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ON THE COVER



Ivan and Tracy Brigman fly for the fun of it.

Photo by Sam Doyle.

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Editor's Note

Cooler weather, get here soon!

The temperatures this summer have been beyond hot — they've been downright sultry. The humidity has only made it worse. Seriously, if I was a rose, I would most definitely be wilted. As school resumes later this month, I know cooler weather is just around the corner, but it can't arrive soon enough for me.

There are so many cute backpacks, notebooks and book binders available to kids today. I was not a "girly-girl" back in grade school, and I'm still not much into ruffles and lace.

But if I were a kid today, I'd do whatever it took to get a full ensemble of Hello Kitty back-to-school paraphernalia. I would mow the yard, wash the dishes and keep my room clean. I wonder if my grandson would like a Hello Kitty backpack to carry his goodies to Granny's in? Hmm ... probably not!

Sandra

Sandra Strong
WaxahachieNOW Editor
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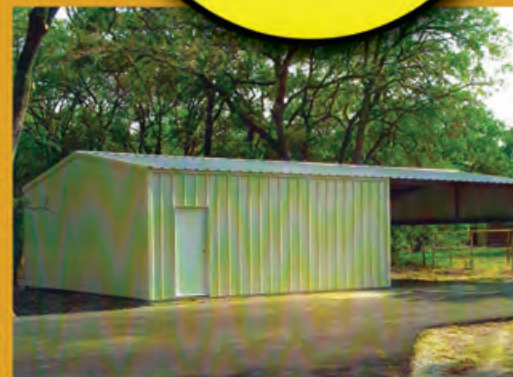
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A full-page photograph of a male skydiver and a female student in tandem. The skydiver, wearing a helmet, goggles, and a white long-sleeved shirt, is holding the student. The student, wearing a pink shirt and goggles, is smiling. They are both in freefall against a clear blue sky. On the left side of the image, there is a large, stylized graphic of the word 'FALLING' in yellow and white, with 'FOR MILES' in white below it. To the right of the text is a vertical column of red and white chevron arrows pointing downwards.

FALLING FOR MILES

— By Sydni Thomas

One smart comment to one of his high school teachers helped Ivan Brigman discover a death-defying hobby he is still passionate about over 20 years later. In 1992, Ivan jumped out of a plane for the first time in his life after promising his physics teacher he would as soon as he graduated. He had barely settled into his apartment at Texas A&M University, College Station, before scouring the phone book for a skydiving company. To his surprise he found Aggies Over Texas and was able to schedule his trip for that weekend. “After my first trip I was hooked,” Ivan said. “I went out every weekend after that.”

Ivan's first jump was also the first trip he ever made in a plane. It took 148 takeoffs before he ever returned to earth in a plane that only landed because of inclement weather. During his college years, Ivan worked toward various skydiving licenses, which would enable him to jump unsupervised in different environments (day, night, etc.). “You can't jump out of a plane without an instructor until you have participated in classes and successfully met certain criteria,” Ivan explained. “I began jumping several times a weekend to reach that goal.”

Tandem jumps, jumping out of the plane harnessed to an instructor, is the most popular and easiest way to introduce beginners to skydiving. Little knowledge of the equipment is required, and the full responsibility of the parachute is placed in a professional's hands. "There are several licenses to work toward and ratings to earn. The ratings qualify you as a coach, instructor or instruction examiner. I have recently become an instruction examiner, who oversees training new tandem instructors."

Ivan spent a lot of time traveling to Granbury before he decided to build his own hanger at the Hillsboro Municipal Airport. After purchasing a plane, hiring people to pack parachutes and a pilot to fly the plane, Skydive 35 became an official U.S. Parachute Association drop zone. This shortened his commute, allowed him to jump more often and let his family

take part. It took seven years after their wedding before Ivan's wife, Tracy, would jump. "The conditions never seemed right for me to jump," Tracy admitted. "One day everything worked out, and I thought, *Why not?* Now I jump twice a year with Ivan, on my birthday and one time for the family Christmas card."

The feeling of her stomach rising in her throat kept Tracy away from jumping for years. Once Ivan explained the feeling of nausea only occurred when jumping out of something at a standstill, like a hot air balloon or helicopter, Tracy was more open to trying. "Since a jumper only accelerates to a speed of 140 miles per hour, only a few miles per hour faster than the plane they are jumping from, it does not cause a roller coaster-like feeling to enter the stomach," Ivan said. "There is little to be afraid of when jumping. The whole experience lasts up to seven minutes, and free falling only occurs for a minute, which



**"After my first trip
I was hooked."**





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seems like seconds, before the parachute is deployed. I'm not sure how to cure someone from being afraid of heights, but don't let the falling feeling stop you from trying it."

From movie sets to the ESPN X Games, skydiving has become more popular each year. The more popular it becomes the more technology advances, making the sport safer for participants. According to the U.S. Parachute Association the number of fatalities each year was cut in half in 2012 compared to 1998. Strong policies and strict training guidelines help give new skydivers peace of mind as they jump. "The only injuries I have seen or experienced are the occasional twisted ankle from not landing properly," Ivan said. "It's very unusual for there to be a fatality."

Ivan has jumped with all kinds of people, from 18-year-old high school seniors to 92-year-old dentists. His and Tracy's favorite aspect of skydiving is the family atmosphere of the sport. "It's the only place where you can find a high school dropout cohabitating with a doctor as best friends. Status has no meaning," Ivan said.

"After a weekend of jumping, we enjoy just sticking around and talking with everyone," Tracy said. "We have cookouts at the end of the weekend that brings everyone together. It's a social sport that forms one big family."

Ivan still jumps as often as he can, averaging at least 500 jumps a year. He finds time to squeeze in his favorite sport, skydiving, between spending time with family, running his construction business



and managing Skydive 35. Ivan even took advantage of down time the morning prior to his wedding to skydive because he enjoys it so much. "I counted every jump up to 1,001," Ivan said. "It was a great milestone. Now I do it so often, some weekends over a dozen times, that it's hard to keep up with the number."

When jumping alone, Ivan likes to experiment with different types of body flight. Skydiving offers limitless sport. Some of the popular disciplines of skydiving are free flying, canopy formations, wing suit flying, sky surfing and freestyle. Skydiving competitions are held worldwide for those licensed to jump alone or in groups of people. "Redbull and similar companies sponsor whole competitions dedicated to the sport," Ivan said. "Each competition is based on something different with



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Texas has proven to be a year-round jump zone.

dozens of events. Some events are based on accuracy of landing, speed, jump form and choreography."

