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August 2007

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to Look
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Editor's Note

Dear Readers!

I am hopeful that students are spending their final days of summer vacation swimming, going to the movies and spending quality time with their friends and families. It will not be long before the lazy days of summer turn into the shorter days of fall, filled with homework and football games.

Several individuals featured this month have called Waxahachie home for many years. Susie Braden graciously invited me into her home, while Jean Heffernan educated me on her passion for birdwatching. The art feature this month is Ellis County Art Association's very own Jane Jacobs.

Be sure to read closely so as not to miss learning more about racquetball from Mike Jones, the local champion, while English teacher and sponsor Karen Jenkins and WHS student Timothy Erickson explain the premier scholastic competition known as the WHS Academic Decathlon.

Just sit back, relax and enjoy!

Sandra McIntosh

Waxahachie Editor



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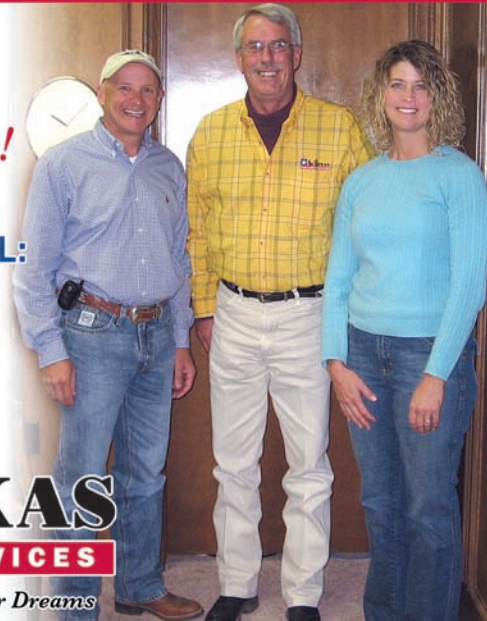
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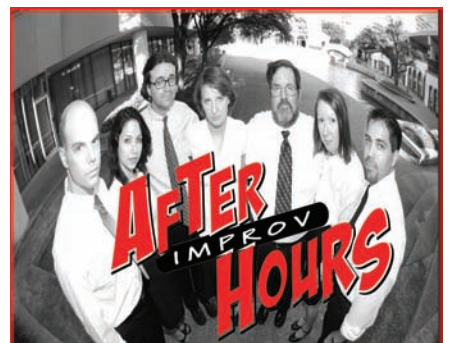


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Taking Time *to Look and Listen*

— By Sandra McIntosh

"I try to take as many trips as possible, and I'm still loving almost every minute of it."

Whether you address her by name or call her the "bird lady," Jean Heffernan gladly answers to both. The decor found at her front entrance easily distinguishes her home in Waxahachie as the "bird house." With the sculpted flying-bird, the detailed yard art and the bench with colorful birds perched on it, one definitely does not drive past Jean's house when coming to visit for the first time.

Jean and her late husband, John, were married in 1970. After the children grew up, moved out and began to rear their own families, Jean was left with a small dilemma. "John was an avid football fan," she remembered. "He'd watch football every Monday night. I wanted to get away from the football and the TV, so I decided to take a course in Dallas with a friend."

She attended a class on bird-watching every Monday night that first year. John saw how interesting the course

was and how excited Jean had become, so he wasted no time in signing up and taking the course the following year. "We became a couple of birders," Jean said, referring to the name given to those who spend a great deal of time watching birds. "For 10 years, we were avid bird-watchers. Our travels were centered on bird-watching. Even on cruises, we bird-watched. We carried our binoculars with us everywhere we went."

During the final stages of John's illness, the bird-watching trips were put on hold, while Jean cared for her husband of 32 years. The massive amount of

bird collectibles she had accumulated since her love of bird-watching began helped her tremendously during this time of heartache and great loss. The birds found throughout the home made

that most difficult time in her life bearable. "I have birds that are quilted, oil painted, carved from wood and needle pointed. They are etched in stained glass and drawn on brown paper bags with pencil," she said, pointing to one bird after another. Picking her favorite collectible came easy to Jean. "See this Andrea Collection

statuette," she said, as she gingerly set the redheaded woodpecker down on the living room table. "It was a Christmas gift from John. It's a very





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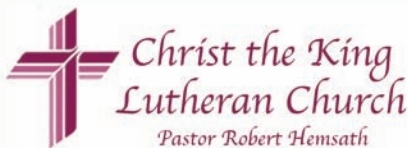
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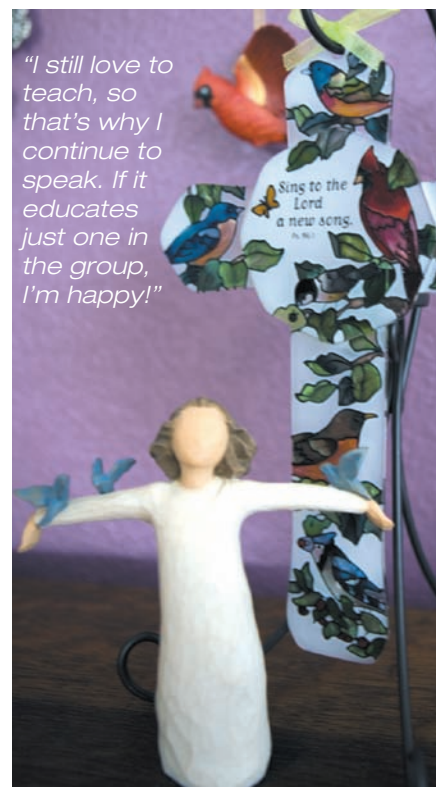
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special piece. It means the world to me."

