## Former Extension Cemetery series agent hired in **Taylor County**

**By Steve Byrnes** Special to the News-Courier

ABILENE — The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has named Jane Rowan as its new agent for family and consumer sciences in Taylor County.

Rowan began June 1.

"We are very fortunate to have Jane join us in Taylor County," said Scott Durham, AgriLife Extension district administrator. "She brings a wealth of AgriLife Extension experience to the position. She's been with our agency for 30 years, so I expect her transfer and transition into her new position to be one of Rowan seamless perfection."



Rowan served as the AgriLife Extension family and consumer sciences agent in Knox County from 1983-2003, and has since served in the same position in Haskell County.

Rowan earned two bachelor's degrees from New Mexico State University; one in home economics education and the other in agriculture.

She has been a Certified Food Protection Management instructor since 1997 and became a Certified Family and Community Leadership Trainer in 1991. She is also a graduate of the Texas Rural Leadership Program and the Southern Extension Leadership Development Program.

Rowan's professional organization memberships include the national and Texas associations of family and consumer sciences, the national and Texas Epsilon Sigma Phi professional fraternities, the Texas Extension Education Association and the Rolling Plains Rural Health Partnership.

Rowan assumes the position formerly held by Martha Alice Spraberry who retired early this year.

### Faculty lineup named for annual music camp

The Knox County News-Courier

GOREE - Fiddle and guitar teachers and students will gather July 7-11 for the 13th annual Bobby Boatright Western Swing Music Camp.

The Knox Prairie Event Center in Goree will provide both classrooms and dormitory space for the camp and the venue for the closing concert. Students age 10 and older will learn by day and jam by night.

Lead guitar instructor Joe Settlemires is one of Oklahoma's most prolific and celebrated musicians. He landed one of country music's most prestigious gigs, playing with the legendary Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys, at the age of 19.

In the years that followed, Settlemires played with a "Who's Who" of country legends including Willie Nelson, Loretta Lynn, Red Foley, Tex Ritter, Harold Bradley and others. He also backed up others in the popular and jazz genres like Bob Hope, Howard Roberts, as well as per-

See CAMP, Page 8

## News-Courier makes office move

By Wayne Hodgin

The Knox County News-Courier

MUNDAY — The offices of the Knox County News-Courier will be temporarily relocated next door in the old library at the Chamber of Commerce until further notice.

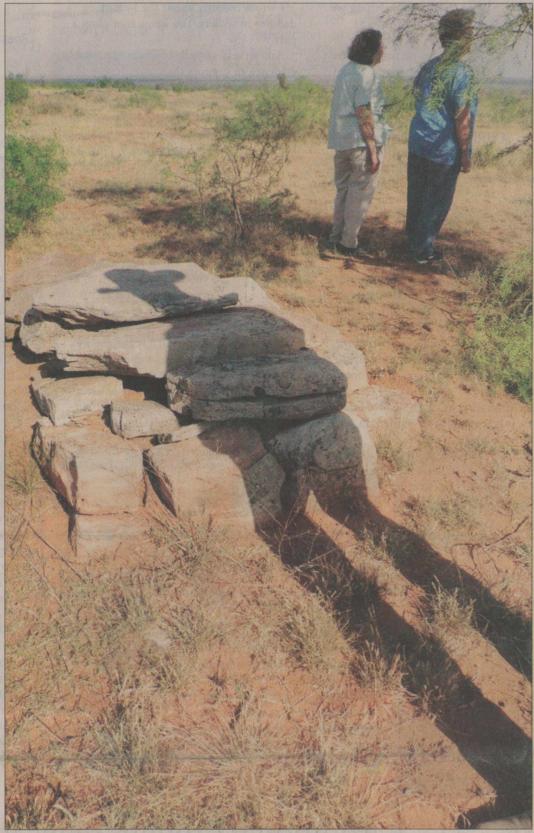
Publisher Chris Blackburn said this week the move was necessary until the current newspaper building could be renovated.

The News-Courier had occupied the space that for years housed the offices of the Munday Courier.

"Structural issues and other inconveniences will force the office to close until the building can be rehabilitated," Blackburn said.

The building is owned by the Waggoner family, whose grandfather was longtime owner of the Munday Courier.

The Waggoners have been in talks with officials with the Munday Economic Development Corp. to sell the building, although no formal negotiations have occurred, EDC officials reported this week.



Photos by Hanaba Munn Welch/The Knox County News-Courier

Rancher Jerry Bob Daniel casts a long late-afternoon shadow over a remote grave near Truscott. Clara Brown, left, and Mary Jane Young gaze to the south across the Wichita River toward Cedar Mountain. Early settlers marked their graves well with large native stones, if not with inscriptions. If any wooden crosses or other such markers once stood at the graves,

## **Children of John Wesley Sheek** buried in county's oldest graves

(Editor's note: This, seemingly, will be the final installment of what has become a wildly popular feature over the last several weeks about the county's cemeteries, some long since forgotten. If you've been following the series and believe we might have missed a cemetery, please call or email us. Future series suggestions also are appreciated.)