While Ivan continues to skydive, he does not participate in competitions. He has, however, made friends from all over the world who are competitors in the sport. Since it's a worldwide sport, many people will travel all over to find the perfect weather for skydiving. Texas has proven to be a year-round jump zone for Ivan. The weather rarely gets bad enough to cancel, there is not a harsh winter and once above the clouds the climate is a cool break from the warm land temperature.

"Many people move down south to Texas or Florida during the winter to keep jumping," Ivan said. "I'm very fortunate to get to jump year-round in Texas, so I haven't needed to travel far. My plan is to keep on jumping for as long as I can. It's an exciting sport, and I think everyone who can, should give it a try." **NOW**



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One of a DOZEN

— By Carolyn Wills

Steven Woods was born in Reagor Springs, Texas, a small community five miles southeast of Waxahachie. “There were six boys and six girls in our family,” said his sister, Sophia. “Steven was number seven, and I’m the youngest. All of the girls are still living, but only two of the brothers.”

For a living, the family relied on sharecropping and, as a little boy, Steven helped. At ages 6 and 7, he spent the summers to early fall picking cotton with his family in South Texas and pulling cotton in West Texas, near the town of Childress. “*Picking* means you take only the cotton,” he explained. “*Pulling* means you take the cotton, dry boll and all.” Both processes are hot and hard work, especially for a young boy. “Like most families back then, we were raised to live off the land,” he explained. “We grew our own food, fished for perch, crappie, bass and catfish and even killed our own hogs and dressed them.”



"We were also born and raised in church," Sophia added. "When we were comin' up, if Momma was home, the only thing we listened to was gospel music. In our house, if you didn't want to hear church, you had better get up and get gone!" Their church is Waxahachie's Mount Horeb Missionary Baptist Church founded in 1859. At 154 years old, it is the oldest church in Ellis County.

Life changed for the Woods family when they moved to Waxahachie in 1961.



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"I was born shortly after," Sophia said. Their two-bedroom home backs up to the old Turner High School football field where Steven started high school.

"I played defensive back on the Turner Lions football team until I was transferred to Waxahachie High," he said. The year was 1968-69, and schools were desegregating. Happily, Steven made the cut to play football at his new school and played his same position. He graduated from Waxahachie High School and eventually went to work for Flexsteel, the major upholstered furniture manufacturer.

In time, Steven became a master upholsterer. Today, in a small workshop behind his boyhood home, he turns time-worn sofas into heirlooms, interiors of old automobiles into coveted show cars, cast-away furniture back to original glory and extends the lives of boats with custom reupholstered cushions. Much of what he does is self-taught, and much is what he learned in his nine-year career at Flexsteel.

"I've been doing this for a long time," he smiled. When Flexsteel was forced to lay off workers, he and a long-time friend rented a building and started their own upholstery shop. "We did it until business slowed," he said. "At one time, I had worked in the insurance industry, so after we closed the shop, I went back into that. But I have always done upholstery on the side."

Upholstery is now what Steven does on a full-time basis. "The work is hard, but I encourage a young person to learn it," he said. "Everybody wants something different these days. Women like colors and patterns and something that will stand out in their homes, like a sofa with the cushion sides covered in different

fabrics.” He is an expert when it comes to tufting, cording, cutting, creating patterns, piecing materials and fitting.

“There are also lots of opportunities to restore old furniture,” Steven remarked. Whether in a garage sale, on the side of a road or a giveaway, he can spot good furniture. “Today, lots of things get made with pressed particle board, so you have to look for solid wood and good construction.”



Lately, more and more projects come to him from automobile enthusiasts — people who love antique or old cars and either want to collect and restore them or transform them into show cars. “I like people to choose their own fabrics,” he said. “You’d be amazed at the colors, materials and designs they want.” For car enthusiasts, faux leathers are especially popular, and he has samples that look very much like the real thing — from ostrich to alligator to cowhide.

“I once worked on a Chevy truck,” he laughed. “It was a little bitty show car, and the owner wanted the interior covered in red, white and blue plaid with matching front and back seats.” Figuring out how to cut and piece the strips was a puzzle, but when it was done, one proud and happy owner sat behind the wheel.

Steven is a master craftsman and a fine artist, yet neither would matter much without his work ethic and commitment to quality. Developing his craft has taken years of painstaking execution. Maybe he profited from the grueling experience of cotton harvesting, yet his greatest benefit surely comes from the love of his large and very close family.

“From my first marriage, I have two daughters, Latonya and La Kiesha, and three grandsons,” he said. Proving that

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love is timeless, he and his new fiancée will soon be married.

"He also has 32 nieces and nephews, 52 great-nieces and -nephews and 10 great-great-nieces and -nephews," Sophia added. One of those great-nephews is Aldrick Robinson, wide receiver for the Washington Redskins. "He was our Momma's first great-grandchild to go pro," Sophia shared. "He got picked by the draft on April 29, 2011, the anniversary of Momma's death in 2006. And the Redskins were Daddy's favorite team."

"Our family is really close," Steven said. "Growing up, we had a dog named Trouble. He was part wolf, part German shepherd and part of our family. He was 14 when he died. We all cried, and ever since we've not had another dog."

The family house is also a refuge when times are tough. It's where Sophia, who will soon get her license as a registered nurse, and family, took care of the brothers who have now passed. "We get together a lot," Steven smiled. "Everyone lives within 40 miles of Waxahachie."

"We all cook when we're together, even the grandkids," Sophia shared. "When the 12 of us kids lived in the house, it had only two bedrooms. Later, Daddy and the boys added a bedroom and a den."

"We'll always keep the family house," Steven said.

"Momma told us to pray and to always come back home," Sophia added. "This is our family home." **NOW**

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Linked to *Family*

— By Sandra Strong



At Home With Griff and Sarah Pickard

Certain personalities can turn a house into a home filled with generations of memories, laughter and plans for the future. The easy, fun-loving banter between Griff and Sarah Pickard and their daughter, Emma Grace, makes coming home something they look forward to each day. They share the three-bedroom, two-bath home, established in 1919, with two dogs, Ollie Grace and Sally Grace, and a cat, Gabby Grace. "Emma named them all," Sarah said with a smile, explaining that they have a last name, too. "Each one's name ends in Pickard, just like Emma Grace Pickard. It's all about the Grace Pickard."