Jean had made it her mission to bring something bird-related home from every trip she took with John, and she is still bringing at least one thing home from her travels. This fact caused her to laugh once again. "The T-shirt I'm wearing now came from



my trip to Trinidad in October of 2006. I went to see the scarlet ibis. The blue skies of Trinidad were filled with those red birds," she explained. "I also have china plates, posters, bird lists and commemorative magazines from other trips, but most of all, I have so many wonderful memories."

It is these memories of times with John and many newfound friends that have kept Jean moving forward in her journey through retirement. "I still consider myself to be an avid bird-watcher," she said. "I try to take as many trips as possible, and I'm still loving almost every minute of it."

This comment brought out the question of what her least favorite part of bird-watching would be if she were asked to pick just one thing. Her answer came swiftly and with great

conviction. "The thing I like the least is the early morning hours," she said. "We never leave the hotel after 7 a.m." She added that it is a treat to see other parts of nature, but her main reason for getting up so early and traveling to places all over the world is for the birds. "As a birder, I do what all birders do," she said. "I stand very still in muted-colored clothing, crane my neck back almost as far as it will go and put the binoculars to my eyes."

Jean has found that through Elderhostel, a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to providing extraordinary learning adventures for



individuals 55 and over, she has been enabled to continue her travels to find birds she has yet to see. Whether she wants to remain close to home or travel afar, she finds programs through the organization that not only meet her interest in birds, but also conform to her activity level, budget, schedule and lifestyle. "Every state and every country have their own Elderhostel. It's an association, and all I have to do is pay my trip expenses to attend," Jean said. "Most Elderhostel trips I've gone on have lasted only a week. The trip to Costa Rica was a full two weeks."

Before retiring, Jean spent 25 years in the classroom at Rosemont Elementary School in Dallas. Teaching kindergarten allowed her many opportunities to share stories of her travels — both near and far — with her young charges. "My favorite bird is the painted bunting," Jean said. "When I described it to the children and showed them a picture postcard, they called it the 'rainbow bird' because of its many colors."



Ivey

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She went on to explain that the female bunting is a solid green, while the male is regal in many shades that blend perfectly together. "Most female birds are plain and drab," she said. "I think God marked them this way so they would be naturally camouflaged



to safely care for their young."

As a retired educator, Jean also enjoys speaking to others about birds. It is common to see her name on garden club programs, at civic organization meetings and as a guest speaker at The Greenery. "I always talk about birds and bird-watching," she said. "I still love to teach, so that's why I continue to speak. If it educates just one in the group, I'm happy!"

Jean is a member of the Ellis County Bird-Watchers Association, the American Birding Association and the National Wildlife Federation. Membership in these organizations does have its privileges. "I use the magazines, books and newsletters to reinforce my knowledge of birds," she said. "The information keeps me updated on ecology and what's going on in the world today. It's proven to be invaluable time and time again."

Watching birds is something Jean will do until she is no longer physically able to walk long treks or navigate mountain trails. The people she has met along the way have been nice, as well as interesting. "They have stories to tell that quickly take the place of TV," she laughed. "Bird-watching is relaxing and rewarding. You do have to get up early, but you don't have to move too fast and it's amazing to see what's out there, if you just take the time to look and listen." **WAXAHACHIE NOW**

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So Much Stuff, So Little Time

— By Sandra McIntosh



At Home With Susie Braden

Susie Braden, longtime resident of Waxahachie and past Crape Myrtle Queen, has a style all her own when it comes to decorating the home she and her late husband, Hubert, a.k.a. Braden to Susie, purchased back in the early '50s. Everywhere you look there is something to intrigue the mind and peak the senses. Knickknacks, collectibles and whimsical keepsakes are displayed alongside antiques dating back well over 100 years. "There are too many stories connected to all my stuff," Susie said, with a laugh. "Braden and I never went out hunting for all this stuff. It just fell into our laps and our home."

The couple moved to Waxahachie from Tyler in 1946. They were not acquainted with

the house Susie lovingly calls home until 1948 — at that time it was a duplex. "We rented one-half of the house," Susie remembered. "We didn't buy it until 1952. It's been home ever since."

Hubert and Susie came to Ellis County with aspirations of opening an automotive store. "It would have been to our advantage to leave many times," she said, referring to the ups and downs that come with a family-owned and operated business. "We both just grew to love Waxahachie."

To look at the four-bedroom, three-bath home today, no one would guess it was ever a

two-family dwelling. Over the years, it has been remodeled three times with the last major construction project taking place in 1970. "It only had seven rooms when we



bought it," Susie explained. "We added the upstairs, the garden room and closed in the front porch."

The journey back to a simpler time begins as soon as you pull into the unique, brick-inlaid driveway toward the open, three-car garage. The trees nestle you in their shade, as the birds chirp and the bees buzz among flowers that are in full bloom. As a Master Gardener, if Susie could, she would spend all her time outdoors. It is where she goes to find the peace that only nature can supply. "I spend a great deal of time outdoors. I'd much rather be outside instead of inside," she said. "I just like to dig in the dirt."



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Thankfully, Susie has a special friend, Alver Thomas, who lets her work in the yard alongside him. "Mr. Thomas is my yard man," she said. "He helps with all the outside maintenance. I'll be 85 on September 12, and I still do all the inside housework myself, but I couldn't keep the yard without Mr. Thomas." Susie also extends a debt of gratitude to Tim Byer and Peter Adamson for their handiwork in maintaining the house. "They can fix anything," she added.

Since she loves the outdoors, it is no surprise that Susie's favorite room in the house is the garden room. "I sit for hours and watch the birds and nature in my own backyard," she said. She admitted it might be time for her to begin filling the bird feeder again. Susie said she removed the feeder when a pesky squirrel showed up, chasing the birds away and reeking havoc in her attic.

