same peach, glass balls onto the stairway. Carol used a heavy garland and bows and we wired the balls to the garland."

At Bryce and Sandy Anderson's home, whimsical white fairies decorate the stairway, and set the theme for the holiday decor. Sandy collects Mark Roberts handmade Christmas fairies. "In the kitchen, she has cooking fairies, and they are hysterical," Nancy said, with a laugh. "I have more fun with them. On her tree, she has an English look, with jesters and fairies. She has Santas that she has collected and a Fontanini nativity. She puts her Christmas plates and her Buyer's Choice Carolers on her Welsh dresser. I like to decorate elegantly, but I also like the whimsical touch."

Every household had different decorating challenges to work with. "You can pick a theme, but you need to learn to be versatile with it," Nancy

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explained. "For example, the Raymond Caldwells have a set of his-and-hers decorations." They have ornaments that each brought to the collection. Raymond is a kid at heart. He likes to come in and watch the decorating. He really got into the Christmas mood, and he will go to the store and buy more decorations; he wants us to expand every year."

Carol agrees that it is always fun at the Caldwells'. "They [Raymond and Andi Caldwell] are so much fun to work with. Every year we try to add to it, and do something a little bit different. It is a work in progress," Carol said. "Now they have personalized their decorations, and it is beautiful at their house at Christmastime. They have a warm, homey Christmas look, mixed in with their antiques from both of their families combined. They have very good taste, very upscale, but warm."

Carol said the first step for Christmas decorators is to choose a color theme that goes with their house. "First, focus on the tree and fireplace, if they have one." New balls and ribbons can unify an inherited collection of ornaments. "Then the next year, add a door wreath and stairway decorations. You don't have to spend a lot of money, just gradually add to it. Every house has its own personality and vibe."

Elegant tree decorations are something everyone can achieve. "You can buy collector balls if you want to, but you don't have to," Nancy instructed. "You can go to a discount store and buy regular balls and incorporate them in. There are ways of cutting corners. Decorating is hard work, but it is an adventure." **ARTS NOW**

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Jack Hall, arena director at the Cowboy Church of Ennis.



— By Kelly Kovar

For sportsmen of all varieties, finding a venue for enjoying your activity is a chief consideration. For the equestrian sport of roping, Jack Hall likes to center his “horseplay” at the Cowboy Church of Ennis’ arena. As arena director there, he has a direct hand in seeing that fellow riders have a safe, wholesome and fun place to pursue their sport.

Jack has been around horses most of his life. He started roping about 20 years ago. “I’ve competed once this year,” Jack said. When not in the arena, Jack works at Southwest Airlines, in aircraft maintenance and engineering.

It was natural for Jack to step in as arena director. It unites his love of riding, people and the Lord, in one place. He makes it a point to see that everyone who comes to his arena has a

chance to practice their sport, whether it is roping, or on Wednesdays when they have youth ride night. Jack’s wife, Wendy, his daughter, Megan, and their

easy events competitions for the kids,” Jack mentioned.

Jack Hall, Dave Wotton and Gene Kubin (Cay’s husband) own the cows.

“We used to rope at my house,” Dave said. They bring their cows out to the arena for roping practice now. “They are really steers and heifers, but we just call them cows. We come out here early on roping nights and catch



The Cowboy Church of Ennis provides a family-friendly place to practice the sport of roping.

friend, Cay Kubin, work with the youth ride. “Cay, Wendy and Megan are getting ready to start some real

the cows, bring them into the pasture and put head wraps on them to protect their ears, so when you are roping them

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Dave Wotton, Jack Hall and Pastor Michael Howard enjoy an evening of roping.

the rope doesn't hurt or sting them."

The ropers come in and warm up their horses. "If we have extra help, we take time for roping ourselves," Dave said. "Some people come out to practice because they are working on their roping to prepare for competition. Others don't want to compete; they just enjoy roping. Even those who ranch



for a living don't use roping in their work anymore. Roping is a sport now."

"People are attracted to ... this arena because it is close to most of them living in this area," Dave said. "Being a smaller practice, they can get pretty much in the three hours we are open here, as much roping as they can stand. It is a simple, no pressure, great practice. We are out here on Thursdays from 7 to 10 in the evening."

"In addition to men, we have women and teenagers who come out here to rope," Jack added. "They like to come here to rope because there is no drinking, and you don't have to

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worry about it getting rowdy.”