Griff and Sarah have lived in the family home for the past six years. "I grew up in Waxahachie out in the country, except for my college years," Sarah explained. "This home belonged to my aunt and uncle before we moved in."

Things in life happen for a reason, and although the unexpected passing of Sarah's uncle brought great sadness, it also opened the doors for Griff and Sarah to make a new home for their family. "We had a newly constructed home of our own," Griff shared, "but we wanted a bigger yard with an older home that needed to be restored." They put their house on the market, and

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it sold much sooner than they expected. During this time, the young family moved into the unattached guest cottage located on the property. Soon thereafter, it came time for Sarah's aunt to sell the home, but as fate would have it, everyone concerned was in the right place at the right time. "It worked out so well for all of us," Griff admitted. "We moved into the big house, and Sarah's aunt now resides in the cottage. She needed to sell, and we were looking to buy, so it all made perfect sense."

Once they got Sarah's aunt settled into



the cottage, the complete restoration process began. While the first room was being renovated, the family moved in with Sarah's parents. Once the home office was complete, they moved to their new home and lived in the office while they worked nightly and on weekends to update each room, one at a time. "We referred to that first finished room as headquarters," Sarah remembered. "We would start working on one thing, and something would happen to change the process." When they were in the throes of working on the ceiling, Sarah fell through a portion of the floor. "At that

point, the floor became the priority."

"We thought we knew what we were getting into," Griff added, smiling now that the home's restoration is complete. "You can see the technology we added when making changes; and those changes made it our home."

The only original cedar floor of the pier and beam home is found in the front bedroom, which now serves as the guest room. The old steam heater system was replaced with central heat and air. A portion of the front porch was sacrificed to add the guest bathroom. Walls were added in several places to transform

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open, unused space into quaint areas that lend to the style indicative of the 1920s.

One large space in the home, once referred to as the "waste room," is now a hallway that includes the master bathroom, a closet and the laundry room. Another large family area at the back of the home was updated to include the master bedroom, Emma Grace's bedroom and a long hallway. Mr. Mosemiller, a local carpenter, resurfaced the kitchen cabinetry, but the original pocket doors still remain. At the back of the house, the roof is being extended to allow for a covered porch, which provides an enjoyable view of the beautiful landscaping. An oversized playhouse for Emma Grace takes its spot in one corner of the backyard, while the garage is found in the opposite corner.

Even though the main house celebrated its completion in July 2012, Griff and Sarah still have some restoration that needs to be finished. "The garage is pretty much all we have left to do," Griff added.

"Sometimes it's hard to discern what room was what since the remodel," Sarah admitted. "Honestly, we really did enjoy the restoration process. My dad was our contractor. He was a tremendous help."

Almost every item displayed in the home links back to family in some way or another. So many were inherited from Sarah's aunt when her aunt realized they wouldn't fit in the cottage. The bus counter, dating back to the late '20s or early '30s, came from the old bus station in Waxahachie. Griff uses the meat slicer the family acquired from Frank's Grocery if and when the need arises. The old crank phone once belonged to Griff's grandmother.

An antique radio in the living room is one of Griff's favorites among the special memorabilia they've collected.

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"I have an affinity toward this kind of stuff," he confessed. "Think about it. Can you imagine what came over the radio waves? FDR and his fireside chats and the bombing of Pearl Harbor. This was the TV in those days."

Griff and Sarah both enjoy the kitchen stove her aunt and uncle tracked down and installed in the early '90s. "It's built for country cooking," Sarah said. "When family and friends come by, we always seem to gravitate to the kitchen."

The claw-foot tub in the master bath is another reminder of the past for Sarah. The oversized tub came from her great-uncle's old farmhouse in Maypearl. The standard-sized claw-foot tub in the extra bathroom, the one Emma Grace claimed for herself, was found at a local estate sale.

Family photos have been displayed ingeniously thanks to an idea Sarah found on Pinterest. "That wall represents our family tree," Sarah said, pointing at the wall in the office. The hand-painted tree, complete with leaves in several different colors, spans five generations, from parents to parents of parents and so on. Other ideas Sarah has found online and on her trips to Canton include an assortment of wall crosses, an overly organized closet and her latest venture — the cracked and broken patio she is converting into a mosaic work of art.

The whimsy found in the home is thanks to Emma Grace, a wonderfully sweet soul who finds pleasure in sharing her creativity with others. Her bedroom, with an old hospital bed that's been sandblasted and painted a deep shade of chewing gum grape, is a true reflection of who she really is — a talented young lady who adds her own special brand of color to the home.

"Everything really does have a story to tell," Griff reiterated. "Every item had a first time with someone somewhere." **NOW**

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RESILIENT *Inspiration*

— By Sandra Strong



Penny Jurkash recently turned 6. Her brother, Joel, will celebrate his 8th birthday at the end of the month. They are like most brothers and sisters — they like to tease one another. Joel takes after his dad, Tony, as he is now the young jokester of the family. “Joel loves to crack jokes,” Tony said, “but he also likes making everyone in the family laugh.” And for this family, laughter has proven to be good medicine.

News that would change the family dynamic came on December 21, 2012. Penny had missed school Monday of that week, home sick with strep throat. Tuesday and Wednesday she continued to run a fever. “On Thursday, Joel was scheduled to see the family doctor for a rash,” Tony shared. “I thought since Penny was still not feeling well, I’d take her, too.” Labs were taken on Penny. Two hours later, Tony received a call saying Penny’s white and red blood counts were both low, which was a red flag for the family’s local physician, Dr. Henry.

After Tony got off the phone with Dr. Henry, he immediately called Leslie at work during dismissal, telling her she needed to get home fast. When Leslie left work that afternoon, she had a feeling of impending dread. “I just knew,” Leslie recalled. The feeling could easily have been a mother’s intuition, but whatever *it* was, she was right. “Penny was transferred to Children’s Medical Center in Dallas that same afternoon where more testing was done,” Leslie continued. “She was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia.”