As an avid collector of fine art, the garden room is home to several

one-of-a-kind lithographs, but the piece that causes Susie to pause and take a breath is the train that always meant so much to Hubert. "Braden was a Realtor at the time," Susie said. "He sold Bob Parsons, an artist friend of ours, a house over past the viaduct."

While the house was going through a major renovation process in preparation for the Gingerbread Trail Tour of Homes, Bob and Hubert came upon the train in the attic. Several years later when Bob decided to move, he called Hubert

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once again. "He wanted Braden to list his house," Susie said. "When the house sold, the train was Braden's commission." The train, still the focal point of the garden room today, is made from "a little bit of everything."

Susie pointed to an airplane designed and constructed by the same unknown artist. "I bought the airplane for Braden long before he got the train," she said. "Found objects are what make up both pieces." The train's front grill is a shoe brush, while the plane boasts of wings made from two metal spatulas.

The antique mantle on the far wall in the garden room came by way of a fellow who had a booth at Peel's Antique Mall many, many years ago. This room is also home to a pair



of original Windsor chairs. Items, from a dollhouse to an antique student desk, also take their rightful place in this room. "So much of this stuff is for my grandchildren," Susie said. "I've never believed you should stick a child off in a room somewhere, so everything for the children is right here."

The dining room is also steeped in history. The dining room table with a dozen matching chairs was purchased at an estate sale. The table measures five feet across; with all seven leaves in place it extends to 12 feet. Susie said it can easily, and comfortably, seat up to 14 people. The way to the upstairs suite of rooms is also found in the dining area. "Braden wanted a circular staircase," Susie said. "He thought it would take up less room while still being functional."



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Hubert designed one, but before they could have it built and installed, another one became available. "This spiral, metal staircase came from the old county courthouse clock tower," she said. It is the only way to the upstairs, and believe it or not, Susie still makes her way handily up and down the staircase.

Another lithograph is found in the formal living room. It has the unique quality of being three photographs in one. "It all depends on where you're

standing when you look at it," Susie said. "It can appear to be Abe Lincoln, a woman or Jesus on the cross." Beautifully sculptured statuettes adorn a small sitting table, while a massive wall-to-wall mirror reflects the natural light, giving all Susie's collectibles a special glow.

Susie was not joking when she said she had a lot of "stuff," so much so that mentioning it all would be an impossible task. There is the hardware cabinet in the TV room and the game table upstairs that came from the Rogers

Hotel, the bed frame in the guest bedroom at one time belonged to Hubert's great-grandmother, the desk in the music room once was home to an editor at the *Baltimore Sun* in Maryland. Cats peek out from a corner, couch or chair in every room.

Susie has known many individuals, who retire, only to return to Waxahachie. "I never thought of going back to Tyler when Braden and I retired," she said. "I just love it here. Waxahachie is home to me!" **NDW**



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Priceless Memories of Dad

— By Sandra McIntosh

Some people excel at sports. Others are gifted at singing and dancing. Jane Jacobs is one of those rare individuals whose natural, artistic talent is not limited to one specific medium. “My inspiration must have come from watching my dad,” Jane said. “He was always working on something.”

As she sat reminiscing about her childhood, Jane smiled before laughing aloud. “Our backyard in Chicago had a small area where the dirt was different. When it got wet it was great for molding and shaping things,” she explained. “I started sculpting before I knew what sculpting really was.” She remembered playing in the “special dirt” until her mother bought her a package of modeling clay.

The laughter came again as she vividly recalled the first time she was able to carve alongside her dad, the late Byron Giller. “I was only 7 years old. I carved rubber band shooting guns and knives for the neighborhood boys,” she said. “I guess you could say I started before I even realized I had a knack for carving artistic pieces of art.”

Sitting beside Jane, now 84, it is impossible not to see the wonderfully detailed art pieces displayed throughout the cozy home she shares with her husband, Ken, and their dog, Cassie. Jane has been able to successfully mix and mingle her



The lion held by Jane Jacobs was carved by her father and brings back many fond memories.

artwork among pieces her friends have given her, making her own personal art gallery.

Jane has never limited herself to just one medium. Her mood generally dictates what she works on from day to day. “I work on more than one thing at a time,” she said. “It’s just all about what I feel like doing.” There are several paintings in acrylic, her favorite mode of creating when it comes to using an easel and an assortment of brushes. There are carvings in wood, as well as in basic rocks. Sculpted pieces of ceramic and clay are placed strategically throughout the home.

One of Jane’s favorite carvings has its rightful place on the fireplace hearth. “He’s an old dog I carved from the root of an oak tree,” she said, as she gently placed the carving in her



lap. "The base is mahogany. The two pieces fit together like a perfect puzzle."

Another very special carving is displayed in her son's home today. It took Jane 10 years to complete it. "I carved a 64-piece chess set from bois



d'arc wood and black walnut," she said. "At times, it seemed as hard as iron. My dad handcrafted the playing table by cutting all the blocks." Jane added that 10 years may seem like a very long time for some, but while carving, she was also a wife and mother to her young family.

As Jane continued to look at the artwork that is commonplace to her, more memories of the special times she spent with her father seemed to flood her mind. There were times they collaborated on a piece and never left their respective homes. "We sent things back and forth in the mail," she said, once again smiling fondly at the recollections. "Dad came up with a slab of cherry wood almost two inches thick and about 14 feet long. I carved two deer and scenery on paper and sent the directions to him. He had a special machine for carving, so he followed my directions and the end result was a beautiful, 15-layer carving in about two feet of cherry wood."