**By Hanaba Munn Welch** The Knox County News-Courier

TRUSCOTT — The oldest known graves in Knox County — except perhaps for a legendary buffalo hunter supposedly buried on the Spike Box Ranch — are at three locations on ranch land near Truscott.

Two of the graves have connections to famed cattleman Charles Goodnight.

In two of the three locations, the graves are marked only with rocks, none bearing inscriptions, and the names and dates of death of those buried at the remote sites are subject to some conjecture.

One is presumably the grave of a woman who was part of a family named Black. Rancher Jerry Bob Daniel, on whose land the rustic graves are located, believes one site is the burial place for twin babies born to the

Near China Lake, south of Truscott, also on Daniel land, three markers are inscribed with names and dates: Rubie M. Sheek, died April 27, 1885, at age 13 months; Lee A. Sheek, died in 1891 at the age of 1, and Miss J.E. Jordan, 1876. Whether the date on the Jordan grave refers to her birth or death is not clear. Her identity seems also to be lost

The Sheek graves, on the other hand, can be traced to a family that likely lived in the

Truscott area in the 1880s and 1890s. A fire destroyed nearly all records for the 1890 U.S. Census, making it difficult to establish without question the whereabouts of the Sheeks in those years.

Both the deceased Sheek children were born to John Wesley Sheek, 1832-1908, and his second wife, Mary Mollie Pate Sheek, born 1853 with no clear death date.

John Wesley Sheek holds a significant place in Texas history as an early day cattle rancher. The 1860 U.S. Census places him in Palo Pinto County, where, at age 27, he was living with his first wife, Martha, and his stepbrother Charles Goodnight, then 23.

Goodnight would eventually achieve notoriety as a trail driver, blazing the route that would come to be known as the Goodnight-Loving Trail. But before he teamed up with Oliver Loving, Goodnight was in the cattle business with Sheek. The two men ran cattle together in the Brazos Valley and trailed their herd to Palo Pinto County.

Sheek's father was Adam Sheek, a Methodist minister. Widowed, he had married Goodnight's mother, also widowed, in 1853. During the Civil War, John Wesley Sheek saw military service as a private in the Texas State Troops, serving in 1864 under First Lt. J.C. Loving and Maj. William Quayle.

By 1900, John Wesley Sheek and his family had moved to Montezuma, Colo., a mining town. Their occupations were listed on the 1900 U.S. Census as farmers and laborers.

The John Wesley Sheek family has a website at sheekfamily.com. The basic family tree lists the two children buried in the graves near China Lake. Most interesting is the mention of another child who died as an infant, Mat-

See GRAVES, Page 8

#### **Knox Notes**

Events are listed free of charge for nonprofit civic organizations, schools and community events. Submit listings at least two weeks ahead of the date. Listings will run through the date of the event. Emailed submissions are preferred to kcnewscourier@ gmail.com.

#### **VBS @ FBC Weinert**

First Baptist Church of Weinert will have Vacation Bible School from 5:30 to 8 p.m. June 12-June for ages 4 through those finishing grade 6. Families and friends are invited to attend Family Night activities and ice cream fellowship at 7 p.m. June 14. For information, call the Rev. Dan Bullock at 940-673-8310 or VBS director Mary Murphy at 940-673-8269.

#### Citywide yard sale

Friday and Saturday throughout the city of Munday. Stop the Chamber office to pick up a map showing where the yard sales will be held.

#### Summer reading

Join the Munday City-County Library for this year's summer reading program, "Dig Into Reading." The library will host a weekly story time with activities and snacks from 10 to 11 a.m. Wednesdays, June 26 through July 17. This is a free program provided for children. For information, call the library at 940-422-4877.

#### **VBS @ FBC-Munday**

First Baptist Church of Munday will have a communitywide Vacation Bible School from 5:30 to 8 p.m. June 10-14 at the church, 220 S.

#### **Vacation Bible School**

St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Rhineland will host Vacation Bible School for ages 3 through grade 6 June 17-19. This year's theme is SonWest Roundup, the Wildest Vacation Bible School in the West. For information, contact Janet Dillard at 940-422-4484 for information.

#### Disaster relief

Members of the Knox County faith community are collecting donations to help with disaster recovery efforts in Moore, Okla., in the wake of this week's devastating tornadoes in central Oklahoma. Donations of water, toiletries, hand sanitizer, diapers, baby wipes, etc., may be dropped off at McCauley-Smith Funeral Home in Munday or First Baptist Church of Munday. For information, call 940-203-0933.