In layman’s terms, childhood acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), the most common cancer found in children, is a type of cancer of the blood and bone marrow where the bone marrow generates too many immature white blood cells. This type of cancer will usually worsen quickly if it goes untreated. “The oncologist at Children’s Medical said Dr. Henry was to be thanked for his prompt attention,”

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Leslie stated. "In cases like Penny's, the timely manner in which treatment is administered is very important."

Penny's trip to the hospital lasted until Christmas Day when she was finally allowed to return home. As sad as the situation was, Tony and Leslie had to keep things in the home and at school as normal as humanly possible. "While Penny was in the hospital, Gabby Elf, the family's Elf on the Shelf followed her there," Leslie shared. "Santa left gifts for her that first visit, and the Easter Bunny came to call during another stay. It just wouldn't have been fun for Penny not to have gotten gifts on those special days."

As grueling as the monthly hospital stays continue to be for the family, it's very important for Tony and Leslie to keep activities in Penny's realm regulated, especially since she loves school, her teachers and the many friends she's made through the years. "Her birthday was on April 27. Her guest list included 49 people," Leslie said. "Twenty-four of them were kids she's gone to school with at First Christian Day School and Northside Elementary School since 3K." Penny was also able to go to school to complete her kindergarten year, although she did have two classrooms — her own and her mom's room that offered her a "protected space."

Like any soon-to-be first-grader, Penny has a long list of favorite things. "Cotton candy is my favorite thing ever," she said, while climbing into Leslie's lap. "I also like rice tacos, corn on the cob and popsicles with ice cream inside." Her favorite color is pink. *Garfield* is her favorite show. The book she loves



reading over and over again is Dr. Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham*. "I love art and music, too," Penny said, adding that her favorite singer is none other than country singer Taylor Swift.

"Penny has her own cotton candy machine and a drum set thanks to her great-aunt and -uncle. She loves the trumpet Santa brought her for Christmas," Leslie added. "She also enjoys painting hearts and symmetrical art." And we can't forget the family Chihuahua, Macy.

Although many things in the household have remained the same, some areas had to change for Penny's welfare and successful healing. "Germs are a very big deal for a patient with leukemia," Leslie said, as Penny closed her eyes, comforted by her mother's soft voice and open arms. "Penny was always a hugger. She loved giving hugs as much as she loved getting them." Hugging was one of the special things Penny had to give up during the long treatment period. She also had to learn to keep her hands away from her mouth, and biting her nails was out of the question.

Tony and Leslie have made sure to keep Joel's schedule as close to normal as possible, too. Baseball is by far his most favorite sport to play, and during the summer months he and Tony traveled with the select league, Ellis County Prospects, of which Joel is a member. When asked what position he plays, Joel stated, "All of them. My favorite is catcher, but I sometimes play at right center, second or first base. I like the glove the first baseman uses."

Joel is also a huge Waxahachie Indian

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baseball and football fan. In fact, he compares his Indians to the Texas Rangers. “The WHS baseball team gave Joel a signed ball,” Tony said.

“I even got to go in the dugout during a game,” Joel added.

Granted, the hardships for this family have been many, but they are looking forward to the new school year at Northside Elementary with optimism and excitement. Tony is in his sixth year as a dual fifth grade science and math teacher. Leslie was an aide before getting her certification a little more than a year ago to become a kindergarten teacher. Joel, who likes being the center of attention, will no doubt be skipping down the hall to his new second-grade classroom, and if he should forget his lunch, he knows where to find his dad.

Although her endurance level is still lower than it should be, Penny will walk confidently through the doors as a proud and happy first grader. She is looking forward to all the new school year has to offer from reading and writing to art and music. “She doesn’t really understand all she’s had to endure,” Leslie said with emotion in her voice. “She will have an awful week and then bounce right back. Even in the worst of times, Penny always finds something to smile about.”

Resilient little Penny is an inspiration to those who know her. As she continues to grow stronger and prepares to return to the dance classes she loves, who knows how many new friends she’ll make along the way. **NOW**



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JUMPING for JOY

—By Callie Revell

At first glance, Clare Johnson may seem like an average American teenager. She is homeschooled on a small farm outside of Waxahachie, surrounded by sheep, llamas and baby geese. However, if you happen to sit in her living room, you will notice the truth: judging by the wall of medals and trophies, she is far from ordinary.

Clare is an elite trampoline gymnast, one of less than a dozen in the country. Currently a member of the USA Gymnastics Junior National Team, Clare travels the world to compete against other trampolinists. "There are three different events, and I only do





“I’m definitely shooting for the Olympics, so if I don’t make this one I will be training for the next one.”

trampoline, but there’s also tumbling and double-mini,” Clare explained. Tumbling involves a series of flips down a long runway ending in a trampoline. Double-mini allows a gymnast to jump on two trampolines one after another to complete a maneuver. “Trampoline is the only Olympic sport,” Claire added. This event is Clare’s main focus, consisting of a complicated series of flips performed high in the air. In 2010, she won the gold medal for double-mini at the Pan American Championships.

Her sport is one of fierce competition. “In trampoline, only one person gets to go from the U.S. because it’s only been in the Olympics since 2000. There’s just this one spot, and each year, there’s probably 10 people at most, who really go for the Olympics,” Clare said. Because of this, she spends most of her free time practicing at Trevino’s Gym in Lancaster. Three times a year, she travels to Huntsville, Texas, to train

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at a workout facility built and run by world-famous gymnastics coaches, Béla and Márta Károlyi. "When we go down there, we train three times a day. That's not counting conditioning and [other] stuff we have to do," Clare explained. "Basically, all the people who are on the [national] team come and train with all the other coaches."

Her passion for the trampoline began when her older sister, Cara, began taking gymnastics classes while the family lived in Colorado. "When we moved, [Cara] started doing it again, and I was like, 'I want to do it, too!' I was probably 5 or 6 years old. I didn't make the team till I was 6," Clare remembered. The new gym only offered trampoline gymnastics, so that was what Clare learned.

She enjoys how structured her sport is because it allows her to sharpen her skills. "I really love everything about it," Clare admitted. "But I probably excel the most at form. In trampoline, the biggest thing is getting into your skill and coming out at '12 o'clock.'" There are 10 levels of trampoline gymnastics, with 10 skills in each level. Each level requires a compulsory routine, which is the same routine everyone must learn. When a gymnast reaches level 8, he or she is allowed an optional routine, which can be more creative and complex. "The compulsory is the easier routine, but it's still hard because you have to make it look really good," Clare stated. "The compulsory is my favorite because I love being able to perfect it."

