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FEBRUARY 2011

Sky Watchers

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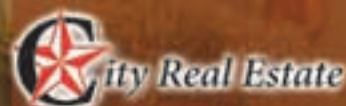
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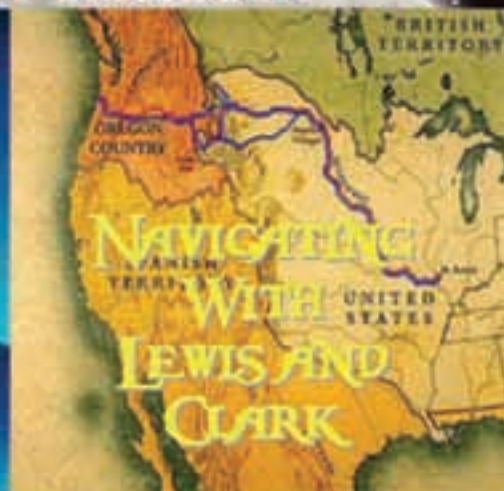
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On The Cover



Carol Walker and Pete Setian
enjoy going where the
currents take them.

Photo by Amy Ramirez

Contents

February 2011 • Volume 8, Issue 2



8 Sky Watchers

Carol Walker and Pete Setian get
a bird's eye view of the world
around them.

16 Renovating Dreams

At Home With Zack and
Courtney Tenpenny.



22 Iron Sharpening Iron

Curtis Tekell and Ravi Dubose are
keeping their athletic options open.



28 BusinessNOW

30 Around TownNOW

32 HealthNOW

34 FinanceNOW

36 CookingNOW

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Editor's Note

Happy February, Ennis!

In just a couple weeks, I will be celebrating two separate, yet equally important, one-year anniversaries. February marks my first year in my new home, as well as my first wedding anniversary. Hopefully, Kevin and I will be spending a few days this month in Ruidoso, New Mexico. We are planning a "scenic road trip," so pray the weather cooperates.



So many events are celebrated this month: Groundhog Day, Boy Scouts Day, Valentine's Day, President's Day, Fat Tuesday and Ash Wednesday. The one that struck a chord with me is Love Your Pet Day on the 20th. If you happen to be a fellow pet lover, then I challenge you to do something special for your four-legged family member. I think I will put Max and Anni in their winter sweaters and go for a longer drive than usual. How about you, what are your plans?

Sandra

Sandra Strong
EnnisNOW Editor
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*Sky*WATCHERS

— By Sandra Strong



Ennis residents Carol Walker and her husband, Pete Setian, are like two birds who flock together, especially when it comes to their passion — flying. Not only did they meet at an airport and exchange their wedding vows aboard a DC-3, they also teach flying lessons together at Big Q Aviation located at Mid-Way Regional Airport in Midlothian. They have been doing so since 2000. Carol has been in Texas for 20 years, twice as long as Pete. She got here as quickly as she could by way of Pennsylvania. “I started flying when I got to Texas,” she said. “There was no going back to anything else.”



The flying school is Carol's home away from home, so to speak. When Pete is not flying internationally as the private pilot for the owner of a Gulf Stream jet that carries up to 15 passengers, he is at Mid-Way Airport, alongside his wife, not only supporting her, but also teaching students the art of flying. “We are a flight school that specializes in tailwheel airplanes and gliders,” he said, adding, “Big Q is the only commercial glider port north of Houston.” That fact alone makes it “standing room only” most days, as students line up to take their turn in the air once they have completed the classroom portion of the course.

The pair agreed that when working or playing, you should always be doing something you love. For them, teaching flying lessons is their “day job,” but it is also what they are the most passionate about. They find great joy in watching others overcome their fears or finally accomplish something on their so-called bucket list. “Flying is glorious,” Carol said, as Pete smiled and nodded his head in agreement. “What we do in a glider is nothing like putting your body in a metal rocket and being shot across the country. I fly for my passengers, whether they are students or individuals who have had a desire to see the world from a different angle. Each flight is tailored to the passenger riding with me.”

When Carol talks about a glider she also refers to it as a



sailplane. At first glance, it looks as if the glider has no wheels, but in reality it has several. A main wheel, the largest of all wheels found on the sailplane, is located on the belly. The main wheel braces the plane. Smaller wheels that aid in balance during take-offs and landings are found on the tail, the nose and the wing tips. In order to take flight, gliders require the help of an airplane with propellers. “Once the glider is securely hooked to the airplane by the tow rope, the airplane takes off, pulling the glider up behind it,” Pete explained in the simplest terms for a better understanding. “Once the glider is at the desired altitude and the tow rope has been disengaged, the airplane lands and prepares to pull the next glider down the runway, as the sailplane that was just released begins gliding like an eagle in the sky.”

Carol and Pete usually take their place in the rear seat of the glider so the passenger can get “a bird's eye view” of the wonderful world around them. They look at one another and laugh as they remember so many flights and so many individuals. “As we take to the air, you can see them start to tense up,” Carol admitted. “The higher we go the more tense their back and shoulders become. When it comes times to release from the airplane, I ask them to do it. As the sailplane is released and it begins to gently glide through the air, they seem to relax almost immediately. It's amazing to watch.”