This family heirloom has also found a home at another son's house, but no doubt, it is a sight to see. "It really did look great when it was finished," she said. "I loved my dad. The time spent with him was priceless!"

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ARTS NOW

Before talking about her love for painting, Jane could not help herself when it came to sharing just one more anecdote.

It was a story that shaped her childhood and made her the woman she is today. "I grew up in the Depression. We received gifts that were handmade," she said. "We got

wonderful gifts Dad had carved, and as kids we were happy. We felt like the richest kids in town. We had neat toys, while the other kids in the neighborhood got apples and oranges."

Over the years, Jane has brought life to blank canvases. She has used oils, watercolors and acrylics. She finds creating with acrylics to be much easier. "I am impatient," Jane said. "Acrylic dries so much faster than oil."

As a member of the Ellis County Art Association, Jane just recently participated in the second annual Paint Historic Waxahachie event. Even though it rained the entire week, Jane and Cassie spent many hours in the car painting on-site. "I had to sit in the car and paint," she said. "Cassie has storm anxiety, so that made for a difficult painting experience to say the least. I got as much paint on the inside of my car as I did on the canvas!"

Jane has a unique way of bringing her hometown to life whether it is on canvas, in wood or rock. "The trip on this world has been fun," she said, referring to life in general. "I got dealt a great hand. I wouldn't trade a single minute of it." **ARTS NOW**



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Dr. Graham practiced as a General Surgeon in the United States Air Force. He served in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, during which time he was awarded the Air Force Achievement medal. He also received the Bronze Star medal for both his service in Iraq and for establishing a field hospital in Kyrgyzstan.

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A Local Champion

— By Ashley Carlino

What sport do you think of when you envision a ball and a racket? Most people would say tennis, not racquetball. According to Mike Jones, a local racquetball champion, racquetball is often ignored these days in the world of sports. "It's not even recognized as an Olympic sport because not enough countries participate in it," Mike said. "Racquetball gets no exposure on national television."

Mike has been interested in sports his entire life. "I've always been an athlete. When I was a kid, my parents said I'd be an athlete wherever there was a ball involved," he explained. "I wanted to be a professional baseball player."

After realizing he might not become the professional athlete he always wanted to be, he asked himself what would be the next best thing. The answer was to become a physical education coach. "Most of my family members are teachers," he noted. So he attended North Texas University to

attain a degree in physical education and health.

"At North Texas University, I participated in intramural sports," he explained. "I played racquetball." He has played racquetball on and off for 25 years, but only competitively since 2000. He and his cousin started playing together at Oak Cliff Assembly. In September 2000, they decided to enter their first tournament at the Maverick Club in Arlington. "We won second place in the men's doubles. I got

hooked," he added.

Mike is an advanced certified instructor of the American Professional Racquetball Association. He has participated in the USA Open twice. In November 2006, he won fifth place in Memphis, Tennessee, at one of the largest racquetball events. Two years ago, he went to nationals in Houston and won both silver and bronze medals. In 2007, he won the mixed doubles state championship in Arlington.

Mike has been teaching sixth grade



"What many people do not know is that a singles game of racquetball can burn anywhere from 600 to 900 calories."

science at Amber Terrace Intermediate School in DeSoto, soon to become East Middle School. Prior to his current position, he obtained a master's degree in education, so he could try his hand as principal of Trinity Christian School, which he helped start in 1980. After a couple of years, he decided to return to teaching sixth grade.

Not only does Mike teach school,



"I want people to appreciate what racquetball can do for them. It saved my life."

but he also teaches racquetball at Navarro College. He also gives free lessons to new members of the YMCA here in Waxahachie. He plays racquetball with a team on Mondays and Thursdays, and is sponsored by Ektelon Sports.

What many people do not know is that a singles game of racquetball can burn anywhere from 600 to 900 calories, which is pretty impressive if you have watched the calorie meter rise ever so slowly on one of those stationary bikes. "Racquetball was a dying sport. It peaked out in 1980, but it is coming back now," Mike explained. "It is a lifetime sport. I want people to appreciate what racquetball can do for them. It saved my life."

He is not simply being dramatic. Having played racquetball for over 25 years literally saved his life. On December 12, 2006, Mike was sitting at his desk when a funny sensation came over him; one that he had never felt before. He thought he would just

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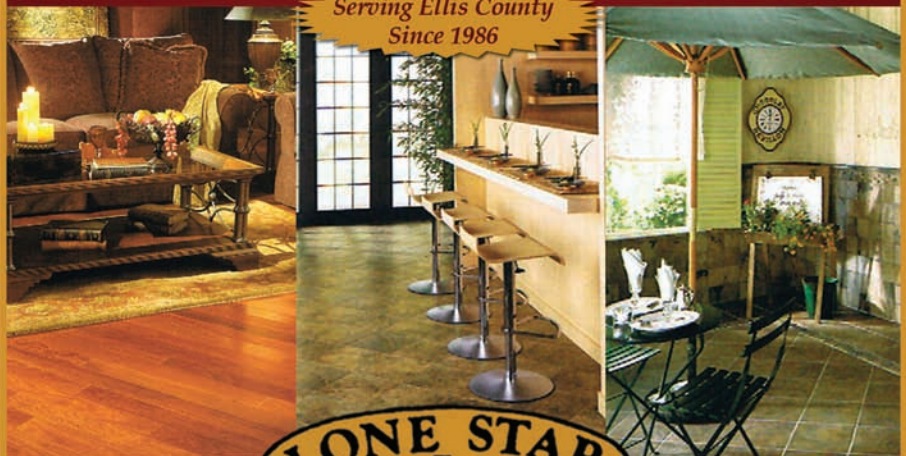
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Sports ~~Now~~

"tough it out," which is not uncommon. He remembered that his father's side of the family had a history of heart attacks — his father, being the only one of nine brothers to have survived



"Racquetball was a dying sport. It peaked out in 1980, but it is coming back now,"

one at the age of 46. Mike managed to make it to the nurse's station and have her call 9-1-1.