Trampoline gymnastics is not as well-known as artistic gymnastics, which uses equipment like the balance beam or uneven bars. "People ask me, 'Oh, you



jump trampoline, can you do a back flip?" and I'm like, 'Yeah ...,' she laughed. "They don't really understand. It's kind of hard to explain it to them because they think, *Oh, it's just jumping around on the trampoline, that's a lot of fun*, but it really is very structured." According to Clare, many people are actually scared of jumping on a professional trampoline. "I think they're scared of how high you can get, and if you get off balance even a little bit at an angle it will obviously throw you the other way. They don't know how to control it."

She hopes as trampoline gymnastics gains more popularity at the Olympics, her sport will gain new fans. She attended the London Olympic Games last summer, and remembers the full arena during the trampoline events. "There were actually a lot of people there. We were really excited so many people showed up to watch, even if they hadn't heard of it. That was really fun."

For Clare, the path to achieving her dreams has been paved with hard work and sacrifice. "I was at a competition one time, and I came down wrong and jarred my knee and lost some bone in my knee," she recalled. "I didn't walk for four months, and I was on crutches. I came back, and everyone was like, 'Oh, the goal isn't to make the National Team, it's just to do your best and get back up there,' but I really wanted to [make the team]."

Clare persevered and earned her place on the National Team. "If you get frustrated, it's hard to keep going," she said, thinking of difficult practices. "I just love to jump trampoline, and it's more like the next day it's not even on my mind. I just really start over. The next day

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when I come into practice, I very rarely carry over anything that happened at the practice before. Usually, it's like a whole new day."

Although Clare began her gymnastics career on the trampoline, many gymnasts begin as artistic gymnasts and migrate to the trampoline later because they think it's easier. "I wouldn't really classify it as easier," Clare said. "It doesn't beat up on your body as much, so I think it really gives you the opportunity to do it longer. Everyone's body is different, so there are some who can't go as long." This separates trampoline gymnastics from artistic gymnastics, a sport from which most athletes retire in their early-to-mid 20s. "If you're older than 25, people are like, 'Oh my gosh, you're so old!'" Clare laughed, but said many trampolinists can continue their careers into their late 30s.

"I'll probably do it as long as I can," Clare said. "I'm definitely shooting for the Olympics, so if I don't make this one I will be training for the next one." The 2016 Olympics will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. After that, the next Olympics Clare would be eligible for will be in 2020. Between Olympics, Clare has the opportunity to participate in other national and international competitions.

Once her gymnastics career is over, she indicated without hesitation she wants to coach. Her dream does not end with her own personal success. Instead, Clare's dream stretches far beyond herself to future trampolinists looking to find the same joy she experiences 15 feet in the air. **NOW**

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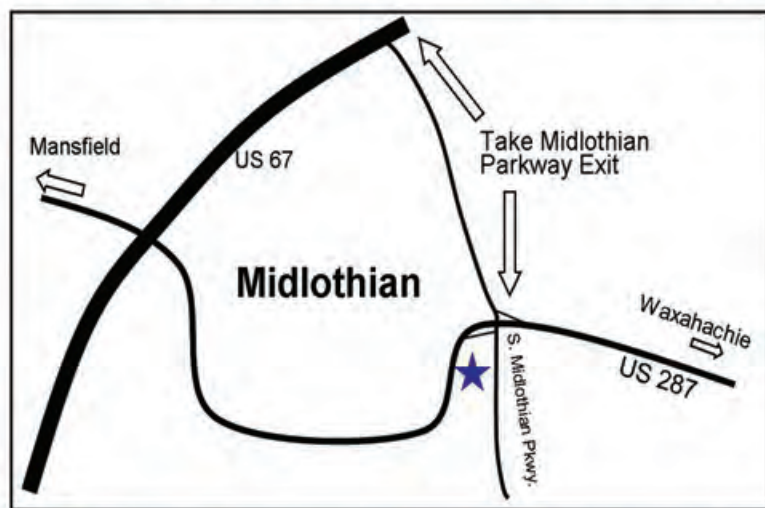


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The Healing Touch

— By Dianne Reaux



Doug Esselman is a native son of Waxahachie. He's also a talented artist, painter and sculptor. He has used many different mediums to craft his work, including acrylics, watercolors and charcoal. Recently, Doug discovered his favorite medium is wood. He loves creating beautiful pieces of work, and most of the work he has created he has given away.

He is a thoughtful, warm and expressive man who speaks slowly — deliberately, as if searching for the exact words to convey his thoughts. “I’ve always known I was creative, even when I was a child. My grandmother recognized I had talent, so when I was 12 years old, she paid for me to take lessons from a local art teacher. But I never really took art seriously until I was in high school,” Doug shared. “I remember painting pictures using acrylic and oil-based paints, and I also sketched with charcoal. I am interested in creating pieces with metal, but working with wood is my favorite.”

Doug has always used art as therapy. “I have the utmost respect for Mother Nature, especially trees,” he explained. “I would never cut down a tree to create a piece of art, but if the tree is already dead, or if someone has already cut it down, I will try to use it to create something beautiful.” The artistic process Doug uses is just as creatively inspiring as the finished piece itself. “When I see a piece of wood I always look at the grain and try to find the unique knots that give the wood its character. Then I get a visual image of what I’m going to create. I can already see the image of what I want to create long before I make my first cut into the wood.”

The therapy Doug refers to stems from using art as a way to deal with the years of physical and emotional pain resulting from a terrible childhood accident. When he was 6 years old, he suffered third-degree burns over the lower half of his body, including his hands. “My brothers and I, along with a neighbor’s son, were playing in an old



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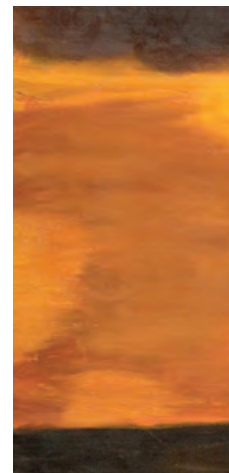
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barn,” Doug recalled. “We were being mischievous — playing with matches. The old barn belonged to someone who used it to store flammable art supplies and solvents. We were too young to understand how dangerous and volatile the chemicals were.” When the fire started, the other boys ran off, but I was worried about the old lady who lived next to the barn. I was worried she might burn in the fire, so I ran back and tried to put it out. I saw that a can was starting to burn, so I kicked it, thinking that if I could turn it over, the flame would go out.” But it didn’t, instead, the fire caught the bottom of Doug’s denim jeans, and traveled quickly up his legs. “The old lady I worried about saving from the fire is the one that actually saved me by covering me with a blanket to extinguish the flames.”