A year after the flight school “got off the ground,” September 11 happened. Not only did that create a difficult time for major airports around the country, it also had its detrimental effects on smaller airports and flight schools. “The terrorist attacks put a hold on air space,” Carol remembered. “Thirty nautical miles

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around the Metroplex belongs to the DFW International Airport. Nothing could be done in their air space for a long time."

Many months later, Carol and Pete took back to the skies around Ellis County, which they love. As aviators, they are always looking to the clouds and listening intently to the daily weather forecasts. "The air currents are what keep the glider in the air," Pete explained. "We never go above the clouds. Thermals

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are found under the clouds." Thermals are the currents, which take the glider up and keep the glider aloft. The "floating" pieces of cirrus clouds can be a sign of a thermal, so it is easy to see why Carol and Pete consider themselves to be "sky watchers."

"We look for currents," Pete explained. "We hover just like hawks, turkey vultures and eagles."

Carol added, "We really are like the soaring birds. When you see birds just flying, letting the air currents guide them, they are not looking for food. They are having fun. We fly with them."

An altitude of 1,000 feet must be reached before releasing the sailplane from the tow plane. For the couple, a

Merle Filecia

Family Nurse Practitioner

Merle holds a Master's degree in nursing from Texas Woman's University and has practiced in Ennis since 2006. Prior to her experience here, she was an accomplished cardiac and emergency nurse in Houston, Texas where she was recognized with numerous specialty certifications. She is very well-trained to provide the full spectrum of family care from infants to older adults.

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typical release is 3,000 feet. “We will go as high as 12,000 feet if the cloud base allows it,” Carol said.

Gliders do have mechanisms which help in steering and spoilers to help “fine tune” the ride, but the best part of the experience is letting the currents take you where they may. “Recently, I was up with a passenger for three hours,” Carol stated. “That single flight time took us



from the airport to Ennis and back to the airport.” And just like they look to the sky and weather reports for flight, they are constantly evaluating the environment when they are in the air for a safe, smooth landing.

Gliding is a community within itself. Getting off the ground takes two planes, an instructor, a passenger and people who launch, wait and watch. The stories the two could tell are many, but the main thing they shared was the importance of making each ride enjoyable for the passenger. “We only talk about ‘good stuff’ when we take flight. We want everyone to be inspired and happy from the experience.” Carol vividly recalled the memory of one gentleman. “He finally got to go up after years of raising a family. Pete and I are able to give people the gift they’ve always dreamed of giving themselves; and that’s such a great feeling.” **NOW**

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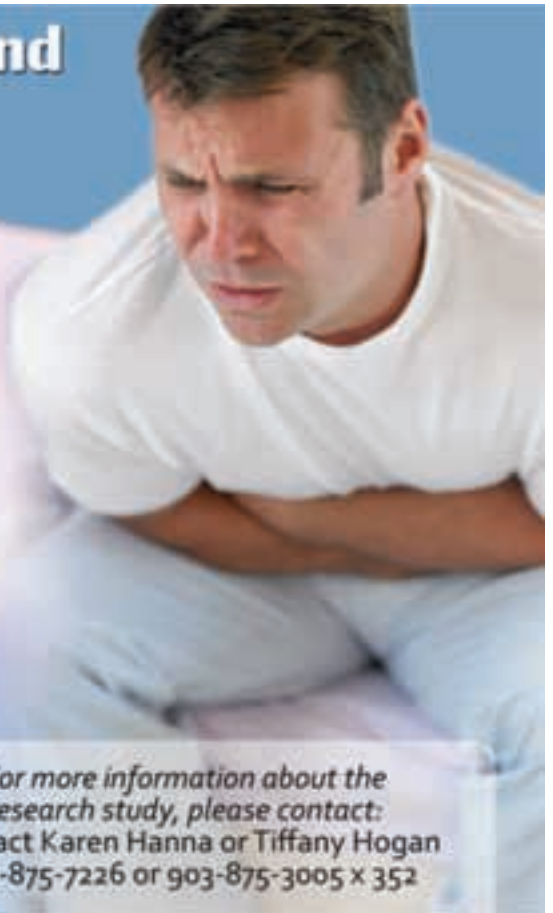
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Renovating Dreams

— By Virginia Riddle

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While Zack and Courtney Tenpenny were growing up in Ennis as friends, they each dreamed of going to college before establishing high-powered careers in neighboring “Big D.” After achieving their childhood dreams and goals, they each then made the decision to return to their roots to live their real dream. “A perfect weekend for us is when there is nothing on the calendar. We hang out with friends and pick up some flowers and plant them,” Courtney explained.





Courtney's dream took her to Texas A&M University where she graduated with a marketing degree which led to a marketing position in Dallas. Zack graduated from Sam Houston State University with a business degree and became an assistant superintendent for a major construction company, also in Dallas. Courtney said, "I got pretty tired of just talking on the phone all the time."

Zack remembered, "That was not what I signed up for. I'm just a country boy." Always friends, even though having attended different colleges, Zack and Courtney began dating after returning home from college while still commuting to and from Dallas, and started renovating their dreams together.