#### Corrections

If you spot an error of fact, contact Editor Wayne Hodgin at kcnewscourier@gmail.com.

#### News on the go



Use your smartphone to scan the quick response, or QR, code to visit us online.

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#### BMG BLACKBURN MEDIA GROU

111 E. B St., Munday P.O. Box 151, Munday, Texas

Email kcnewscourier@ gmail.com

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**EXECUTIVE EDITOR** Wayne Hodgin

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It is the mission of this newspaper to promote the rights of individualism in the American Declaration of Independence. The right of life, liberty and the ownership of property are the cornerstone of freedom. Government's sole purpose is to enhance our liberty and

Therefore, we hold every elected and appointed agent of government accountable to that standard.

#### **DEADLINES**

Advertising: 5 p.m. Fridays Editorial: Noon Mondays

#### **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

\$30 a year in the county \$35 a year outside the county







## The Paperboy

## Reversing a trend of apathy Menus for June 10-14

Then I see communities rally and mobilize for the Oklahoma City area, it makes me very proud to be an American. It also makes me wonder what we could do in our own communities if we were so motivated.

I'm concerned with a trend I've seen for years. Those of you involved in your com-

munity have no doubt noticed it as well and it really is something we need to reverse.

We are living in apathetic times. There is no other way to put it. The majority of the population does not give a rip about taking part in making their community, state or nation better. Some will tell you they care, but if they did, their actions would speak for

them.

BLACKBURN

CHRIS

Want proof?

How about major elections where only half of the electorate votes?

How about local elections where office holders run unopposed election after election? Are they doing that good of a job?

In my opinion, I believe we have become a selfish society where we're more interested in what can benefit us as individuals rather than trying to reach out for the greater good.

As the number of those involved declines, it places a greater burden on those remaining.

I've seen civic groups all over getting smaller. That's not just a rural trend, numbers are dropping worldwide.

If you speak to ministers, they'll tell you church attendance is down.

I have a feeling that the void the Greatest Generation is leaving as they pass will not be able to be filled ... even by the largest generation in world history, the baby boomers.

Why?

Maybe it's meth. There's no doubt the devastation that drug has caused.

I wrote recently about the lack of daddies in society. You know that plays a

Are we self-absorbed? There is probably evidence to support that.

Regardless of why or how, we need to figure out a way to reverse it. We need local leadership. We need people ready to step up and inspire others to get involved. We actually need to perform our civic duty.

Small towns should not be apathetic. We should be vibrant. We should be concerned about our communities to the point that the numbers of volunteers actually increase. We should have a sense of urgency in these Special to the News-Courier

If you had a room full of people and they were asked: Do you want your town to be better? I think every hand would go up. Well, if we really want it to get better, then action is needed.

I'm old-fashioned. I firmly believe we should give back to our communities and remain involved. It takes leadership and commitment. Most importantly is takes time so these endeavors must have a purpose.

Christopher Blackburn is publisher of The Knox County News-Courier and CEO of Blackburn Media

## Student News

## Clower graduates from Hardin-Simmons



ABILENE — Sarah Clower of Benjamin graduated from \$100,000 and must be paid for through private donations. Hardin-Simmons University during commencement ceremonies May 11 in HSU's Behrens Auditorium.

two commencement ceremonies.

Clower was one of 269 graduates to receive degrees from lives for our safety." HSU in May.

## **Knox County Aging Services**

Charbroiled beef patties with peppers and onions, garlic mashed potatoes, beets, bread, Mandarin oranges.

Tuesday:

Chicken and rice casserole, black-eyed peas, carrots, wheat roll, fruit cocktail.

Wednesday:

Ham and beans, spinach, seasoned corn, orange-pineapple cup, country apple crisp.

Thursday:

Roast beef, baked potatoes, carrots, whole-wheat roll, chocolate pudding.

Friday: Chicken on a bun, salad, potato wedges, carrot and raisin salad.

## Springer urges support for memorial expansion

This April, the tragic explosion in West brought attention to the lack of space on the volunteer firefighters monument at the Texas Capitol. This monument, erected in 1896, has been used to house the names of our state's fallen volunteer firefighters for more than 100 years.

Volunteer fire departments make up about 78 percent of the fire departments in the state of Texas. House District 68 is served almost entirely by volunteers.

Before the memorial was full, names were added each biennium in a special ceremony, often attended by more than 1,000 spectators.

Today there are 12 names waiting for the monument expansion so they can be remembered for giving the ultimate

"As a volunteer firefighter, I have seen firsthand the dangers these brave men and women face on a daily basis protecting our families and property," said Rep. Drew Springer, R-Muenster. "During the last biennium we lost a fire chief in Memphis and just a couple of months ago we lost five firemen in the tragedy in West. We must expand this memorial so we can etch their names into history and honor their memory."

