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ON THE COVER



Jennifer Pope finds peace in putting one foot in front of the other.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Happy Whatever Day!

We celebrate so many wonderful holidays in May that I found it difficult to pick my favorite one. Mother's Day and Memorial Day both pay homage to some very special individuals. The second Sunday of the month is the holiday we openly lavish love on our mothers through flower arrangements, cards and special gifts. Although we should say thanks every day for their tireless love and support, this is the day we go the extra mile — the day we do a little bit more — because without them, where would we be?

Memorial Day, celebrated the last Monday of the month, honors the men and women who lost their lives fighting for the family gatherings, backyard barbecues and celebratory church services we sometimes take for granted. As we partake in our weekend activities, let's not forget the heroes who make all those wonderful freedoms possible!

Sandra

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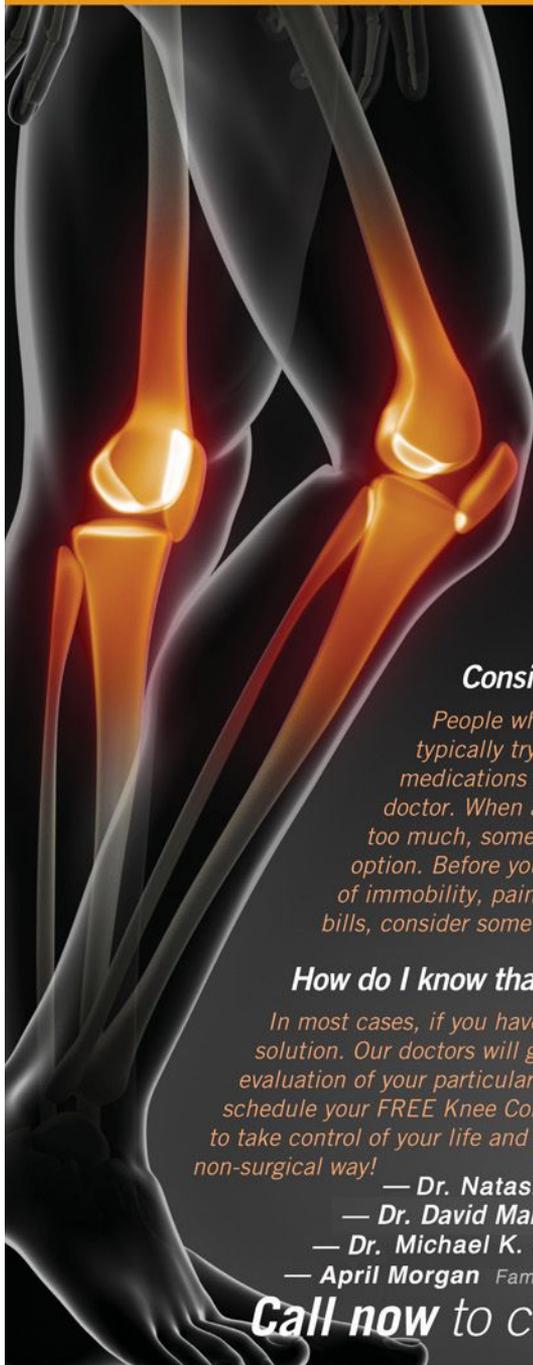
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Never Too Late

— By Sandra Strong

Jennifer Pope's love of running began early in life. Starting as a fifth-grader and continuing through high school, she competed in what she refers to as fast stuff. "I always found myself on the 400- and 800-meter relays," Jennifer recalled. "I ran in college for the exercise of it."

As an adult, things in life — marriage, family and career — took precedence. But 12 years ago, Jennifer once again found solace in putting on running shoes and taking to the road, this time as a distance runner. "My father-in-law, Don Pope, wanted to lose weight, so he asked if I'd be interested in running with him," she explained how the journey she's now on began. "Saturdays became our training days. We were an encouragement to one another."