Courtney returned home to live with her mother and stepfather, Janelle and Jim Houdek. She contacted her former high school principal, Bill Chapman, and started substitute teaching while working on her alternative certification teaching certificate. For the past nine years, she has taught school and is now a second grade teacher at Sam Houston Elementary School. "This is exactly what I wanted to do. The kids rely on my being there and doing my best," she related.

Zack had grown up helping his parents, Sam and Anita Tenpenny, in the buying, renovating and selling of real estate, so he started his own residential remodeling and furniture construction businesses, Tenpenny Residential Construction, LLC and ZaCo Creations. "Now I have two or three jobs going at one time. My commute might be three

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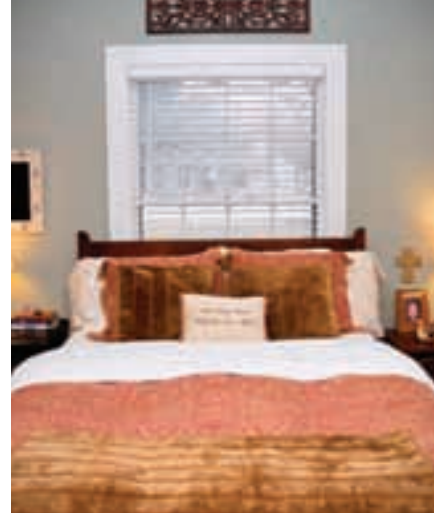
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minutes,” Zack laughed. His first job was renovating a home for Courtney’s grandfather, Jerrell Wingo. “That gave me the confidence to go out on my own,” he added.

When Zack first showed his future bride the home built in 1949 he had bought before their engagement, Courtney was dismayed. “This was an abused house; for years and years it suffered,” Zack said. The couple started working on the house, and with the approval of their families, planned a private wedding in Las Vegas seven years ago with a reception for family and

friends in their newly remodeled home upon their return.

“It came down to this question: Do you want a big, expensive wedding or a new kitchen?” Courtney said. “Looking at the kitchen, it was an easy decision.”

Work began with family and friends helping the young couple out. “We were here every night and every weekend,” Courtney remembered. The remodeled home with its three bedrooms and one bath is small, but perfect for the couple; their toddler son, Hix; and Zack’s college dog, Chief.

“We didn’t add onto the house; we just

did with what we had,” Zack said, but quickly added, “I don’t think anything is original.” During the tear-out stage, construction trash piled high.

“We were so fortunate to have wonderful neighbors; they didn’t say anything about all the trash,” Courtney recalled.

With such a small home and many friends and family who had been part of their lives and the new life of their home, Zack wanted to build a patio fit for a crowded celebration. With the date set for their one-month anniversary, the couple had just one weekend to complete

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the project. “The weekend we had to do it, it rained and rained,” Courtney remembered. Her mom and his parents helped out in the pouring rain. “After something like this, our new neighbors thought we were crazy,” she added. Zack traded skills and time with childhood friends who helped out throughout the project, but one friend, Trinity, the remaining bachelor of the group, came to aid them for another reason. “Trinity would work for dinner, and I was glad to cook,” Courtney said laughingly.

The resulting patio and home truly reflect that renovated dreams can come true. A flagstone path leads to the tree-shaded patio with its fire pit and fountain. The relaxing haven is bordered by a storage shed Zack built for the tools of his trade. With the birth of Hix, the new daddy added swings to the shed’s side for mommy and baby. Food can be cooked outside on the grill or in the completely remodeled kitchen featuring sophisticated black tile countertops, new cabinets and a pantry created by Zack from old recycled materials. The new kitchen now accommodates both their families on Christmas Day as they create new memories in this old home.

Walls were moved to create a central hallway for the home, and nearly all original wood floors were refinished. The dining room, bath and two bedrooms open to the new hallway. The dining room has a full wall window seat with storage. One bedroom, with an exterior door, has become Zack’s office while the



bathroom borders the nursery on the other side of the hall. Hix's nursery was a very special project for the mommy- and daddy-to-be. "Mommy did a lot of painting while pregnant," Zack said.

Courtney laughingly added, "I sat on my little bucket and painted circles forever." She also reflected about how lucky she is to have a creative husband. "Daddy built Hix's changing table and matching bookshelves. I feel so spoiled."

An armoire, the focal point of the living room, is another original by Zack. Future dreams will surely result from the soothing colors of the master bedroom which opens to the living room.

A new brick front porch and steps leads the couple and their young son to visits with neighbors and on walks



around their Temple-McCanless Historic District neighborhood. One neighbor is now sorely missed since she became a third mom to this young family. Ruth Vaughn, a resident and "mother hen" of the neighborhood for 30 years, recently passed away. "One of the greatest things about summers was sitting on her deck and having coffee," Courtney fondly remembered. "She had great stories about the house."