The cost to expand the memorial will be more than

"Donations of all sizes are welcome, and truly will help us reach our goal," Springer said. "Please take a moment to Clower graduated with a bachelor of arts during one of share this with your friends and family, so that we can forever honor these men and women that selflessly gave their

> To make a donation, visit texasfirefightermemorial.org. For information about the project, contact Springer's Capitol office at 512-463-0526 or at drew.springer@house. state.tx.us.

## Additional drought relief for Texas landowners

## D's Café

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Special: Sat-Sun Only: Menudo & Barbacoa will be

Sat-Sun: All other lunch meals start at 11:00am

## Good Luck to all 2013 Seniors!



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Special to the News-Courier

In response to the ongoing drought in Knox County, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service is offering additional funding for agriculture operators in the county wishing to address plant health conditions on their land through the agency's Environmental Quality Incentives Pro-

"With so much of the area suffering from a lack of rainfall, this funding will help farmers and ranchers apply conservation practices to reduce the impacts of drought, while improving

soil health and productivity," Knox changes. County District Conservationist Charles Schur said.

Through this additional EQIP funding, the NRCS will work with landowners in providing assistance to establish and improve plant health on their private lands.

Applications will be accepted in drought conditions. NRCS field offices until June 14.

Funding priority will target 129 counties, including Knox County, which are designated as extreme drought, according to the current US Drought Monitor map. Priority coun-

Schur suggests landowners visit the NRCS field office for a free consultation and to develop a conservation plan, which is an effective management strategy for pasture and rangeland recovery, along with helping mitigate the effects of Texas' current

Interested landowners should contact the local NRCS or Soil and Water Conservation District in Knox City at 940-658-3526, Ext. 3.

USDA Service center locations and program information can be found on ties will be adjusted as the drought the Texas NRCS Web site at tx.nrcs.







## O'Brien Junior High Graduation



Eighth-grade valedictorian Kate Baker speaks during graduation exercises at O'Brien Middle School.



Eighth-grade salutatorian Amy Harrington speaks during graduation exercises at O'Brien Middle School.



Photos by Shari Baty

The 2013 graduating eighth-graders of O'Brien Middle School.

Congrats, 2013 Grads!



## Hamlin man injured in Saturday plane crash

Special to the News-Courier

ABILENE — One person was injured in an aircraft landing in Jones County about 10:30 a.m. Saturday.

Texas Department of Public Safety spokesman Sparky Dean said Joseph Wayne Collier, 49, of Hamlin, was attempting to land a fixed-wing crop duster at the Hamlin Airport. As the plane touched down, Dean said, a gust of wind caught the aircraft and carried it 150 yards to the west where it crashed.

Collier was in good condition at Hamlin Memorial Hospital.

The weather was dry with high gusty winds. The plane is owned by Tri County Sprayers Inc. This crash site was secured by DPS officials pending an FAA investigation.

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June 10-14, 2013

5:30 pm to 8:30 pm

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Everyone welcome to a Grand Finale on Friday night at 8:00 pm

## T-Shirt Sale Only \$15!

By purchasing a "Get Lambrey to Brisbane, Australia" T-shirt you will help Lambrey Rawlins take part in a Global Expeditions mission trip to Brisbane, Australia!



This fall Lambrey will be attending Teen Mania's Honor Academy, in Garden Valley, TX, for a year-long internship. The sole purpose of this school is to teach young adults how to stay strong in their faith and prepare them for leadership roles in the world.

Teen Mania also has a mission field organization called Global Expeditions, and thousands of kids and adults each year do the work of God through this organization.

If you make the decision to support her in this life changing journey, or you have any questions please feel free to call Lambrey at 940-203-0635.

Thank you for your consideration and God Bless! -- Lambrey Rawlins



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## **Benjamin News**

By Gladene Green

It has been a busy week for folks all across the area as last of school activities took place, and the grand finale was Friday night (some were Saturday) when commencement programs were held.

Here in Benjamin, the three (kindergarten, junior high and high school) were all on Friday evening at the Memorial Building. The 10 kindergarteners graduated into first grade. They each had a speaking part on the program and then closed by singing "You Are My Sunshine."

Those youngsters getting their "diplomas" were Lilly Benson, Hudson Cates, Lexi Wilson, Triston Meinzer, Electra Estrada, Nathan Tighe, Paulina Hamm, Termaine Wilson, Christian Garcia and Jerry Grayson.

The eighth-grade graduation followed. Emily Brown gave the invocation, Justin Rainwater gave the salutatory address, Benjamin Vanderpol presented the valedictory speech, Superintendent Olivia Gloria presented the awards, Pam Duke gave out the diplomas, and Hayden King voiced the benediction. Ushers were Daniel Jackson and Caleb Barrientez.