When he arrived at the hospital, the doctors confirmed that he had, in fact, suffered from a mild heart attack. An angiogram photographed the blockage, and his physician informed him that two of the four major arteries surrounding his heart were indeed blocked. "The only thing that kept you alive was playing racquetball," he said, quoting his physician. "The arteries around my heart had already begun branching out, making new pathways to transport all the blood that was being pumped in through

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**"Having played racquetball
for over 25 years
literally saved his life."**

give new blood flow to his heart. He was instructed not to play racquetball for three months. Mike faithfully participated in rehabilitative therapy, which consisted of walking on the treadmill and riding the stationary bicycle. It was three months and one week from the date of the surgery that he entered a singles racquetball tournament. He won first place in his division.

Mike is currently very healthy. He continues to appreciate the irreplaceable benefits provided through consistent exercise. He is the proud father of 18-year-old Natalie Jones, who will be attending Angelo State University in the fall. **NOW**

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Waxahachie Building Supply is experiencing a remarkable rise in business since moving to their new location at 3841 S. Interstate 35E in February. Andy Westbay and Karen Anthony, the store's manager and assistant manager respectively, are pleased with the success the move brought to the already well-known and highly established, full-service lumberyard.

Moving from their longtime location on Rogers Street became a necessity as the lumber business continued its uphill swing. Now, Waxahachie Building Supply boasts of 6,500 square feet of showroom space, 28,000 square feet of covered storage space for lumber and two entry/exit gates — one right off I-35E and the other off Highway 77. “We are located on 5.2 acres,” Andy said. “We have plenty of room to grow.”

Advantages that came with the

move are plenty. “We still have so much room for more inventory. More inventory means a larger variety of items on hand for the customers. We keep adding new items all the time,” Karen said.

With so many new items currently on the market, Andy and Karen were hard-pressed to pick just one. But, after a moment of thought, Karen quickly got out of her chair, only to return with a heavy rectangular piece of exterior siding. “This is just a sample of what we have on display in the showroom,” she said. “It’s not your basic everyday siding. It’s made of a fiber cement-like compound that makes it very strong.”

Labeling their business a full-service lumberyard simply means they keep

current to the demands of an ever-changing market. They carry lumber, fencing, roofing, drywall, doors, windows, trim, interior and exterior

paint, which includes a color-matching system, a small lawn and garden center and a few items for plumbing and electrical jobs. “We also carry metal culverts,” Karen said. “So many customers are glad we have them in stock.”

The lumberyard also carries the old wood siding and

trim, which is very popular on the Gingerbread-style homes found around the Waxahachie area.

Andy, Karen and the staff, which includes five salaried employees, about a dozen hourly and two outside sales people, are in firm agreement when it



comes to the customer service provided to those individuals who frequent Waxahachie Building Supply.

"It does not matter if you are a regular [customer] that comes in on a daily basis to fill a cup with coffee and sit a spell at the counter or a 'first-timer,' everyone is treated the same. Customers are our lifeblood," Andy said. "Customers can go almost anywhere these days," Karen interjected. "Our goal is to keep them coming back here."

They did not just accomplish their goal in outstanding customer service by being polite and courteous. They took customer service one step further. "We don't just get new materials in stock," Karen said. "We get to know the product by learning all we can about it. In doing this, we're able to explain all we know to the customer."

It has definitely proven to be a "win-win-win-win" situation for Waxahachie Building Supply and their many customers. The immediate customer base is within a 50-mile radius of their facility. "Our target market is anywhere we can deliver within an hour, but, we'll go further if needed. Having 12 branches — three lumber yards and nine drywall locations — makes shipping and receiving so much easier," Andy explained.

Andy and Karen grew up in and around lumberyards. They both remember those long days stocking shelves as teenagers. When asked if starting at the bottom and working their way to the top is a good thing, they both agree it has been great. "We are still willing to do whatever is needed to get the job done," Andy said. "We have an awesome team of people who just have a great time working together."

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The Goal is to Win

— By Judy Beard

According to the U.S. Academic Decathlon, theirs is “the premier scholastic competition” for high school students. Waxahachie High School Decathlon sponsor Karen Jenkins shares those same sentiments. “Our previous principal, John Aune helped get it started,” Karen said. “When I became involved, the group of students came to me because we didn’t have a sponsor. Wanda Cain was my assistant coach. Two coaches and a classroom, that’s how we started. We’ve had Mark Colson on economics, Jo Bore for the Super Quiz Infrastructure and my mother-in-law, Nancy Hightower, listens to kids’ speeches.”

One year, Waxahachie High School

(WHS) placed eleventh in the Decathlon for the entire state of Texas. “In the Decathlon at the state and national level, scholarships are provided for both the school team and individual student,” Karen explained. “UIL [University Interscholastic League] also has lots of scholarships tied to the state level.” Karen recalled a past student who received a \$12,000 scholarship.

According to Karen, the difference between the two competitions is that UIL students focus on one subject per competition, while her students learn 10 different subjects. The 10 Decathlon subjects are super quiz, language/literature, art, music,

science, economics, mathematics, speech, interview and essay. Karen and WHS student Timothy Erickson are involved in both the Decathlon and

UIL competition. “I’ve sponsored UIL Literary Criticism for about 15 years” she humbly said. “Tim also advanced to regionals in UIL Social Studies.”