Zack, President of the Ennis Heritage Society, relishes the "good bones" found in older homes. "Your home needs to make you comfortable and happy. We are always ready to come home," he said. Blocks in the living room spelling D-R-E-A-M, and the saying on a pillow on the master bed say it all: Zack and Courtney are now living their dream "and they lived happily ever after." **NOW**

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Iron Sharpening Iron

— By Aleta Penfold

Ravi Dubose and Curtis Tekell, Ennis High School seniors, have been friends since attending Austin Elementary School. They have run track and played football together, and hope it will not all end next year when they attend college. “We would really like to go to the same school, but we’re keeping our options open until track is over this year,” Curtis explained. They both think they will run track in college and are hoping to also play football.

Longtime friends Ravi Dubose and Curtis Tekell hope to continue playing sports together in college.

Ravi agreed, “It would be great if we could continue to play sports together at the same college, but we will just be thankful to get any scholarship.”

Both young men were bright and articulate as they teased each other and talked about their love of sports. Curtis’ favorite sport is football and he wants to play it forever. Ravi’s favorite sport is track and he has loved to run for as long as he can remember — always running with his cousins and uncles.

Curtis, Ennis’ starting quarterback, began running track in junior high, which helped him stay in condition during football off-seasons. Ravi has run track since the eighth grade. A coach, watching him run and high jump, asked him to play football. He has played wide receiver during his junior and senior years.

They both agreed the bond that grew between them from running track first, helped them immensely in football. “We have such good chemistry in or out of sports, from friendship and running track, that the trust was already there when we played football as the quarterback and receiver,” Curtis said, looking toward Ravi. “It really helped.”

The emotions and excitement really went up a notch though when the two athletes started talking about track. Both young men have been on the varsity track team since their sophomore year. While Ravi has always focused on track, Curtis began to really focus and learn to love the sport in high school.



Ennis Coach Steve Morrow has been a driving force in both of the runners' lives. Coach Morrow's passion has inspired Ravi to do better and work harder every day. "Coach means a lot to me," he said. "I appreciate that he pushes us to work hard. He takes time out for all of us."

At first, both young men tried all running and field track events, but Coach Morrow has since helped them narrow down to three running events each. Ravi runs the 200-meter and is the first leg of the 4x4 relay. Curtis runs sprint relay and is the fourth (anchor) leg of the 4x4 relay. And, here is where it gets really interesting — they both run the 400. This of course, means the two friends are competing against each other. "We love running against each other," Curtis said, while Ravi nodded his head in agreement.



"It keeps us constantly pushing ourselves and each other, trying to beat one another," Ravi grinned. When asked who wins the most they looked at each other and laughed. They agreed their best times switch back and forth. Curtis ran the 400 last year at district in 50.6 seconds and at regionals he came in at 50.3 seconds. Ravi thought he had run it at 49.9 seconds. Both young men seemed genuinely humble when asked their winning times and seemed to remember each other's times better than their own. They moved quickly on to the next subject.

"Remember the Corsicana meet last year?" Curtis asked.

"Oh, man," Ravi fell back against the couch and shook his head slowly. "That was the first time I ever saw Coach

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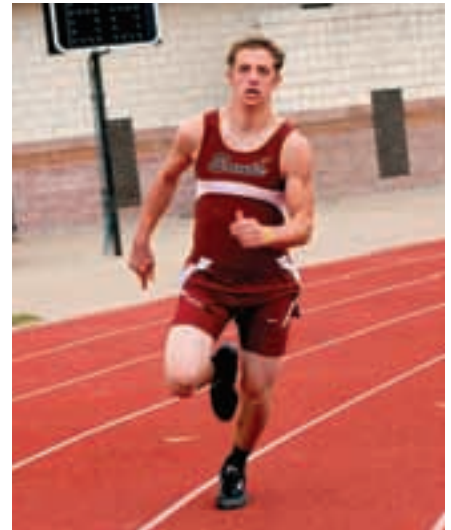


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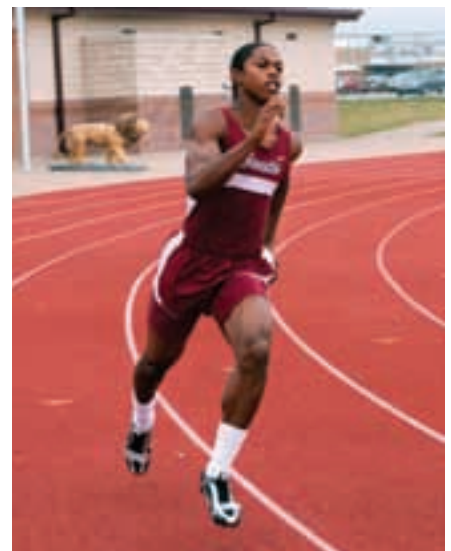

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Morrow smile! He said the 4x4 relay was the best race he had ever seen!"

And, what a meet it was! Earlier in the day, there had been a "photo-finish" ending between Curtis and Ravi in the 400. The computer at the finish line indicated Ravi had come in first and Curtis second. But what came up later is still the talk of the high school track world.



Midlothian had beaten Ennis during the 4x4 relay the year before in another photo-finish ending, making them district champs. Ennis' four-man team had been focusing on that rematch ever since. Curtis said he had run the sprint and the 400 earlier and had rested, but he was quick to point out that Ravi, their first leg runner, had run the 400 and then had just finished the 200, when it was time to start the relay. There was no time for a break. "Man, I was so tired," Ravi remembered,



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“but I said to myself that I was going to give it my all, and I went ahead of my opponent at the last 80 meters.”