“It is smaller, low-key, and a good environment for the little ones,” Dave said. He got interested in roping through his friends, Jack and Gene. “When I married in 1986, my wife had always had horses,” Dave mentioned. “She taught me to ride. When we moved to Ennis in 1991, I met Jack and Gene. I brought them along for



“Once you use your rope to slow down and turn the cow, the heeler has to change sides and come in. The horse has to go the same speed as the cow. It takes teamwork.”

trail riding,” Dave said. “They insisted that I learn how to rope.” When Dave is not riding or roping, he has to make time for work. “I am a technology and communications manager at Southwest Airlines in their operations center at Love Field. My wife is retired from Southwest Airlines. Now, she runs our ranchette [and] takes care of the horses. We have two teenage daughters, too. That is why we wanted her to retire — to stay home with the girls.”

Sometimes Jack and Dave are so busy at the Thursday night roping practice, that they do not get in much practice of their own. “At my place, we have a mechanical cow, called Beauregard, that we pull around with an ATV in my arena,” Dave said.

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Teamwork is key to the sport and the camaraderie that Jack, Dave and Gene have in the arena. “I just like horses; I like roping,” Jack said. “It is like any other sport; this is my release.” **NOW**



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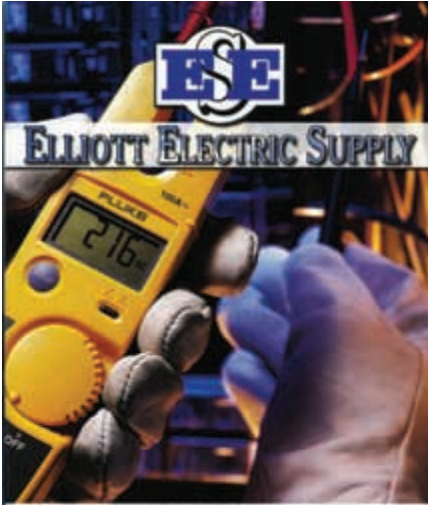
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— By Dia Catalani



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with his son and daughter, Justin Kopec and Kari Rounsavall.

Kopec Overhead Doors opened its first office in 1998 in Corsicana. Kenny worked with Dan Crump and Greg Harrison of Ennis Overhead Doors, who taught him the trade, before helping him establish his own clientele. Nearly 10 years later,

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Self-paced Social Studies

— By Kelly Kovar

Mike Self is the teacher whom students never forget. The fact that he plays in a rock 'n' roll band on weekends and holds a black belt in tae kwon do, gives him an edge kids at Ennis High School (EHS) find fascinating. However, what makes Mike an extraordinary social studies teacher is that he really cares about his students. "I like teaching a lot; I like working with the students," he said. "I have not found a kid I don't like."

Even students who might be classified as troublemakers have a soft spot in Mike's heart. "I have usually taken them under my wing even harder," he explained. "Once you talk to them on their own, and really show that you care what is going on with them, they are different kids. I will say, 'I know you don't know what you want to be when you grow up. Who does, when they are 15 years old? But, you have to take this step here.'"

Mike came to the field of teaching later than some career educators. He grew up in El Paso, moving to Dallas after high school to be a professional musician. "I traveled with bands all over the United States, including

"My dream as a teacher is to have touched their minds."

Inasense, a rock band in the late '80s. I had big hair down to here, a blonde streak, a long earring. If the kids saw me, they would freak," Mike reminisced, with a grin. His travel experiences taught him that it is nice to know where places you talk about are, a concept he has communicated to his geography classes. "I asked one class, 'Does anybody know where this is? Does anybody know where that is?' One girl, who had been laying her head down, said, 'I know where Belize is!'" She was able to come and point it out on Mike's huge wall map. "I've been there," she said. "It was beautiful." I showed interest in her trip, and the next day, her head was up; her book was open; her pen in hand. I realized I reached her! There are some moments like that which give you the will to go on. That is why I do this."