Those weekend workouts with Don turned into half marathons, 8-mile turkey trots and local 5Ks for Jennifer. Training for her first big marathon, the White Rock Marathon held annually in early December in Dallas, began soon after her son, Chase, was born in 2003. Caroline Ford, one of Jennifer's friends expressed an interest in running a full marathon. "People talk about marathons," Jennifer admitted. "Caroline and I wanted to do more than talk, so we decided to get serious about training for White Rock."

Just two short months prior to the marathon, Jennifer's mother passed away. Many runners would have put their plans on hold,



but Jennifer knew her mom would want her to continue on with her plans, and continue she did. "I remember running with Caroline the day after Mom died," Jennifer shared. "Caroline asked me how I was doing, and I calmly answered with, 'My mom passed away yesterday.'" Of course, Caroline was momentarily taken aback, but Jennifer knew running and putting one foot in front of the other during the final two months of training would bring the peace in heart, mind and spirit she desired. "Running became my therapy," she confessed.

As the years came and went, Jennifer's weekends once again were spent competing in local 5Ks, half marathons and full marathons. In 2006, Jennifer ran the Fort Worth Marathon. Her visit to Cowtown earned her a spot in the Boston Marathon. After she crossed the finish line, her father-in-law told her he thought her time had qualified her. "You have to earn a spot in Boston based mostly on your time and age," Jennifer explained. "I did qualify in 2008, and I ran the race in April 2009."

Jennifer was healthy and without injuries when she ran in Boston. Since the day of the marathon is a holiday, runners, totaling well over 30,000, are treated like royalty. "I felt like a rock star," she

confessed with a grin. "I ran by myself, but I didn't feel alone.

It was so cool!" The crowd noise was so loud there was no need for her to turn her iPod on. "I wouldn't have been able to hear the music anyway," she





Shirley Piper
Boston Marathon
April 21, 2009
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laughed. The crowd noise gave Jennifer the confidence she needed to keep pounding the pavement toward the finish line.

The excitement she felt was overwhelming. When she got to Heartbreak Hill, the marker that lets runners know they are more than halfway to their goal, Jennifer was feeling pretty good. “The cheers sounded like a rumble,” she said. “They made my insides shake, and I couldn’t control the smile on my face.” When she saw her dad and her husband at mile 23, she knew she had this. “After the finish, they found me,” she said. “My dad said he was proud of me. You’re never too old to hear those words.”

After getting back to the hotel, Jennifer was thinking seriously about returning to the half marathons, since training takes less time, and it’s much easier on the mind and body. But Jon had other ideas for his wife. “He thought we should do the New York Marathon,” she remembered. “I hadn’t even changed clothes yet. I asked him, ‘What part of *we* is running that marathon?’” Then Jennifer realized that it’s a team effort. Jon is so supportive of Jennifer, and that showed as he stepped up to help with Chase’s daily routine, so Jennifer



Katy Curtis and Jennifer Pope.



could sign up and begin her training. Friends and family show Jennifer support through prayer and encouragement. The New York Marathon is a full marathon for which anyone can sign up. Runners are drawn on a lottery system prior to the race. The first two years

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Jennifer did not get in. The third time proved to be the charm Jennifer needed. "I wanted to run New York before I turned 40. I was chosen the year I turned 38," she said. "I ended up taking advantage of the year-postponement rule. I had to decide to run injured with severe shin splints or wait another year, which meant I'd be 39. I decided to wait."

As the 2012 race loomed in Jennifer's future, she and her running buddy, Katy Curtis, began to train together. Katy had never run a marathon and was ready to give it a try. The week of the race, Hurricane Sandy showed up and wreaked so much havoc that she and her cheering section ended up cancelling the trip. New York also cancelled the marathon because of Sandy. Instead, Jennifer ran the Fort Worth Marathon with Katy, which in the end was a true blessing. "God had other plans for me," she confessed.