“Ravi was awesome,” Curtis bragged. They agreed their second leg runner really held his own but Midlothian passed him. By the time the baton was passed off to their third leg runner, Waco had also passed them, leaving them in third place. When the baton was finally passed to anchor-runner Curtis, Midlothian, Waco, Waxahachie and Ennis were packed together. Waxahachie handed off the baton badly, so that left three teams in a clump of runners. As they came into the last curve of the home stretch, Waco tried to make a move on Midlothian from the outside, trying to cut them off.



Ravi could barely finish the story. “So that gave Curtis the inside lane, and he took advantage of it and won! I will never forget that race!”

Their passion for track has also spilled over to their teammates. “We try to be leaders by example,” Curtis said. “I’m more outspoken, but Ravi mostly leads by example.”

“Yes,” Ravi agreed. “I think others see when we step it up and push each other. The hardest part of track is consistency, like one meet you could do really well and the next meet you do not. Consistency is hard, but if you really work at it, it’s worth it.”

Curtis added, “We don’t want each other to fail in anything. I mean, if I would see that Ravi’s grades were down and he wouldn’t qualify academically to run, what good would that be?” That does not seem to be a problem however, with Ravi getting all A’s and B’s, and Curtis in the National Honor Society.

These two outstanding young men want what is best for each other. Ravi emphasized, “Getting an education is really the most important thing to us. We both want to go to college and graduate.” **NOW**

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— By Sandra Strong

Mike Montgomery and Sandra Lowe are no strangers to the business of banking. As chairman, president and CEO and chief financial officer/cashier at First State Bank Rice, respectively, they bring over 60 valuable years of experience to the table. “I had a desire to get into banking after I graduated from college,” Mike said. “A friend gave me a chance to start at the ground level.”

Sandra’s story is somewhat similar. “I worked for a bank when I was a VOE [vocational education program] student in high school.” Quickly realizing how much they liked people and numbers, Mike and Sandra both decided to make banking their careers. And what wonderful careers they have been, especially the last two years.

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State Bank Rice flourished. So much so, that in the past three years, Mike, along with a group of investors, was able to acquire the charter location of First State Bank Rice, which first opened in 1928. He was also able to build new branches in Ennis and Waxahachie, while also acquiring a location in Italy. “Yes, the economy was on a downturn. Banks were getting bad press,” he admitted. “Any community bank in Ellis County has prospered because of outstanding, attentive service.”

Sandra explained even further. “Customers don’t want to be put on hold. Customers want to do business with a personal touch; they want a bank where they can call and talk directly to a person.”

Another reason all four locations have prospered during this time of recession could be because of Mike’s accessibility to customers. “We are here to solve the problem or give customers

answers to their questions about personal accounts, CDs and loans,” he stated. “All decisions are made locally when customers deal with a community bank.”

But, Mike honestly feels the banks’ successes are due to bank staff and their professionalism. “I surround myself with good employees,” he said, proud of the staff he currently has in place. “I get compliments all the time on our level of customer service at all four locations.” Most offerings at banks, whether large or small, are basically the same. The main difference in First State Bank Rice and its locations is the outstanding level of customer service. Customers are always greeted with a smile.

Mike and Sandra both enjoy being part of the success stories their valued customers have experienced over the years. And working together since 1991, you can bet they have seen and heard about some wonderful successes. “I like to be part of someone’s success story,” Mike said, as Sandra nodded in agreement. “It doesn’t matter if they’re a banker, a doctor, a preacher or a housewife; I like to be part of their story.”

It truly is amazing what time and change can do, especially in the business of community banking. Three years ago, when ownership of First State Bank Rice changed hands, they had assets totaling 10 million dollars. “As of the end of



October 2010, total assets were 105 million dollars,” Mike stated. “When you take good care of customers, they in turn take good care of you.” **NOW**

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Team Vortex poses for a group photo.



Joel, Samantha, Eli, Marissa, Samuel, Angel, Maritza and Isiah are ready to collect money at their garage sale.

Michael Mendoza and Alex Castro take their dogs, Chico and Cash, for a walk around J. C. Park.



Vicki Everett, manager at Bling It Up Hair Salon, styles Armadina Medina's hair.

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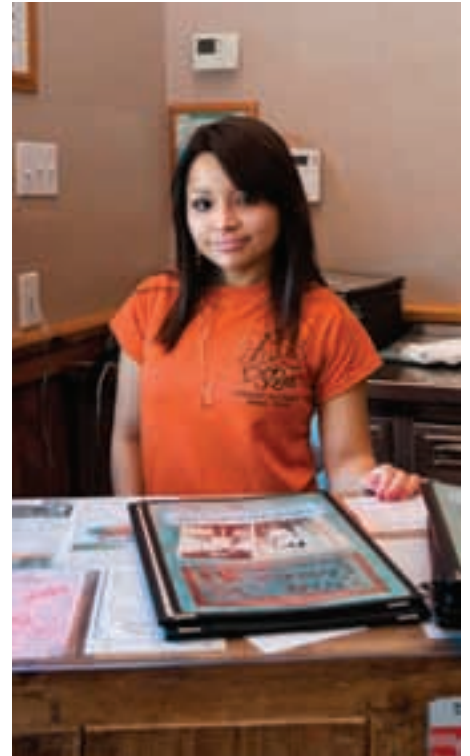
Kyris and Dantron Brown stop by the car wash with their mom.