The accident scarred more than just Doug’s body. “For over 10 years, I had to travel back and forth to the Shriners’ Burn Institute in Galveston for reconstructive surgery and therapy. It was an ordeal,” he admitted. “I was only 6. I remember having to stay by myself for over eight months because my parents couldn’t



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afford to take off work for long periods of time to stay with me.” Recovering from serious burns is a slow, painful and difficult process. And as a youngster, Doug had to undergo several extremely painful procedures to remove the dead flesh to facilitate the healing process.

During his most difficult years of recuperating, he began to understand he had been blessed with a gift for creating art. “I don’t have many memories of my childhood, but one memory stands out like it happened yesterday,” Doug explained. “When I was 16, I was confined to a wheelchair. While I was in an art class, I painted a picture of a sailboat. The painting also included my mother’s silhouette. It had her long, dark, flowing hair with two small images of what appeared to be feet. I remembered painting the feet, but I also remembered wondering why I put them in the painting. It didn’t make sense.”

The painting was always special to Doug, and although most of the items from his youth are gone, he managed to hang on to the old painting of the sailboat. His painting finally found a permanent home on an old decorative wooden heat stove in his dining room, behind a potted plant. But one night, a strange noise woke him from his sound sleep. It sounded like something had fallen hard on the wooden floors, and Doug found his painting on the floor.



Doug’s mother passed away from cancer in 1992, but he believes the painting fell mysteriously that night to get him to look at it more closely. “It was as if a message had been sent. My mother sent a message to comfort me because I’ve always had issues with being



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abandoned. I also believe she wanted to ease my anxiety about what is after this life — she wanted me to know the small feet were symbolic of the fact she had been born again before her passing. She wanted me to know that she was OK, and that I'd be OK, too."

Today, Doug is happily married to Jaily, his wife of seven years. "She is a strong woman," and he credits her with keeping him straight. A walk to their backyard leads visitors past many pieces of his work — both finished and unfinished. One of his favorite pieces is what appears to be a totem pole. "The top of the pole has an image of an owl, and down the length of the pole, the images of faces become distorted, almost grotesque. "It's symbolic," Doug explained. "It's a representation of where we were as a nation to what we have become. It represents our humanity — or lack of it."

Doug believes more people should be attentive of the significance of nature. "I wish more people would respect nature and be mindful of the fact that her resources are not unlimited," Doug stated. His sentiment for nature voices what scientists have echoed for years. "Everything in our ecosystem has a purpose," Doug shared, "and when you weaken the links, you weaken the entire chain." **NOW**

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As the new owner of Central Kubota, Steve Widrick is sharing his years of knowledge and vast experience in the tractor industry with his son, Justin.



LOOKING TO THE *FUTURE*

Three generations of tractor experience proves to be quite beneficial.

—By Sandra Strong

Steve Widrick, owner of Central Kubota, may still be fairly new to the Ellis County area, but he's definitely no stranger to the tractor business. "I'm a third-generation tractor dealer," Steve said. "My grandfather opened the family's first tractor business in northern New York in 1949. After he retired, my dad and uncle owned and operated it for years before my brother, cousin and I bought it in 1984." The three of them grew the business to include three separate tractor dealerships, as they worked side-by-side for 24 years.

When the opportunity presented itself in 2008, the trio sold the businesses to an interested buyer. As Steve left the tractor business behind, he fell into dairy farming. "After two years of that, I realized it was hard to make a living for my family on a

small dairy farm," he admitted. When he decided dairy farming wasn't for him, he then began to seriously look for a tractor dealership in the south. "I'd lived in New York my whole life. My wife, Elnora, grew up in Costa Rica," he shared. "We both wanted to go south for the warmer weather."

Steve, Elnora and their children, Justin and Jamie, had been visiting relatives in San Antonio. They passed Central Kubota as they travelled down Interstate 35 on their way to Dallas. "When we passed the dealership, I quickly turned around and came back," Steve explained. "I sat down and asked the owner if he was interested in selling." At the time, the business was not for sale, but within a month, Wayne McEwen called Steve, and as they say, "The rest is history."

The dealership, under Steve's leadership, celebrated their first anniversary in March. Steve credits several things to Central Kubota's growing success, beginning with the staff. "The same individuals who worked for Wayne are still here," he stated. "I think our success is largely due to Central Kubota's valued employees. They already knew the Kubota product line. They just had to adjust to a different management style." Success is also found in the Central Kubota product line. "The products not only cater to the full-time farmers, they also meet the needs of those we refer to as the 'weekenders,'" he explained. "Weekenders are individuals who desire to farm on the weekends. They want to maintain the acreage they own themselves."

"We cater to them all."

The trend in North America is moving away from those who farm on a full-time basis, while moving in the direction of the weekenders. "Every customer is important to us — large or small," Steve said. "We cater to them all."

Steve believes in offering what the customers want when they want it. Central Kubota is well-stocked with compact utility tractors and RTV utility vehicles, as well as several sizes of mowers. "We pretty much have anything a customer wants to buy on the lot," Steve said. "Our mission statement is to be a premier retailer of tractors while implementing services that offer a lasting value to our customers. Our goal is to exceed customer's expectations today and into the future."

The future looks bright for Central Kubota. As Steve grows the inventory volume by expanding product offerings, he will continue to guide Justin in his position as lot manager and overseer of quality control. "The first year far exceeded my expectations," Steve shared. "I'm optimistic about the future and the area itself. My family and I are fortunate to have landed here." **NOW**

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Ladies from the Grand Reserve apartments enjoy water aerobics during the hot summer months.



Members of Sweet Heat WYB Softball 2 show off their trophies.



Kent Brewer enjoys plein aire painting in a prime location at the Farmer's Market.