The graduates were Emily Brown, Devin Harris, Joslynn Harris, Hayden King, McKenzie King, Christopher McGhee, Justin Rainwater, Casey Stiewert and Benjamin Vanderpol.

The final event of the evening was commencement for the three Benjamin High School graduating seniors. The program was as follows: Processional, Invocation by Matthew Acree; Salutatory Address by Jonathan Rainwater; Valedictory Address by Matthew Acree; Presentation of Awards by Superintendent Olivia Gloria; Presentation of Diplomas by Pam Duke; Benediction by Jasmine Patchett; Recessional was the Senior Slide Show.

The graduates were Jonathan, Matthew and Jasmine. Kelsey Brown and Gilda Solis were ushers.

A reception honoring all the graduates followed, and then on Saturday the graduates headed to Dallas and left out today (Sunday) for the coast for several days of R&R. Susan Spake, class sponsor, made the trip with them.

#### Former Resident Injured in Accident

We have learned that Doug Brown, the son of Stanton and the late Shirley Brown, was critically injured in a one-vehicle rollover Friday.

I talked to Penny Brown tonight, and she said he is in a medically induced coma and has lots of problems, but they are hopeful for a complete recovery. She said he's having a lot of trouble with his eyes and had several broken facial bones and undetermined internal injuries.

The accident happened on a curve on a rain-slick road. The pickup rolled over, and he was pinned under it. He is in Scott & White Hospital in Temple. The family asks our prayers for Doug.

#### New Arrivals

Angela is the brand new baby daughter of Adan and Tina Siemens Silva. She was born May 27 at Hendrick Medical Center in Abilene and weighed 9 pounds 3 ounces. Grandparents are Sal and Maria Silva of Knox City and Tina and Kim Sealy and the late Jacob Siemens of Benjamin

Also on May 28 at Hendrick Medical Center, Noah David was born to Brandon and Jessica Moorhouse Hutchinson. He weighed 6 pounds 11 ounces and was 20 inches long. His maternal grandparents are Debi and Mike Moorhouse and the late Debra Moorhouse, and his paternal grandparents live in Ohio (and I have forgotten their first names!) I'll have all the "stats" on him next week.

#### Here 'n' There

Judy and Randolph Barnett were in Elk City, Okla., on

Saturday evening for the wedding of his great-nephew (his sister Betty Jo Riggs' grandson).

Bill and Dink Jennings of New Braunfels visited Hazel Stockton one day last week. They also visited with Bud Conner. Bill is a former Benjamin resident, and they come back from time to time to visit friends.

Sabra Bohannon and Taylor Howell, who live in Nebraska, are here for several weeks' visit with their grand-parents, Bety and Roger Bohannon.

Bob and Patti Tavernia left Friday for their home in Frederick, Md., after several days' visit with her mom, Earlene Meinzer, and her brothers, Ricky and Wyman, and their families and other relatives and friends.

Brittney Kuehler of Wichita Falls spent the weekend with her parents, Teresa and Mark.

Barbara and Donnie Ryder and Shannon Propps spent Memorial Day with his sister, Judy, and her husband, Jack Whitten, at Lake Stamford. Barbara will be having knee surgery in Fort Worth on June 5. Of course, we wish her well.

And for you readers of this paper who live away from here, we still have not had any rain to speak of. Showers off and on, but surely not enough to do a lot of good. Any amount we get is appreciated, and we sure don't want the storms that have happened in places where it has rained.

Also, I know there were several graduation guests this weekend here in town, but I was not able to contact several, so I'll have that news next week, with any school news I have missed.

With the Monday noon deadline, it's hard to get everything in sometimes.

See you next week.

Gladene Green is the longtime Benjamin correspondent for the Knox County News-Courier.

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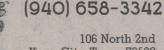
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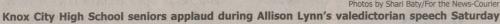
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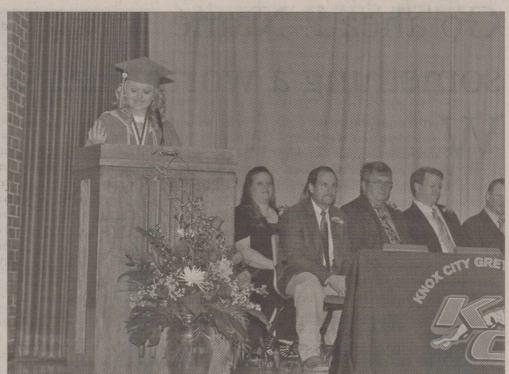
940-657-3483

evening during commencement exercises.