Brooklyn, Haylie, Adrian, Shayne, Peighton, Savannah and Haydon have fun at the bowling alley.



Chloe and Gregory Loftin stop by WalMart on a winter day.



Flor Barriga waits to seat customers at Don Jose's.

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Successfully Treating Head Lice — *By Barry H. Davison, M.D.*

Head lice are a common problem among elementary-school-age children and those who attend day care facilities. Symptoms and signs of the presence of head lice include scalp itching, red bumps in the scalp and, occasionally, scalp sores. Head lice do not transmit any known diseases. However, taking their blood meals from the folks they infect causes the complaints. Head lice are human pests and don't infect animals. They are passed from one person to another through close contact and sharing of clothing and hair grooming supplies, like brushes and combs.

Diagnosing head lice is usually fairly straightforward. Inspecting a child's scalp will occasionally reveal live adult lice, which are dark gray in color and about the size of a flea. However, adult lice can move rather quickly and easily escape detection by casual observation. It is much easier to see nits, the egg cases of head lice. These are about the size of a grain of sand and are firmly attached to hair shafts. Nits that have not yet hatched are dark gray or black. Nits that have already hatched and those that contain dead, immature head lice appear pearly white. The best place to search for nits is in hair at the base of the scalp and behind the ears.

Several satisfactory treatments for head lice are available. Over-the-counter and many prescription remedies are essentially

diluted insecticides. They are safe and generally work well, if the directions for application are strictly followed. Most of these medications do not kill lice eggs, so a second treatment in a week may be necessary to eradicate any newly hatched lice.

If over-the-counter medications are ineffective, caretakers of infected children should consult their health care provider for a prescription. There are a couple of oral medications that may be used, as well, if products applied to the hair and scalp do not result in a cure.

After treatment, any nits should be removed with a fine-toothed, metal comb. The child's bedding, sleeping attire and sleeping buddies (like teddy bears) should be washed in the hottest cycle the day of treatment, and their room should be thoroughly vacuumed and dusted. Adult and immature lice in hair brushes and combs will be killed by putting these articles in boiling water for about a minute. Since head lice are pretty contagious, it is a good idea for caretakers to check the heads of other children in the family for them, particularly if the children share the same room. **NOW**

*Barry H. Davison, M.D., Pediatrician
Ennis Regional Medical Center*

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February Is Rose Time

— By Nancy Fenton

Think of Valentine's Day, and getting roses for a special friend comes to mind. Roses are a sentimental favorite as well as a beautiful flower. A garden full of roses is truly a thing of beauty. You can have a rose garden that will grow, bloom and possibly outlive you, if you plan a bit and do the proper preparation. Ninety-nine percent of roses adore full sun, so when planning, look for a well-drained, sunny spot away from walls and fences. If the spot is not as well-drained as you would like, build it up. Compost and expanded shale will help, as will a soil test if you have not had one on the bed area in a while.

EarthKind roses have been tested all over the nation and found to be sturdy, as well as beautiful. Knock Out, one of the first EarthKind roses, has been cultivated to include pink, yellow, rainbow and blushing white varieties. Plan your color scheme and look around. Hybrids can be great roses, but they usually bloom only once a year whereas EarthKind roses

bloom all season. An attractive bed could include Sea Foam roses crawling over the edges and then a bed built with varying sizes and colors. With the white edging, an apricot yellow small shrub like Perle d'Or or a lilac pink one like Caldwell Pink would begin to

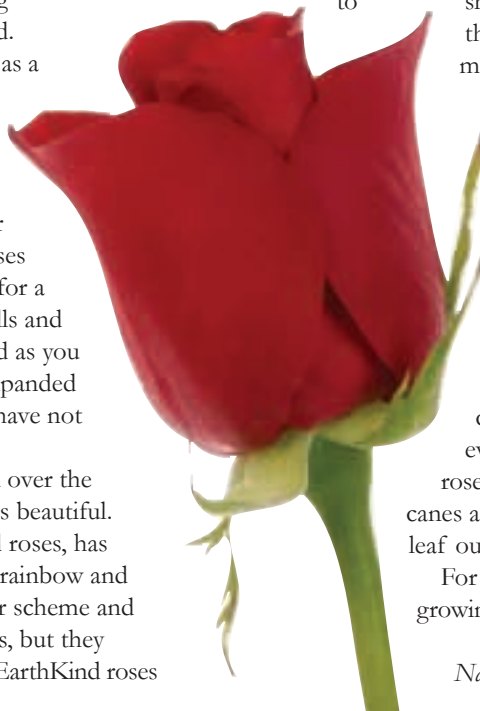
show off the multi-color beauty. Depending on the size of the bed, medium and large roses of many colors can be added. They all require sun, careful watering and mulching. Turn your lawn sprinklers away or off, and go to drip- or hand-watering for this bed.