In the '90s, still before his teaching years, Mike continued playing in bands, including Loaded Guns and a duo named Retroactive. He calls the '90s his "film era," because he worked for Panavision and also bought and renovated the downtown Hillsboro theatre. In 2003, inspired by his girlfriend, Jackie Graves, who has been a teacher with the Ennis Independent School District for 17 years, Mike began substitute teaching. "I became enamored with it right away," he recalled. In December, 2003, he went back to school, put in 50 hours in one year, and graduated in December 2004 with a degree in economics and a minor in history. After a year of teaching senior economics at Sunset High School in Dallas, he applied for an open position at EHS. Mike and Jackie had married in 2004, and they had the

Education NOW


opportunity to teach together at EHS.

Jackie goes with Mike when he plays with his current band, The Pontiax, where he can be seen on guitar, keyboard and harmonica. Mike joins Jackie in teaching at her school, Ennis Black Belt Academy. "By teaching martial arts, I found that when you teach, you learn more. I have applied that principle with my social studies classes. I will say, 'You three have 20 minutes to learn that section of the book and teach it to the class.' Then, they will come up and teach. At the end of the year, I can ask them about that little section that they taught, and they will know it better than anything they have done all year."

Mike likes to balance classroom lecture with hands-on learning activities. "One thing I have learned is that competition brings the best out in kids. I put them in teams to do video quizzes and [the competition] is on." In world history, students make a map depicting 30 different historical occurrences. "Once they start, they realize that the Persian Empire occupied a lot of the same



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they will not have the
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territory that the Roman Empire occupied. They have to figure out how to make that overlap. It gets them thinking outside the box."

"When I hear the kids talk about me, they say, 'Ooh, he is the cool teacher.' ... I am not looking for that, but the martial arts and the music put me in a different light in their eyes. Playing in a rock 'n' roll band makes me kind of an enigma. I have a lot of little colloquialisms or sayings that they don't get. I will say, 'Far out, Dude!' because I still talk like a musician to them. They are never going to forget my class, but my dream as a teacher is to have touched their minds. I don't necessarily want to be remembered as being the coolest guy. Rather, my goal is to be that teacher that students remember because they learned from being in his class, because without education, they will not have the knowledge to see the opportunities that wait for them in the future."

Christmas for Your Gardener

— By Nancy Fenton

The holidays are here, and the old question of what to get for your favorite gardener is with us again. I've seen some fun and interesting things this year and thought I would share them with you.

There are lots of "rubber like" shoes out there this year, which really do well in the garden. Most of the discount stores are carrying them, and you can get some high-end ones through the catalogs. Look for ones with a back to them since the ones that just slide on tend to let the mud

and dirt slide in the back. They are great to kick off at the door when the phone rings and do not take much more than a rinse off with the hose when you are finished!

Broad-brimmed hats are literally lifesavers for some of us. The more frequent appearance of suspicious sores on the face, which might be cancerous, is reason enough to shield that skin as much as we can. There are several kinds of hats around, but my favorite is straw with an attached sweatband inside to catch the product of hot, hard work. It also makes the hat fit better. Do not omit the string that holds the hat on in the wind. It cannot do your gardener much good if they are off chasing it! There are also some collapsible ones that fold up into a disc and can be carried easily in a pocket or bag.

If you want to go big this Christmas,

look at a small cultivator. There are electric models, which only weigh about 11 pounds. That is about right for those of us in urban areas without acres to plow. The collapsing sacks with wire in them, which stay open when you are filling them and then smash down for storage when empty, are great for easy pick up of stray branches and other yard trash.


When in doubt, go for a gift certificate to your gardener's favorite garden store or online catalogue. Young people can go for a "gift certificate" of several hours of complaint-less yard work of the gardener's choice. Be it shoes, hats, gloves or plants-to-be, your gardener will appreciate you knowing just where their interest lies. Have a great holiday! **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener in Ellis County.

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Around Town NOW



A ribbon cutting, top left, was held at Bowles Farm and Earth Products. The EHS Varsity Cheerleaders, top right, are shown with Ryan McGuire, son of Bill and Johna McGuire. A grand opening, left middle, was held at Monolith Group. Dan Whisenand, bottom left, grabbed a burger off the grill from W.C. Raines. Jackie Self and her grandson, bottom right, recently enjoyed the blue skies and fall weather. Chamber Ambassadors Daisy and Allen Morris, directly above, presented a membership plaque to Ennis Golf owners, Matt and Gina LaFollett.