Pat Turner enjoys decorating her home for the Fourth of July holiday.



Founders Jene and Sherry Lewis and board members Mary Jones and Annie Blair of Faith Family Academy attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the expansion.



Several members of Lone Star Santas, a nonprofit for children, eat lunch at TaMolly's with friends and family.

Beverly Worthington looks on as Carol Farrar crowns Melissa Ballard as the new Crape Myrtle Queen.



The Spirit of Waxahachie Marching Band get the crowd in the Independence Day mood with a patriotic song.



WaxahachieNOW Magazine ad reps, Bryan Frye and Carolyn Mixon, take a short break after a long day.



Little Miss Ramos, 3, races around the driveway in her pink Mustang.



Old Glory is a commonality at the annual 4th of July parade.



Ayana Williams and her children, Amarion and A'Niyah, find a shady spot on the parade route.

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How Disability Income Insurance Can Help Protect You

We depend on our paychecks to cover our expenses: groceries, housing, transportation — and those are just the basics. When a person is unable to work due to a disabling injury or illness, the financial impact of lost paychecks can be devastating.

An income interruption due to a disability isn't something you can afford to ignore. According to the Social Security Administration, more than one in four 20-year-olds will become disabled at some point before they retire. And 50 percent of working Americans would suffer financial issues in less than a month if they lost their paycheck. Twenty-five percent would have problems immediately — within a week — according to the Life and Health Insurance Foundation for Education (LIFE Foundation).

Here are some steps you can take right now:

Help protect your paycheck.

When the unexpected happens, disability insurance can help. Disability insurance essentially replaces a portion of your income — generally about 40 to 60 percent — if you can't work due to accident or sickness, according to Matthew Tassey, CLU, ChFC, LUTCF and past chairman of the LIFE Foundation. "Disability insurance should be a priority," he said. "We always have expenses."

Find the right fit.

There's no one-plan-fits-all approach to disability insurance. Some employers offer disability coverage, whether long-term or short-term, so check with your company's benefits manager to see if you have coverage, and if so, what that coverage provides. If you don't have it, you can purchase an individual plan.

Some terms to know when shopping for disability insurance:

Elimination period: Refers to the length of time you need to be disabled before you receive payment.

Benefit period: Refers to the length of time benefits will last.

"The quicker the money comes your way and the longer it pays, the more expensive it is," Tassey said. And he pointed out that, on average, a 30-year-old, nonsmoking healthy male can receive \$1,000 a month up to age 65 for about \$30 a month. His benefits would begin after 90 days.

Learn more.

In recognition of National Disability Income Insurance Month in May, the LIFE Foundation has created a Web site that explains the basics of disability insurance, contains video testimonials from real people and provides calculators for determining how much insurance you need and estimating your lifetime earnings. You can also calculate your personal disability quotient online.

*The information in this article was obtained from various sources. While we believe it to be reliable and accurate, we do not warrant the accuracy or reliability of the information. The information is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified professional. Nor is it intended to effect coverage under any policy. State Farm makes no guarantees of results from use of this information. We assume no liability in connection with the information nor the suggestions made. **NOW***

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Divide and Multiply

This is not the teacher in me coming out! You really do need to divide first if you want to rearrange your spring blooming plants. Most spring bloomers will divide and become very crowded. This causes them to become less and less able to vigorously bloom. This happens with your bulbs, as well as other spring bloomers such as: daisies, blue mist, iris, day lilies, etc. They need to be split up now, so they can adjust and grow new roots before the hard freezes begin. I worked on a bunch of daffodils I put in the ground 11 years ago when we moved into town. After I got them out of the ground and separated, the seven small bulbs I planted had grown into over 250. It's a wonder they were even blooming at all!

To successfully divide any plant, most of them must come up out of the ground completely. Bulbs can be gently pulled apart or soaked in water to loosen up the tough dirt holding the roots. You want the roots intact, so they can get a good start. Daisies and other "clump" types may even need a sharp knife to slice through thick roots. Choose a natural-looking division and cut away. Large clumps can make several smaller ones that will grow, bloom and expand. They make great sharing plants also!

The general rule of thumb is to divide bulbs and clumps of spring bloomers every four to five years in the fall. While the need to do this really can vary a lot, a sure sign they need to be split is if they no longer bloom vigorously! Drop a small amount of fertilizer (a teaspoon or less) in the hole where you are moving the new start, and water just as you would after planting a new plant — every day for a few days and then once a week.

September is just around the corner, and it is a great time to plant a few seeds for the fall garden. Spinach, lettuce, peas, turnips and broccoli all do well in the cooler months. If you have questions on what does well in Ellis County, contact the Master Gardeners at (972) 825-5175 or at the Waxahachie Farmers Market on Saturday mornings. **NOW**

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August 10

Ark Country Store's 2013 Ellis County Wildlife Expo: Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Ln. For more details, call (972) 937-8860 or visit www.arkcountrystore.com.

August 14 and 15

Summer Kids Club presented by First State Bank: 10:00 a.m., ShowBiz Cinemas, 100 Broadhead Rd. Featured movie will be *Madagascar 3*. Pickup free passes at First State Bank, 104 Broadhead Rd. Children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to receive passes. Call (972) 938-7575 for more information.

August 16

Summer Moonlight Move – *The Avengers*: 9:00-11:00 p.m., 100 block of East Franklin. Free to the public. Bring your own blanket and/or lawn chair. Concessions will be available on site. For more information, call (463) 309-4111.

August 18

Mr. Stacy Arnold in concert: 6:00-7:00 p.m., St. Paul Episcopal Church, 624 Ovilla Rd. Free concert, but donations are welcomed. Call (469) 337-7294 for further details.

August 21

Community Free Day at Fitness Center: Baylor Institute for Rehab and Fitness, 507 Hwy 77N, Ste. 700. Group exercise classes, up-to-date cardio and strength equipment in three different workout areas. For more information, call (972) 938-3311.

August 21 and 22

Summer Kids Club presented by First State Bank: 10:00 a.m., ShowBiz Cinemas, 100 Broadhead Rd. Featured movie will be *Cloudy With a Chance of Meat Balls*. Pickup free passes at First State Bank, 104 Broadhead Rd. Children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to receive passes. Call (972) 938-7575 for more information.