EarthKind roses can be found at local nurseries. Buy small and leave extra room between plants for the air to get through after they mature. Damp leaves and poor air circulation are the primary causes of black spot and other rose diseases.

Any roses already in your beds should be cut back now. Any canes that cross should be evaluated and one of them cut severely. My two roses that struggle in the shade are cut back to 6-inch canes and come on like gangbusters until the trees leaf out!

For a brochure on EarthKind roses and hints for growing, call the AgriLife office at (972) 825-5175. **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.





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Be Prepared for Early — and Possibly Unwanted — Retirement

— *By Bob Irish*

Given the economic climate we are in, you may one day be faced with a downsizing or otherwise forced to retire earlier than you had planned. But even if that happens, you can still maintain control of your financial future — if you make the right moves.

Unfortunately, many of us are ill-prepared for events such as forced early retirement. In 2009, more people filed for Social Security than any year in history, with a big increase in the number receiving reduced benefits because they filed before their full retirement age. And they paid a heavy price, too — 62-year-old workers who filed for benefits early lost about 25 percent of their monthly benefits over waiting until their “full” retirement age of 66, according to the Social Security Administration.

Of course, if you are forced to take an early retirement, you, too, may need to tap into your Social Security earlier than you planned. But that is just the beginning — you might also need to start withdrawals from your IRA and your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan, even though you had planned on leaving those accounts intact for a few more years. And that is why you won't want to wait until early retirement is thrust upon you before taking action. While you are still working, consider these steps:

- Boost your contributions to retirement plans. Put as much as you can possibly afford into your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored plan. Every time your salary goes up, try to increase the amount you contribute to your retirement plan. Also, contribute regularly to your traditional or Roth IRA.
- Be prepared to rebalance your portfolio. If you are facing a forced early retirement, or even if you think it is a possibility, you may want to rebalance your portfolio to provide more opportunities

for income. Talk to your financial advisor about income strategies appropriate for your particular situation.

- Build up cash accounts. Even during “normal” times, it is a good idea to keep an emergency fund, in cash or other liquid vehicles, containing six to 12 months' worth of living expenses. If you suspect a forced early retirement is heading your way, try to beef up your cash holdings as much as possible.

- Repay any 401(k) loans. Once you have left your employer, you may be forced to repay a 401(k) loan within two months — an obvious hardship during a stressful time.

- Work part-time. Even if you were forced to retire from one job, it does not mean you cannot find another. This might be the perfect time to take a part-time job in an area in which you have always wanted to work.

- Get some help. By consulting with a professional financial advisor, you may find that you actually can afford to retire early. A financial advisor can help you develop those income and spending strategies that are appropriate for your situation. And the earlier you get this type of help, the more options you ultimately may have.

You may not be able to avert an unwanted early retirement, but by preparing for it, as far in advance as possible, you can improve your chances of maintaining the retirement lifestyle you have envisioned. **NOW**

Bob Irish is an Edward Jones representative based in Ennis.

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The Dixie Swim Club presented by Ennis Public Theatre, 2705 N. Kaufman Street. Friday and Saturday shows all month with a Sunday show on the 27th. Call (972) 878-7529 for ticket prices and curtain times.

February 2-6

Gingerbread House Annual Chili Cook-off and Barn Dance at Ellis County Expo Center. Call (972) 937-1870.

February 3

Ellis County SPCA: Ribbon Cutting and Business After Hours, 5:15 p.m., Chamber of Commerce Boardroom.

February 12

Ennis Czech Music Festival: 1:30-11:30 p.m., Sokol Activity Center, 2622 E. Hwy. 34. Listen and dance to five bands: Czech Harvesters, Jodie Mikula Orchestra, Czech & Then Some, Ennis Czech Boys and Jak Se Do. Tickets: \$5. Children 14 and under are free. Call (972) 878-4748 or visit www.ennisczechmusicfestival.com.

Ellis County SPCA Volunteer Orientation: Noon, Ellis County SPCA

2570 FM 878, Waxahachie. This event is designed to welcome new volunteers and keep all volunteers better connected to the organization. For more information e-mail spcaevents@gmail.com.

"Share the Love" Gala: 6:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. Dinner, dancing, wine, roses, chocolate and shopping will be available at this dinner and auction benefiting CASA of Ellis County. \$50 per person. For more information, contact Rhodie Rawls at (972) 937-1455 or e-mail rdrawls@sbcglobal.net.

February 15

Deadline for entries in the Master Gardener Photo Contest. Entry categories include "single specimen" and "in the garden." Think about vegetables, summer gardens and fall and winter when taking pictures. There is no cost and individuals may enter as many as five photos. Prizes will be awarded. Enter online at www.ecmga.com.

February 17

Leadership Ennis: Austin trip and Ellis County Day. For more information call the Ennis Chamber of Commerce at (972) 878-2625.

February 25

"A Night at the Canteen": 6:00-8:00 p.m., Texas Motorplex, located between Waxahachie and Ennis. Happy hour and swing dance lessons for "early bird" ticket holders and larger sponsors of next month's Fabulous Forties Fling, a gala dinner and dance open to anyone from the public who wishes to support Meals On Wheels of Johnson and Ellis Counties. For reservations, call (817) 558-2840 or (972) 351-9943 or visit www.servingthechildrenofyesterday.org.