As for Tim’s preference between the Decathlon and UIL his response is, “I do both. It’s easy to do,” he said. “They don’t conflict.”

When speaking of the Decathlon requirements, Karen stated, “The biggest misconception is that only the top students can compete. That’s just not true.”



Education **NOW**

With A-, B- and C-students eligible, Karen feels the hardest student to find is the C level. Tim, who was in the B category explained, "The Academic Decathlon doesn't place more emphasis on AP classes."

"This is for students who love to learn," Karen said. "I would like to see more kids get involved. I like to have a

**"I decided last year
was my experimental
year. This year
I want to win!"**

lot [of students] apply so there's already a feeling of competition. Even homeschooled students can participate."

"I was homeschooled fourth through ninth," Tim chimed in. "It was fun."

Each Decathlon team has nine students. This year, Waxahachie only had seven students due to illness. Referring to the Decathlon team, Karen further explained that it is usually a male-oriented competition. "This year we were evenly split," she said. "We have a standard uniform of black jackets provided by the school and khaki slacks. We feel we set a standard for the region."

Every school pays a registration fee. The Decathlon exposes the students to so much more than the curriculum offered in the classroom. "Two of the competitions are speech and interview," Tim said. "They help us with our communication skills."

While Tim said that reading through all of the material (a huge binder full) is his job, the dedicated teacher explained her strategy for the team. "The day before the actual competition, all the kids come to my house and we have an all-day study session, polish speeches and go over



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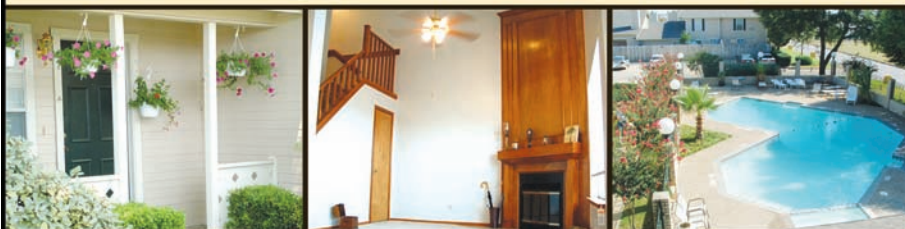
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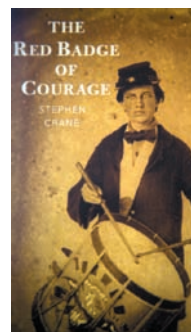
material the kids still need to cover," she said. "We do have practice tests. That really helps!"

Karen continued saying that the Decathlon is always held in January, with both regional and state levels of competition. "Even if your team doesn't win in your region, the team can advance to state based on point totals," she explained. "They like to have 25 teams in each section — small, medium (WHS' category) and large (5A) based on school population. This year the event will be at Lancaster High School." Schools host the Decathlon for two consecutive years, and the hosting school always travels to state whether they qualify to do so or not.

The list of weekend activities begins with essay writing and culminates on Saturday with the Super Quiz Relay, much like the TV show *Jeopardy*. The quiz topic on China last year proved to be a difficult one. The Civil War will be the topic for the upcoming year. Tim's favorite subjects are history and social science. "I decided last year was my experimental year," Tim said. "This year I want to win!"

"Tim has become my self-appointed captain for next year," Karen said. "He's working really hard to pull in student participants who are dedicated." Perhaps this is one reason it comes as no surprise that when asked what he likes best about competing, Tim enthusiastically proclaimed, "The competitions are fun! I like building the team this year!"

Karen, mother of four, two of whom have been Decathlon team members, and a teacher to be admired, stated, "It's something I just enjoy and that's why I do it. If we're going to do this, my goal is to win!" **NOW**





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Around Town **NOW**



One of many Fourth of July parade floats is shown at top left. A ribbon cutting was held recently at Bandit Signs, top right. Before Martha Allen's peaceful passing on July 14, she held an Avon liquidation sell. Martha, directly above, was an Avon representative for 40 years. Ribbon cuttings at Bluebonnet Courier Service, middle right, and Lucky's Firehouse Pub, bottom right, were also held recently.

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Jerry Proffitt and his 11-year-old schnauzer Bo, top left, enjoy a day of sunshine. A ribbon cutting was held, top right, at C&M Mfg. A student from the Stage Door School of Dance, bottom left, recently performed at the Heart of Texas Arts and Craft show held at the Waxahachie Civic Center. The Bessie Coleman official Texas historical marker, bottom center, was unveiled recently at Freedman Memorial Plaza. A ribbon cutting was also held at Double Dave's Pizza, bottom right.



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Look Who's Cooking

By Melinda Hines

IN THE KITCHEN WITH SHERRI COOPER

Sherri Cooper credits her mom, dad, grandma and grandpa and her Italian heritage for her love of cooking and eating. "I was raised in an Italian family, and my parents were both great cooks," Sherri said. "Every Sunday after church we would go to my grandparents to have pasta."

She has passed on this awesome family tradition of enjoying food, loves to make lasagna and enjoys cooking with and for her own family. "My husband is really a better cook than I am, and my boys love to cook all the time now, too," Sherri said.