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Around Town **NOW**



The fishing booth at the downtown fall festival, top left, was a favorite with the children. Pony rides, top right, created a lot of happy faces at the Ennis Fall Festival. The EHS girls' volleyball team, middle left, worked at their own fundraiser booth. Area teens, Jessica Kovar and Taylor Dodson, directly to the left, manned the booths at a local fall festival so Ennis youngsters could play games and win treats. Doris Dunkerley and Nancy Swindell, bottom far left, oversaw the Ennis Fall Festival, planned by the Downtown Merchant's Association. New members of the Ennis Lions Club, bottom right, were recently announced at a recent noon meeting.

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Look Who's Cooking

— By Melinda Hines

IN THE KITCHEN WITH CERTIFIED CULINARIAN ROBERT K. GILLENLINE

"My mother taught me to cook in the early years, and I self-taught until culinary school," Robert said. Robert started cooking professionally at Zale Lipshy University Hospital as a chef de tournant, served as executive chef at Chandlers Landing Yacht & Tennis Club, as a chef de tournant at Brook Hollow Golf Club and is currently the executive chef at Medical City Hospital. "I am also a chef instructor at the Art Institute of Dallas and enjoy competing," he said. "I currently hold the two-time title as the ASHFSA [American Society for Healthcare Food Service Administration] culinary champ."

Robert even teaches the mother-daughter cooking program at Central Market. "These recipes are very easy to follow if you just take the time to make a great meal," Robert said. **ENNOW**

APPLE EMPANADAS

4 Granny Smith apples
2 oz. brown sugar
2 oz. butter
1 Puff Pastry Sheet
1 oz. cinnamon
1 oz. powdered sugar
2 oz. tequila

Peel and dice the apples. Combine the apples, sugar, tequila and butter in a small bowl. Lay out the Puff Pastry on a clean, level surface. Cut the Puff Pastry in the desired shape (4 x 4-inch square). Fill half of the cut out square with the mixture, and then fold in half. You should have a triangle shape now. Press the edges together with a fork. Follow the steps above until all the pastry is used up. Bake at 350 F until

browned. Top with the cinnamon and the powdered sugar.

HEART HEALTHY BROWNIES

2 egg whites
1 cup applesauce
1/2 cup flour
1 cup packed brown sugar
6 Tbsp. cocoa powder
1 cup walnuts

Combine the egg whites and the applesauce in a large bowl. Add the flour, sugar and cocoa powder. Stir in the nuts. Bake at 350 F in a non-stick baking dish until finished.

CHILE OIL

16 oz. salad oil

6 oz. chili powder

Combine the two in a saucepan. Heat until it simmers. Cool and strain thru a fine sieve. Store chilled.

SWEET POTATO BISCUITS

12 oz. brown sugar
9 oz. margarine softened
1/2 oz. cinnamon
1/2 oz. nutmeg
1/4 oz. salt
7 oz. maple syrup
2 lb. 5 oz. flour
2 3/4 oz. baking powder
7 oz. half & half
1 lb. sweet potatoes, peeled and boiled
Cream together the brown sugar, margarine and spices. Add maple syrup.



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Who's Cooking **NOW**

Add flour, baking powder and half & half.
Add cooked sweet potatoes and mix well.
Roll to 1/2-inch thick and cut to desired
shape. Bake at 400 F for 15 - 20 minutes.

PAN SEARED HALIBUT NAPOLEON WITH YAM AND ROASTED FENNEL

1 fennel bulb
1 large yam
10 oz. halibut fillet
2 shallots
1 qt. heavy cream
2 vanilla beans
1 oz. butter
2 oz. brown sugar
salt and pepper to taste
1/2 oz. micro greens

Roast the fennel and yam in a 350 F oven until fork tender (approximately 45 - 50 minutes). Salt and pepper halibut to taste. In a shallow sauté pan, sear the halibut to a nice golden crust, finish in a 425 F oven. Sauté the shallots in a small saucepot until they are translucent. Add the heavy cream to the shallots. Split one of the vanilla beans and scrape the seeds out adding them to the cream. Reduce the sauce by half. Finish with the butter. Remove the peel from the yam and cut into four even sections removing the skin. Dust the top of the yams with the brown sugar, brown them in a salamander broiler. With a sharp knife cut the halibut to mirror the yam. Clear the dark spots from the fennel bulb and cut it into four even sections. **ASSEMBLY:** Start with the layer of fennel on the bottom, then add the yam and top with the halibut. Drizzle the vanilla cream sauce over the stack and top with the micro greens.