August 27

Girl Scout Volunteer meeting: 7:00-8:30 p.m., Brown Street Church of Christ, 2471 Brown St. For more detailed information, visit joinus@gssu251.org.

September 10

SAGU Church & Business Expo: 8:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m., SAGU Full Life Center. Come meet and recruit new and returning students. This is an excellent opportunity to talk with students about prospective employment and volunteer involvement within the organization. Register online at www.sagu.edu/careerservices or visit careerservices@sagu.edu for more detailed information.

September 20

5th Annual 100th G.R.E.E.N. (Golfers Rallying to Erase the Effects of Neglect) Marathon: 6:30 a.m., registration; 7:30 a.m., shotgun start, Old Brickyard Golf Course, Ferris. Free golf all day with the objective to play 100 holes of golf individually, or as a team of two or four. Breakfast, lunch and dinner will be provided on the golf course at no charge to the golfers. Each participant is expected to raise \$1,000 through pledges. For more information on registration, call Leroy Fenton at (214) 676-4486.

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Tick Fever

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Summertime means many things to creatures. For insects, warm weather signals a time to eat and breed. When they go about their business, far too often they cross paths with humans to our detriment. One species that can wreak havoc is ticks — specifically the American dog tick and Rocky Mountain wood tick. With their bite, they can transmit Rocky Mountain spotted fever, a bacterial disease, to humans. The infected ticks carry the bacterium *Rickettsia rickettsii*.

When campers and hikers go to forested areas or fields, they are at a higher risk of coming into contact with these ticks. Where the dog tick is common, owning a pet increases the risk. Many times a person does not even know they have been bitten, as the bite is usually painless. The longer a tick is attached, the higher the risk of becoming infected. If crushed while still attached or if crushed between the fingers, there is a possibility of the secretions causing an infection.

Initial symptoms occur within two to 14 days after being bitten, and the person may feel as if they have the flu. Not all of the symptoms are experienced by everyone. Some of the symptoms experienced are: headache, high fever, muscle aches, nausea and vomiting, fatigue and rash. The rash usually begins on the wrist and ankles spreading into the palms, feet, up the arms and legs and into the torso area.

Early diagnosis is very important. Rocky Mountain spotted fever can cause serious complications and can be fatal if treatment has not begun within the

first five days of symptoms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends Doxycycline as the first line of treatment for this disease. With clinical examination and medical history, hopefully your health care provider can get enough information to begin treatment even before the rash begins.

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases lists these prevention guidelines: “To help prevent Rocky Mountain spotted fever, you should avoid walking in areas of tall grass and brush where there may be ticks. If you do go into these areas, be sure to:

- Wear light-colored clothing.
- Tuck your pants legs into your socks so ticks can’t get up inside your pants legs.
- Wear a long-sleeved shirt and tuck it inside your pants.
- Spray insecticide containing permethrin on boots and clothing. The effects will last several days.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET to your skin. Because DEET lasts only a few hours, you may need to reapply it.
- Look for ticks on your body, including in your hair, when you return from hiking or walking.
- Check children and pets for ticks.” **NOW**

This article is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult with your physician if you have questions regarding this topic.



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In The Kitchen With Louis Brown

— *By Sandra Strong*

Louis Brown's first experience in the kitchen came when he was eye-level to the stove. He never really took it too seriously until he and his wife, Linda, opened The Chaska House Bed and Breakfast. As a former engineer, he's always appreciated the science of cooking. "There's synergy involved in transforming measured amounts of ingredients into new and delicious food dishes," Louis explained. "And there's no such thing as an original recipe. As you cook, changes make the recipe your own."

Louis has created, tested, borrowed and refined numerous recipes, settling on a few that look and taste good, are attractively presented and result in empty plates returning to the kitchen. "And the sight of 16 hungry guests keeps me inspired," he said with a smile. **NOW**

Upper Crust French Toast Strata

Serves 6-8.

1 5-lb. bag frozen chicken wings
1/4 cup Tony's Seasoning
1 lb. loaf unsliced French bread
1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese
10 large eggs
1 1/2 cups half-and-half
1/4 stick butter, melted
3/4 cup maple syrup

1. Line 9x13-inch baking dish with parchment paper. Cut bread into 1/2-inch cubes. Place half of the bread cubes into the baking dish.

2. Cut cream cheese into 1/4-inch cubes.

Dot evenly over bread. Add another layer of bread.

3. Mix half-and-half, eggs, butter and syrup until well combined. Pour mixture evenly over bread and cheese layers. Use large spatula to press the surface to saturate all the bread cubes thoroughly.

4. Bake on middle oven rack at 350 F for about 45 minutes or until the center is raised and set and the upper crust is golden. Remove from oven. Let set for 1-2 minutes to allow dish to stabilize before slicing and serving.

Perline's Baked Tomatoes

Serves 12.

10 slices bread, cubed

1 small onion, diced
1 cup sugar
1 tsp. red pepper
1/2 tsp. salt
1 stick butter/margarine, melted
4 12-oz. cans diced tomatoes, drained

1. Place first 5 ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Mix lightly.

2. Drizzle 3/4 of the butter evenly over the dry ingredients. Mix thoroughly.

3. Mix in tomatoes and pour into large, ungreased casserole dish. Drizzle remaining butter on top.

4. Bake uncovered at 350 F for 45-50 minutes.

Eggs Benedict (Arnold)

Serves 12.

16 eggs, hard boiled, peeled, sliced into 1/8-inch slices

1 stick butter, melted

1 cup flour

4 cups milk

10 oz. Cheese Whiz or aged cheddar cheese, grated

10 oz. sour cream

1 3/4 lbs. Jimmy Dean Hot sausage, lightly fried, crumbled and drained

12 English muffins, divided and toasted

1. Spray 9x13-inch casserole dish with nonstick coating. Layer with egg slices. Add butter to large saucepan. Slowly add flour until butter is absorbed. Add milk. Stir constantly over medium heat until mixture thickens slightly. Stir in cheese and sour cream, season to taste.

2. Pour sauce evenly over eggs, top with sausage and cover with foil. Bake at 325 F for about 25 minutes, remove foil; bake an additional 10 minutes until sausage is brown and eggs are bubbly.

3. Serve immediately on muffins. Good topped with paprika and a side of contrasting fruit and sprig of mint or parsley.

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