Sherri, who owns Just Scrap It, said she also enjoys cooking because, for her, it is so much like scrapbooking. "I love creating something from nothing that everyone can enjoy," she said. **WAXAHACHIE**

GRANDMA DADDATO'S ITALIAN COOKIES

5 3/4 cups flour
3 Tbsp. baking powder
1 1/4 cups sugar
3/4 cup shortening
4 eggs
1/2 tsp. vanilla
1/2 cup frozen orange juice concentrate
1/2 oz. anise flavoring
1 cup milk
1 cup chocolate chips

ICING:
powdered sugar
water

1/2 oz. anise flavoring
colored sprinkles or sugar toppings

COOKIES: In a large bowl, mix flour, baking powder and sugar. Cut shortening into dry ingredients until it resembles corn meal. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture. In a separate bowl, beat together eggs, vanilla, orange juice and anise until well blended. Pour mixture into well and mix together. Add milk, mix and knead. If too wet, add more flour. Put flour on table or counter and knead dough while adding chocolate chips. Roll into approximately 2-inch wide rolls, the length of the cookie sheet, three rolls to a pan, tap them to flatten a little. Bake at 350 F for 12 to 15

minutes or until they look done. Do not under bake. Remove cookie loaves from pan when slightly cooled and place on wax paper or foil. **ICING:** Mix powdered sugar, water and anise to a thin consistency (not thick like cake icing). Brush or spread with hands on loaves. Immediately cover with colored sprinkles or sugar toppings. Don't let icing dry or the toppings will not stay on. Cut diagonally.

CHOCOLATE CHIP DATE NUT CAKE

1 1/2 cups water, boiled
1 cup dates, cut up
1 3/4 tsp. baking soda



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Who's Cooking **NOW**

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup butter
2 eggs
2 cups flour
1/4 tsp. salt

FROSTING:

1 cup chocolate chips
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup chopped nuts

CAKE: Pour boiling water over the dates and 1 tsp. baking soda and let stand until cool. In another bowl mix sugar, butter and eggs. Add this mixture to the date mixture; mix well. In another bowl, sift together 2 cups flour, 1/4 tsp. salt and 3/4 tsp. baking soda. Add this to the other mixture and pour into greased cake pan. **FROSTING:** Mix frosting ingredients and sprinkle on top of unbaked cake. Bake at 350 F for 1/2 hour.

PINEAPPLE CASSEROLE

2 large cans of pineapple chunks, drained
6 Tbsp. pineapple juice
6 Tbsp. flour
3/4 cup sugar
2 cups grated cheddar cheese
1 tube Ritz crackers, crushed
1/2 stick melted butter

Mix above ingredients in a 2-qt. casserole dish. In separate bowl, mix crushed Ritz crackers and melted butter. Pour over top of pineapple mixture and bake at 350 F until bubbly, about 20 to 30 minutes.

HERSHEY PIE

1 large Hershey bar with almonds
1 8-oz. tub of Cool Whip
chocolate or Oreo pie shell
1 regular Hershey bar

Melt the large Hershey bar with almonds in microwave. Stir in cool whip and mix well. Pour into pie shell and grate regular-size Hershey bar on top. Chill until ready to serve.

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Women

Must Focus on Retirement Income

— By Ted Echard



Whether they are the breadwinner in their household or not, preparing for retirement should be extremely important to women. One item of planning that must be considered is the financial situation of the surviving spouse and what can be done to prepare for a potential shortfall.

Women survive their spouses more often than men do. The Administration on Aging estimates that seven of 10 women will outlive their husbands,¹

highlighting the need for retirement planning even more.

Unfortunately, women are often at a disadvantage when it comes to resources available for retirement. The average woman spends nearly 15 years away from the workforce, while the average man will be away for 1.6 years. This translates into lower benefits from company pensions, 401(k) plans and Social Security.

Various estimates indicate expenses

after the death of a husband will be 80 percent of what they had been when he was alive. Unfortunately, a widow's income may likely be much less than that. Of all elderly persons with income below the poverty level, over 70 percent are women.² More than half were much better off financially before their husbands died.

Less time in the workforce may also mean fewer women qualify for health benefits. This can put an even greater



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burden on their retirement income. It is imperative for women to start saving now for their retirement, which can be accomplished through several savings vehicles. It is equally important to protect your nest egg through adequate life insurance coverage and insurance options should your health care needs change. Adequate planning for retirement and surviving a spouse can be a deciding factor in living comfortably.

Taking the time to examine the household finances and planning carefully will help to ensure there are adequate means of support for either spouse during the golden years. Talk to a qualified individual about your retirement needs to prepare for and enjoy a comfortable retirement. **WAXAHACHIE**

Source: "Older Women." *Administration On Aging*, 2000, p. Ibid. p. 1

Ted Echard is a State Farm agent based in Waxahachie.

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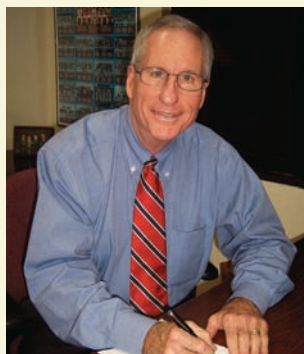
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Back Pain Safety

Dr. James Ellis, an orthopedic surgeon on the medical staff at Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie, offers the following tips for dealing with back pain, a common and complex condition. On average, about 25 percent of Americans experience chronic or sporadic back pain. There are many different possible causes, the most common being accidents, muscle strain and sports injuries. While many back injuries are minor and temporary, more serious injuries can include a fractured vertebra, a slipped vertebra or vertebrae and damage to nerve function called cervical radiculopathy.

"The majority of back pain that I

see comes from people who have been injured," Dr. Ellis said.

Most back pain can be treated with a combination of therapies, including physical therapy, pain medication and/or anti-inflammatory medications. "In some cases, surgery may be required, but that all depends on the individual patient and their condition," Dr. Ellis said.

In most cases, back pain can be more annoying than debilitating. However, a trip to the doctor is

advised should you feel numbness or tingling. Your doctor may use an X-ray, CT scan or MRI to further assist in pinpointing the area of concern.