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Year End Planning Opportunities

— By Gary Hayden

The clock is ticking and we are running out of year. As 2007 is winding down, here are some things that you can do that will make a positive impact on your financial life between now and year end.

Get organized. See if you can do a little record keeping cleanup over the holidays. Update your records. Knowing exactly what you have and why you have it is an important step in helping you make smart choices about your money. Develop a game plan that is consistent with your values and lifestyle. Formulate a budget. I apologize for using the dreaded “b” word; however, a budget is critical in order to manage income and expenses.

In order to head off a family feud, get your estate plan in order. Everyone has an estate, and it is important to them that their money, family and possible charitable interests are taken care of. If you do not have a will, go see an estate attorney as soon as possible. Also, if you have a will and possible trust documents, make sure they are current and up to date with your present intentions. Along these same lines, check all your accounts and insurance policies for proper beneficiary designations completeness and accuracy. If you have been blessed with extra money, spread that money around. Make a difference in someone else's life. You can give up to \$12,000 per person per year without triggering gift tax. Also, you can make unlimited charitable contributions without gift tax.

In the retirement area, there are some year end planning opportunities that you do not want to miss. If you are still accumulating for retirement, make the maximum contributions for 2007 if at all possible. The type of retirement plan you have will dictate how much you can contribute. For 401(k) or 403(b) plans, it is \$15,500. If you are over age 50, an additional

\$5,000 may be contributed. If you have an IRA, you can put away \$4,000 for 2007 (\$5,000 if you are over age 50). If you are already in retirement and over the age of 70 1/2, make sure you calculate and take your required minimum distribution (RMD) from your qualified accounts. If you fail to take your RMD amount by year end, there is a 50 percent penalty of what you should have taken, but did not.

In the retirement area, there are two additional concerns that need to be mentioned:

1. Risk

Many investors are not aware of the risk and volatility to which their current portfolio is exposed. Having the proper asset allocation of your retirement accounts is the most important factor in ensuring that there will be enough money waiting on you at retirement and making sure that you will not run out of money during retirement.

2. Failing to plan for catastrophic medical expenses

Many expenses decrease or stay the same in retirement, with one notable exception: health care. With increasing

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costs of elder care — be it assisted living, home health care, or nursing home fees — you can quickly deplete a nest egg by not adequately planning for long-term care expenses.

Once you have a financial strategy that addresses your concerns and is consistent with your goals, time frame and risk tolerance, you can feel more confident as you navigate the months and years ahead. Take time to enjoy your success at this year end and spend some quality time and remember the people who make your life meaningful. Celebrate Life!

Wishing you a joyous holiday season and a very prosperous New Year! **NOW**

Gary Hayden is a financial consultant with offices in Corsicana and Ennis.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



During this holiday season and every day of the year, we wish you all the best.



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Women's Health, *Part 2*

— By Michelle Confer

Last month, I highlighted the top 5 causes of death in the U.S. for women. You may have been surprised by some of them. This month, I would like to explain what your OB/GYN is really there for, and what is happening when you come to us for that “annual exam.”

OB/GYNs are the providers of health care for women, trained to evaluate and treat you for many health concerns and refer you to the appropriate specialists when we identify an abnormality that warrants further investigation or treatment. We specialize in the care of your female organs throughout your life which therefore includes pregnancy, but we are also there as the gatekeepers for all other aspects of your health.

When you present for your “PAP smear” we use that time to screen you not only for those top killers of

women, but also the myriad of diseases and conditions that we know could affect you. We take a fairly complex history in order to help us to know the diseases and conditions for which you are most likely to be at risk. We use this history to identify conditions you may be displaying symptoms for, even ones you are not aware of, and to outline the concerns you have that we need to discuss with you. We examine you from head to toe to identify any abnormalities you have physically and perform the screening tests we have determined you need based on multiple factors including the history and physical exam that we have just performed. We teach you the techniques and exercises we know that you need to promote your health and well-being such as self-breast exam, Kegel exercises and weight loss.



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*Contributed by Michelle Confer, MD
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December 2007

Community Calendar

Every Monday

Arena Barrel Practice, 7 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ennis.