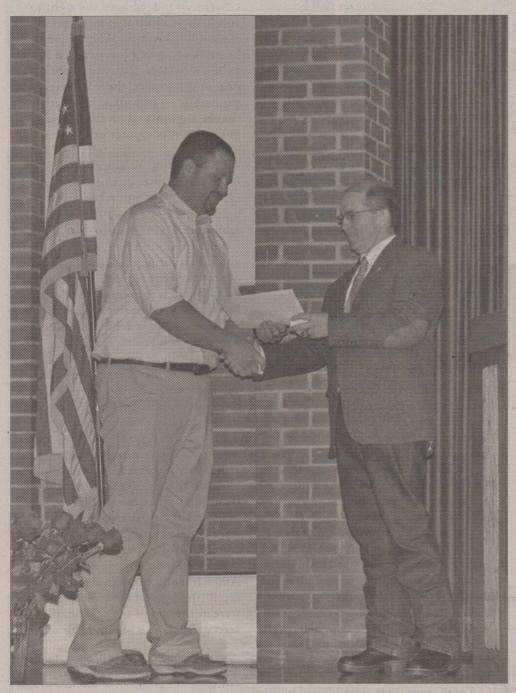
## **Knox City High School Graduation**







Knox City High School Class of 2013 Valedictorian Allison Lynn inspires and entertains her classmates with her speech Saturday evening during commencement exercises.



Knox City High School teacher Colin Howeth is recognized with the Mirabeau B. Lamar Award of Excellence for Outstanding Educator during Saturday's commencement exercises. Present-



Jose Espinal was recognized by the Balfour Co. for his dedication in the production of the Knox City High School yearbook.

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#### **Idle American**

## Go ahead: Name something a worthy cause

Torthy cause enthusiasts postpone sleep until wee hours sometimes beyond — trying to come up with names for days, weeks or months that might reap the highest order of recognition. Such names — or slogans — or other IDs — typically result in folks opening checkbooks to extend financial

One would have a difficult time find-



NEWBURY

ing a more successful group than the one for breast cancer research. The world seems awash in things pink; contributions come from millions of donors. There are far more

"causes" than there are calendars to accommodate, with local, regional and national lists numbering into tens of thousands. Try to tally 'em and risk serious eye-

As surely as yeast rises, such lists grow with exceeding rapidity.

Some of them, of course, seem more for grins than impact. Take Jeff and Anne Horch — young marrieds with a quartet of toddlers — three ages 2 and younger. They're in the midst of potty training, calling it "Pottypalooza."

A "right" of passage?

If Will Rogers were still alive, he might not credit newspapers for supplying all he knows, but I have a notion the printed page would still provide most of his mate-

Writers help us to feel better about ourselves. Their accounts of generosity extended by so many in so many ways give us light in a world too often dark.

Cases in point: Heroism following the fire/explosion tragedy in West as well as tornadoes in Granbury, Cleburne and Ennis, Texas, and Moore, Okla. How about OKC Thunder basketball star Kevin Durant signing a \$1 million check for tornado victims?

Successes marked by school and college graduation provide encouragement. They

So are remarkable feats accomplished despite overwhelming odds. How about that Plano West High School athlete who helped his team advance to the recent baseball playoffs? His name is Blake Bruce, and he was born with two club feet. He brought a 3-and-1 pitching record into the playoffs. He's also an effective outfielder, thanks to a quick first

His early years were marked by surgeries, pins and casts, and he was finally able to walk at age 2. His mother joins the rest of us in amazement: "All I ever wanted for him was to be able to walk."

Who among us are not impressed by folks who excel in two or more professions with night and day differences? I realize that appreciating music doesn't mean we'll become accomplished on an instrument, or that visits to museums don't mean we'll make it as artists. Particularly intriguing to me are people handy in car repair. I find a deep sense of accomplishment in adding water to the radiator without anyone being scalded and replacing caps on valve stems without cross-threading.

Then there are "Click and Clack," a pair of mechanical geniuses who also happen to be great communicators. Only in recent years have I read their weekly column that runs in hundreds of newspapers. (The brothers' real names are Tom and Ray Magliozzi, ages 75 and 64, respectively.)

They have "Bombeck humor qualities," entertaining as well as informing.

In a recent column, they provided suggestions for frequenting auto junkyards uh, "automotive recycling centers."

For "do-it-yourselfers," they suggest the importance of buying items still in the "donor car."

The main reason for this practice is so buyers will know where the stuff has been.

"Get in the car and take a deep breath," Ray said. "You don't want to install seats in your wife's car only to find out that they were in the car of an old lady who drove around all day with her eight male cats while chain-smoking Cuban cigars."

The Magliozzi's "Car Talk" on National Public Radio ended its 25-year run in 2012. Don't fall victim to withdrawal pains - NPR is offering re-runs.

When they announced "retirement" last year, their blog indicated they "plan to get even lazier."

I'll take their columns, even if re-prints, and I'll love their radio shows, even if re-broadcasts. I don't expect to make it as a mechanic, but vow exhaustive efforts to "appropriate" some of their humor. Count me in if a day, a week, a month, a year shoot, even a decade — is ever named for these zany brothers.