Jennifer set her sights on the 2013 New York Marathon. Training once again brought challenges. She found her once-healed shin splints hurting again, and she was 40. By mile 23 of the marathon, Jennifer was in a great deal of pain and dehydrated to the point of needing to walk some in order to finish. She

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completed the race only because of the encouragement of her cheering section. But she knew in her heart she could have had a better time. "My doctor said it was never about the time or running the race before I turned 40," she said. "It was about getting through the injury and circumstances that kept getting in the way of running in New York."

What has Jennifer learned from all this running? Running is part of who she is as a person. Running is something she will continue to do as long as she can. "I've also learned you're never too old to begin something new," she said. "You're never too old to pass on the encouragement you've been given. And you're never too old to hear your loved ones say they are proud of you." **NOW**



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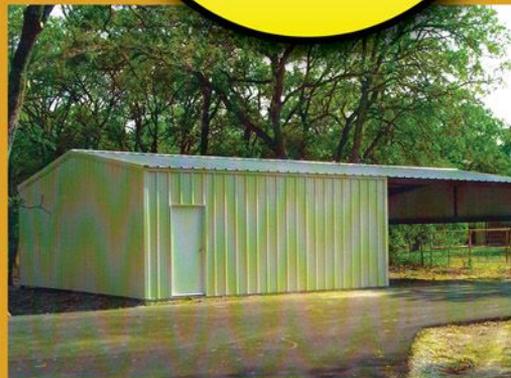
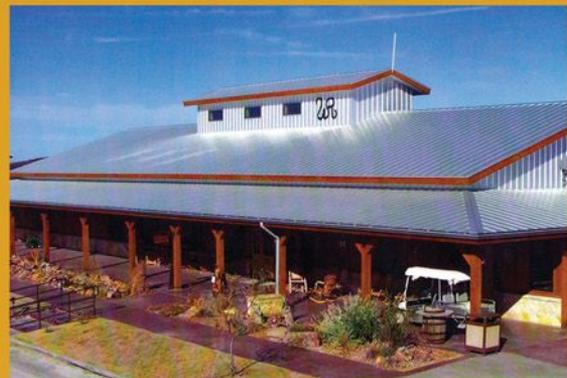
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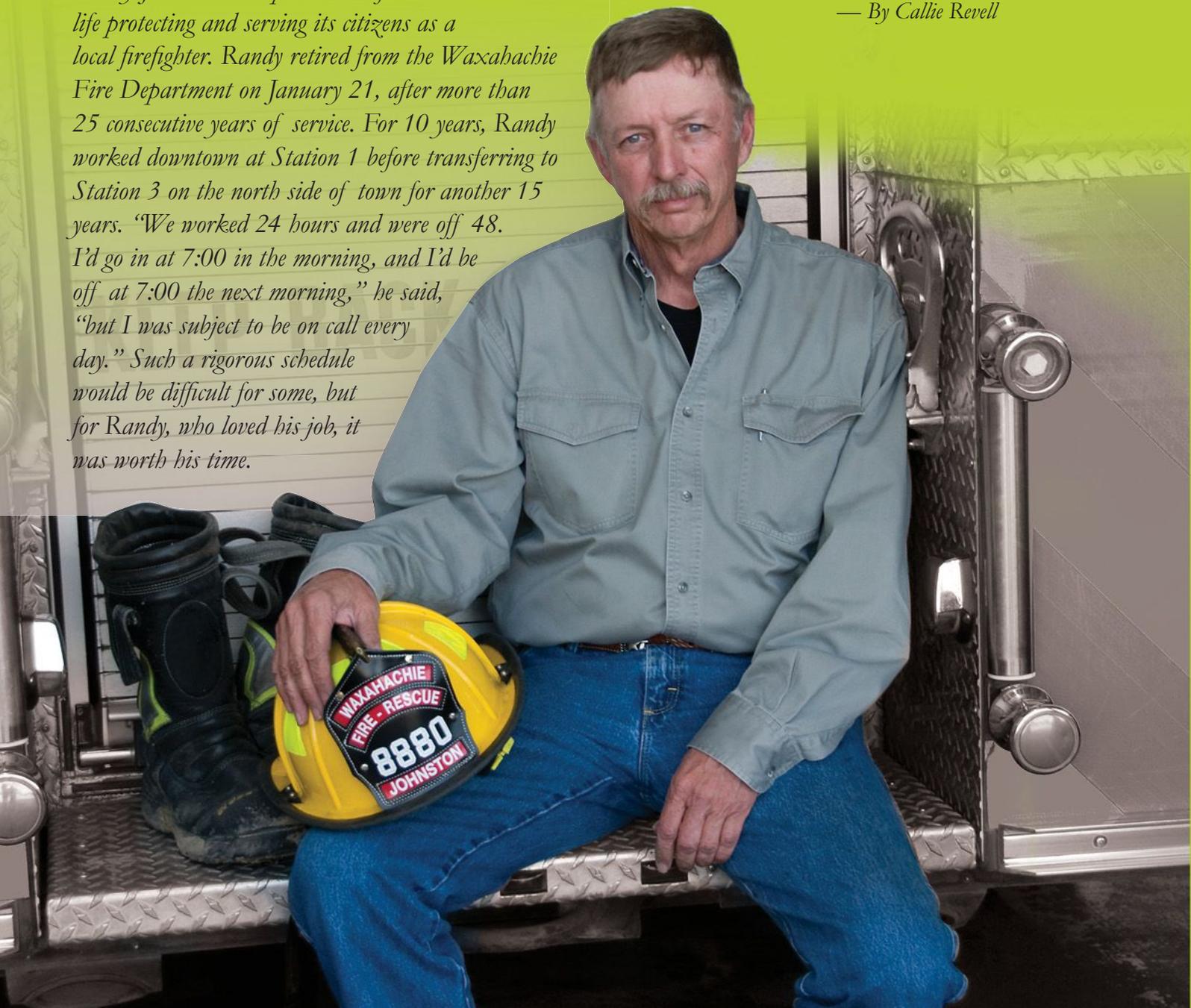
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A **THIRD** of *His Life*