March 4

Empowering Seniors and Caregivers Conference: 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., St. Matthew Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 380 Northwest Tarrant Ave., Burleson, TX 76028. This annual conference is hosted by and benefits Meals On Wheels of Johnson and Ellis Counties. A meal will be served. Please RSVP by calling (817) 558-2840 or downloading an RSVP form from www.servingthechildrenofyesterday.org.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to sskoda.nowmag@sbcglobal.net.

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In The Kitchen With Karen Brooks

— *By Adam Walker*

Karen Brooks grew up in a southern Illinois German family and learned the basics of cooking from her mother and grandmothers before launching out on her own. Not only does she collect cookbooks, she is also writing cookbooks for her daughters and granddaughter. “I enjoy making down-home comfort food,” she said. “I’m strongest at baking, and I’m a real believer in butter and cream.” She likes to make cream-filled cupcakes and layer cakes, but that can go awry. “One of my daughters was having a birthday,” Karen remembered. “I made a four- or five-layer cake and filled it with cream between the layers. When I tried to cut it, it slid everywhere like a deck of cards! I never made one that tall again.” **NOW**

Savory Vegetable Ribolitta

1 cup chopped onion
2/3 cup chopped celery
2/3 cup sliced carrot
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 Tbsp. olive or vegetable oil
2 19-oz. cans white kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1 32-oz. carton chicken broth
2 14.5-oz. cans diced Italian-style tomatoes, undrained
4 cups chopped Savoy cabbage
1/2 cup diced sweet red pepper
1/2 cup diced zucchini
1/2 tsp. dried thyme
Toasted croutons or crostini (see recipe below)
Shredded Parmesan cheese

1. In a large saucepan over low heat, cook onion, celery, carrot and garlic in oil until tender, about 5 minutes.

2. Add the beans, chicken broth, tomatoes, cabbage, red pepper, zucchini and thyme. Cook, uncovered, until vegetables are tender and flavors are blended, about 20 minutes.
3. To serve, place croutons or crostini in each soup bowl and ladle soup into the bowl. Sprinkle with cheese. Makes 8 servings.

Crostini

1/2 cup olive oil
2 cloves minced garlic
1 tsp. Italian herb seasoning
Pinch of salt
1 loaf Italian bread

1. Combine olive oil, garlic, Italian herb seasoning and salt.
2. Cut bread into 1-inch slices.
3. Brush oil mixture on one side of bread. Place on baking sheet, coated side up.
4. Bake at 375 F for 15 minutes or until lightly toasted.

Chicken Pecan Tarts

2 Tbsp. butter or margarine
1 cup finely chopped pecans
1 cup finely chopped, cooked chicken
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/4 cup mayonnaise
1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
1 3-oz. package cream cheese, softened
1/4 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
1 7.5-oz. tube refrigerated buttermilk biscuits

1. In a large skillet, melt butter; add pecans and sauté until lightly browned.
2. In a bowl, combine chicken, celery, mayonnaise, mustard, cream cheese, salt and nutmeg.
3. Add pecans. Mix well.
4. Separate biscuits. Roll each into a 4-inch circle. Press into 10 foil bake cups, letting dough cover bottom and sides. Place bake cups in muffin pans.
5. Spoon chicken mixture into bake cups.
6. Bake at 425 F for 12 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Makes 10 servings.

Gram's White Christmas Pie

1 pkg. Knox unflavored gelatin
1/4 cup cold water
1 cup sugar
4 Tbsp. flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1 1/2 cups milk
3/4 tsp. vanilla
1 cup coconut
1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
3 egg whites
1/4 tsp. cream of tartar
1 9-inch pie crust, baked
2 Tbsp. coconut

1. Soften gelatin in cold water.
2. Combine 1/2 cup sugar, flour and salt in saucepan. Gradually stir in milk. Cook over low heat.
3. Transfer to a large bowl. Stir in softened gelatin. When partially set, beat with mixer until smooth. Blend in vanilla and 1 cup coconut.
4. Whip the cream until stiff. Gently fold into coconut mixture.
5. In a clean bowl, beat egg whites until frothy. Beat in cream of tartar and 1/2 cup sugar. Continue to beat until egg whites form stiff peaks. Fold into coconut mixture.
6. Pour filling into cooled pie shell. Sprinkle with additional coconut.
7. Chill 2 hours.



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He specializes in ear, nose and throat with head and neck surgeries for adult and pediatric patients. This includes: ears and hearing, sinus and allergy, throat and mouth, face and neck, as well as sleep disorders in adults.

Dr. Branch is originally from Burleson, Texas, so once he completed his specialty training, he and his family moved to Corsicana to recapture the small-town community he had known all of his life. Additionally, Dr. Branch is Board Certified by the American Board of Otolaryngology.

He is an active member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, the American Medical Association and the Texas Medical Association.

He started seeing patients every Friday morning in his office at the ERM Medical Office Building on the ERM campus on July 2, 2010. He is now accepting new patients.

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