Don Newbury, former chancellor of Howard Payne University in Brownwood, is a humorist and motivational speaker.

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## **Guest Columnist**

## First Amendment champions deliver for Texas residents

hen the dust settles from another hard-fought legislative session, the people of Texas will have a clearer picture of current events in the Lone Star State, thanks to the hard work and determination of two Texas statesmen — one

Republican, one Democrat.

Rep. Todd Hunter, R-Corpus Christi, and Sen. Rodney Ellis, D-Houston, scored major transparency victories in the 83rd Legislature. Three of those victories will be particularly helpful in strengthening and clarifying the public's right to complete and accurate information.

One crucial bill Ellis and Hunter shepherded through the legislative dust storm strengthens a crucial First Amendment law they passed two years ago.

**DONNIS** 

BAGGETT

That law took aim at legal actions known as Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP) — suits filed against whistleblowers by individuals or entities who have plenty of money to pay lawyers.

SLAPP suits are designed to intimidate and stifle those who dare to exercise their First Amendment rights. Thanks to the 2011 law, however, it was finally possible for a David Q. Citizen with meager resources to defend himself against a SLAPP suit filed by a deep-pocketed Goliath.

Unfortunately, an appeals court ruled the 2011 law did not include certain appeal rights for David. If a judge ruled against David's motion to dismiss Goliath's suit early in the process, David could very quickly find himself bankrupted by the expensive discovery process following that denial.

The legal tweak pushed through the 2013 session by Hunter and Ellis makes it crystal clear that David does, indeed, have a right to appeal, thereby stopping the discovery process until the motion is heard on appeal. It is a major victory for those who believe the quality of justice shouldn't be determined by the depth of one's pocket-

Another measure championed by Ellis and Hunter makes it clear that a

government official's use of his private electronic device for messages regarding public business does not allow him to hide those messages from public

In recent years, a number of local officials across Texas have maintained their government-related messages are no business of the public so long as the official uses his private device to send or receive them. Texas attorneys general have consistently ruled against that strained and arrogant line of reasoning, but officials continue to try to evade Texas' open records laws anyway.

Once signed by the governor, the law will establish in black and white that citizens do indeed have the right to access these electronic messages about the public's business. There should be no doubt going forward that if a public official is discussing public business in cyberspace, those messages are, yes, public — regardless of whether they're transmitted on the official's government computer or his personal

The third bill enhances public discourse by establishing clear and fair rules for prompt corrections by publishers. Until now, there was no established legal framework for a citizen to request a correction, nor were there guidelines for publishers to follow in addressing that request. The new law establishes clear processes and deadlines, which will result in the record being corrected quickly and fully when a mistake is made.

None of these important legal advances would have happened without the hard work and legislative prowess of Hunter and Ellis. For decades the two veteran lawmakers have fought hard — often against daunting opposition — to expand and protect citizens' access to government information and journalists' right to cover the complex issues that affect our daily lives.

The 83rd Legislative Session of the Texas Legislature saw these two veteran legislators from different parties — men who do not consider the First Amendment a partisan issue — at the top of their game. And because they were at the top of their game, the citizens of Texas can see more clearly now.

Veteran journalist Donnis Baggett, former publisher of the Waco Tribune-Herald, is executive vice president of the Texas Press Association.



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#### **GRAVES** From Page 1

tie Dora Sheek, who died in 1887

If the family was living continually in the Truscott area at least from 1885 through 1891, the logical place for Mattie Dora Sheek's 1887 grave would be between the 1885 Sheek grave and the 1891 Sheek grave. The lack of any such grave would seem to indicate the family was living elsewhere in 1887 — perhaps back in Parker County.

Also worth noting, the child Mattie Dora might have been named for John Wesley's first wife, Martha "Mattie" Lane Sheek

As for the buffalo hunter buried on the Spike Box, that's another story.

#### CAMP From Page 1

forming with the Oklahoma City Symphony.

After teaching at Oklahoma Christian College, he found a permanent home at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma.

Fort Worth musician Glenn McLaughlin will teach beginning guitar, working his magic as an instructor with patience and knowledge and a knack for coaxing the best from his students. It's McLaughlin's fourth year to teach at Bobby Boatright Music Camp. Margaret "Maggie" Scales, a qualified teacher of both fiddle and violin, brings to the Music Camp her experience with the fiddle. She has played and opened shows with many legends, such as Bobby Bare, Hank Williams Jr., Ray Price and Ronnie Milsap.

Scales will team with Ronny Dale Schultz, who has taught many years at the camp. He is known for his ability to perform and teach many different instruments. This year he will teach beginning fiddle.