Every Thursday

Men's Breakfast at the Cowboy Church of Ennis, 7 a.m., Ranch House Café, I-45 exit 242 in Rice.

Team Roping Practice, 7 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ennis. Come with or without a horse.

Second Tuesday

Ennis Masonic Lodge #369 monthly stated meeting. Dinner: 6:30 p.m. Meeting: 7:30 p.m., 209 N. Dallas Street.

Fourth Thursday

Ennis York Rite Bodies. Dinner: 6:30 p.m. Meeting: 7:30 p.m., 209 N. Dallas Street.

Daily

Grace Recovery Group meeting, 8 p.m. at 107 S.W. Main Street. This is a support group for recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. (972) 921-3275.

All month

Applications being accepted for Master Gardner Training Program. Visit www.ECMGA.com or call (972) 825-5175.

November 30 - December 2 and December 7 - 9
Bethlehem Revisited, 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. behind Central Presbyterian Church, 402 N. College Street, Waxahachie.
Ancient Bethlehem recreated depicting the night of Jesus' birth. Free admission. Donations welcome.

November 30 - December 17

My Favorite Christmas, Ennis Public Theater. Visit ennispublictheatre.com or call (972) 878-PLAY.

December 1 - 31

Festival of Lights in downtown Ennis.

December 1

Circle of Friends meeting, 7 p.m. Call (972) 878-0740 for information. Circle of Friends is an Ellis County Women's Group meeting the first Thursday of every month.

Annual Christmas Market & Gift Show. Waxahachie Civic Center. Sponsored by Waxahachie Junior Service League. Tickets \$5. (972) 935-0255.

Christmas Parade, 10 a.m. in Waxahachie. (972) 937-2390.

December 1 - 2 and 8 - 9

Candlelight Home Tour, Waxahachie. 2 p.m. - 8 p.m. (972) 937-2390.

December 1 - 2, and 8 - 9

Waxahachie Downtown Merchants Association hosts annual Downtown Victorian Christmas Festival in the courthouse square. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. on Saturday, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Sundays.

December 2

KJT members Christmas Party, 2 p.m. - 3 p.m. Party for youth. (972) 723-8249.

December 4

Christmas Showcase sponsored by the Ennis Arts Commission,

6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m., First United Methodist Church.

Ennis Garden Club Annual Christmas Party, 6 p.m. at Brown Street Cafe, 118 W. Brown Street. Members bring finger foods.

December 6

WInGS (Women in God's Service) Women's Ministry Christmas party and kick-off, 7 p.m. at Tabernacle Baptist Church Family Life Center. Bring an unwrapped ornament. Silent auction to benefit benevolence fund. No charge, but reservation required. (972) 875-3861.

December 8

Waxahachie Downtown Victorian Christmas Festival lighted Christmas stroll, 7 p.m. Carolers and lights. (972) 333-1653 or (972) 937-3310, ext. 12.

December 15

Annual Toy Drive hosted by Gold Wing Road Riders Association, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Citizens National Bank of Waxahachie. Benefits Ellis County children.

December 20

Last day of school for EISD before Christmas break.

ABWA Express Network event, 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at Waxahachie Civic Center. See ABWA-EmpoweringWomen.org.

A *Charlie Brown Christmas*, followed by Christmas carols, praise dance and more, 7:30 p.m. in the Ennis Public Library. Free admission. Accepting canned goods for Helping Hands of Ennis. Limited seating. (972) 878-7799 or (817) 789-8558.



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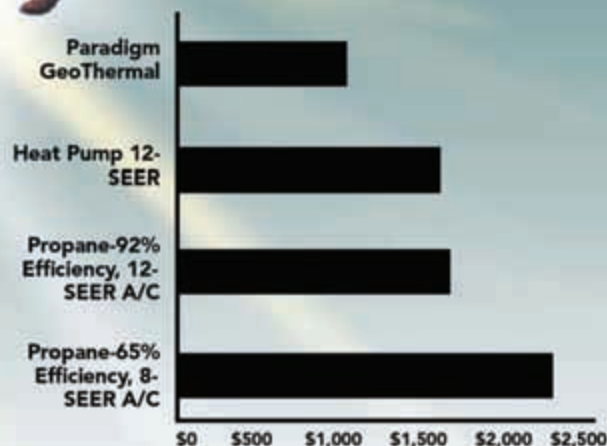
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