To relieve common back pain:

Rest: If you have been doing strenuous activities such as moving or lifting heavy objects.

Heat: A heating pad can help to alleviate some of the pain and help increase your movement.





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Strengthen: Working on your abdominal muscles can also help to internally support your spine.

Standing: While standing you should keep your head up and abdominal muscles pulled in. You should also avoid wearing high heels.

Sleeping: You may have to try out soft and hard mattresses in order to find one that will not give you back pain.

Sitting: When sitting in a chair it should be of an appropriate height for you and should give you adequate lumbar support. **NOW**

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Color in the Shade

— By Nancy Fenton

Finally, the sun is shining through the lush green canopy. It would be great if I had more holes in that canopy! The heavy roof of leaves gives us shade from the scorching sun, but is hard on flowerbeds where we want some color. There are several

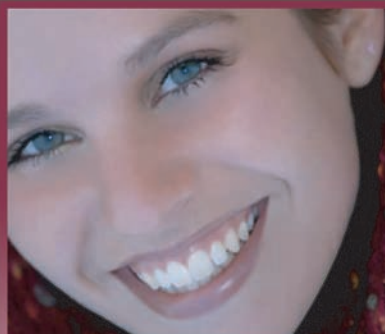
ferns which do well in our alkaline soil that can give you multiple shades of green, and a few multicolored bulbs that can still brighten your beds. Holly fern is fairly large, about three feet tall and wide, with large dark green fronds. Japanese painted fern has multicolored white and green leaves and is a bit smaller. Both do well in shady areas and compete well with large trees! Autumn ferns are about 12 - 15 inches tall and make a great low border, and the old standard wood ferns survive well growing to about three feet in height.

If you mix them in with bright white, pink or red caladiums, they can really brighten a dark, shady bed. It really is not too late to plant caladiums, if you can find them. The bulbs themselves have a blooming life of about three months, so there is still

time for them to come up and look great until fall. I just learned this spring that you can hurry the time from planting until they come up by soaking the bulbs for 30 minutes in warm water before you plant them. We still have August, September and October before the nights get cold, so give them a try!

Purple oxalis is another bulb that will come up year after year and will do well in the shade. It takes awhile, but will reward you with a low-growing splash of bright purple in a not-so-bright flowerbed. The bulbs are usually very small, so be prepared to put a lot of them in the ground! Then enjoy the rest of your summer and rest up for fall plantings! **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener in Ellis County.



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August 2007

Community Calendar

Every Monday

Guitar Pickers' Night from 6 - 8 p.m. at the Five Twelve Teahouse. Free and open to the public.

First and Third Tuesdays

Training Academy for Dental Assistants' free informational sessions at 5:30 p.m. Call (972) 842-2999 for details.

Second and Fourth Mondays

Texas Ladies Networking meets from 11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Fire Mountain Grill in Waxahachie. For more information, call (214) 587-1221.

August 1

After Hours Improv Workshop for Teens from 3 - 5 p.m. at Sims Library. Free for teens ages 11 - 12. Learn the fundamental skills of improvisation. Call (972) 937-9839 for more information.

August 3 - 26

You Can't Get There From Here by Pat Cook at the Ennis Public Theatre. Call (972) 878-PLAY for more information.

August 5

Motorcycle Rally at New Beginning Bible Church. Free barbecue and refreshments starting at 10 a.m. This event is free for all ages. Bring your motorcycles so you can participate in the games or just come and watch. Location: 1970 FM 983, Ferris, Texas. Call Kenneth Dunlap at (972) 842-2800 for more information.

August 6

Executive board meeting begins at noon at the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce office. (972) 937-2390.

August 7

National Night Out from 6:30 - 9 p.m. in historic downtown Waxahachie. Call (972) 937-2390 for more information.

August 8

Waxahachie Night at the Rangers from 4:45 - 11 p.m. hosted by the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce & Convention and Visitors Bureau. The Texas Rangers are scheduled to take on the Oakland A's at the Rangers Ballpark in Arlington. The chartered bus will depart at 5 p.m. from the Chamber of Commerce office, located at 102 YMCA Drive. The bus will begin boarding at 4:45 p.m. Tickets are \$50 per person and include transportation, Terrace Box seat on the 3rd base side, dinner and unlimited refreshments in the air-conditioned Corner Club. The trip is sponsored by Linebarger, Goggan, Blair & Sampson, LLP. For more information or to make a reservation, contact the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce at (972) 937-2390.

August 11

After Hours Improv Comedy Show begins at 8 p.m. at the Texas Theater. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$6 for children 10 and under. Buy tickets at www.AfterHoursImprov.com or by calling (972) 937-9839.

August 14 & 28

Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce Business Interchange leads group meets at Hastings Entertainment at 7:30 a.m. For information, call (972) 937-2390.

August 16

Amateur Radio Club meets at 7:30 p.m. at the Waxahachie Fire Department station on Water Street. For more information, visit wd5ddh.org.

August 22

Ambassador Luncheon begins at noon at the Waxahachie Chamber Conference Center. Cost is \$10 per person.

August 24

Summer Moonlight Movies in Downtown presents *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Show starts at 9 p.m. in historic downtown Waxahachie. Admission is free. Bring a lawn chair or blanket.

August 27

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meets at St. Paul Episcopal Church, Hwy. 287 at Ovilla Road, Waxahachie, at 7 p.m. Visit CQGuild.org for more information.

To have your events posted on the community calendar, e-mail us at:

smcintosh-nowmag@sbcglobal.net



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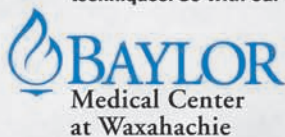
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