The camp honors the memory of the late Bobby Boatright, renowned and beloved Western Swing Fiddle Player. Grammy Award-winner Tommy Allsup and Boatright taught at the camp. for years and organized the curriculum. The camp was named in memory of Boatright after his death.

A fee of \$450 covers tuition, on-campus housing and meals. For registration and information contact J.W. Sollis at 940-839-7870 or jwsollis@yahoo.com.

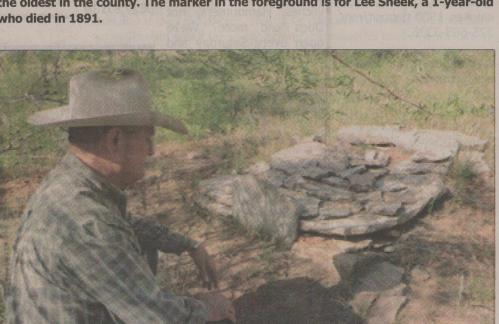
"This may well be the best overall instructional group that I have had at the camp," Sollis said.

## **Cemetery series**



Photos by Hanaba Munn Welch/The Knox County News-Courier

Jerry Bob Daniel and two local historians, Mary Jane Young, left, and Clara Brown, gaze at graves near China Lake in northwestern Knox County. The graves are among the oldest in the county. The marker in the foreground is for Lee Sheek, a 1-year-old who died in 1891.



A grave near China Lake is marked with the name "Miss J. E. Jordan" and the date 1876, most likely the year of her birth. The marker is similar to markers for the nearby graves of two children buried in 1885 and 1891.



Jerry Bob Daniel stands at the side of a stone-bordered lot on his ranch — a place where he thinks a specific set of twins, surname Black, is most likely buried. Daniel believes the large number of rocks carried to the site indicates a deep level of grief. Contemplating the site with him is Clara Brown of Truscott.



John Wesley Sheek, 1832-1908, stepbrother and business partner of Charles Goodnight.



An unmarked grave near Truscott appears not to have changed much, if at all, through many years. The grave likely dates from the 1880s or 1890s and belongs to a woman with connections to the Black family, pioneer settlers. A marker could have existed originally, but no trace remains today. In the near distance is Jerry Bob Daniel, rancher, and Clara Brown, left, and Mary Jane Young, curator of the Wichita Brazos Museum in Benjamin.

## The 501 A goathead's lament — or not

childhood memories of backyard barbecues, like Dad grilling steaks over charcoal and mesquite chips.

Not me. Daddy didn't believe in spending money for charcoal, and mesquite was simply the default fuel for chuckwagon cooks out on the range miles from nowhere who didn't realize they were launching a great culinary tradition that would eventually bring fame to the otherwise both-

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JACOB, AGE 5

ersome, thorny invaders of many a pasture. Meanwhile back at the farm,

wiener roasts were fun events in my childhood. The fuel? HANABA In the summer,

MUNN goatheads. WELCH If you think a goathead is the

head of a goat, you've probably never stepped barefoot on one or punctured a bicycle tire by riding over one or several. A goathead is an evil three-spiked sticker that looks like the head of a very miniature goat, sort of. Two points are the horns and the other one is the beard of the goat, or so I surmise.

If you can find a goathead, look it in the eye to see if you agree.

Tome people have treasured Good luck finding one. Special weevils or something came along some time ago and essentially eradicated goatheads from our part of the world. That's what I've heard. Goatheads are scarcer now than horned toads. I miss them both.

> Back when goatheads flourished in our driveway, Daddy's weapon of choice was a hoe. He chopped the stems and rolled up the spreading expansive plants like so much carpet. When green, the stickers didn't fall off. After a day or two in the hot sun, the pile of offending vegetation would burn. But before Daddy lit the fire, we'd be sure we had wieners and marshmallows to roast. Goathead wiener roasts rated right along with watermelon feasts.

In those days, goatheads gave rise to two myths taken seriously by most children.

Myth No. 1: If you ran barefoot across a patch of goatheads, as opposed to walking, you wouldn't get the stickers in your feet. The older kids said so. The younger kids tried it. I was younger.

Myth No. 2: When a poisonous little point from a goathead broke off in your foot or hand or elsewhere, if you couldn't bear the pain of letting your mother remove it with a needle, it would grow into a tree. My mother didn't say so, but enough other mothers did to get my attention. A tree!

All such parental scare tactics formed a body of common knowledge. If you swallowed a watermelon seed you'd end up with watermelon vines growing out your ears. If you crossed your eyes, they could get stuck that way. If you swallowed a fish bone, it was practically a death sentence. In our family, there was even a story about a woman who choked on a fried chicken crumb. I tried not to think about that one.

Dangerous times, childhood. But I'd like to go back for one more goathead in the palm of my hand for my mother to remove. She was good at it.

Hanaba Munn Welch is a columnist and contributor to The Knox County



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