Born and reared in Waxahachie, Randy Johnston has spent most of his life protecting and serving its citizens as a local firefighter. Randy retired from the Waxahachie Fire Department on January 21, after more than 25 consecutive years of service. For 10 years, Randy worked downtown at Station 1 before transferring to Station 3 on the north side of town for another 15 years. "We worked 24 hours and were off 48. I'd go in at 7:00 in the morning, and I'd be off at 7:00 the next morning," he said, "but I was subject to be on call every day." Such a rigorous schedule would be difficult for some, but for Randy, who loved his job, it was worth his time.

— By Callie Revell





Originally, becoming a firefighter wasn't part of Randy's plan. "My parents were farmers, and my brother still is a farmer," he said. He spent his earliest years of adulthood working with farm equipment, doing mechanics and welding. Then one day, he decided he needed a change. "I had some friends who worked at the fire department. I thought I needed to find something more secure, so one day, I thought, *I'm going to be a fireman!*" Randy said. "I always saw the trucks there and talked to my friends who were firefighters, and I said, 'I can do that!'"

He began his career in December 1988. Once he started, he realized he'd made the right choice. "I just enjoyed it," Randy said. "You get to the point where you're helping people and doing it for others. It just felt good." Randy discovered a passion for serving others and protecting the people in his community. "The best part is being able to help people when they're down, whether it's through EMS, or their house is on fire, or helping them if they're stuck on the side of the road or locked out of their house. When people are appreciative, that makes you feel really good."

Throughout the years, Randy had his share of strange moments on the job. "I've taken raccoons out of the nursing home. I've taken snakes out of houses. You never know what the job's going

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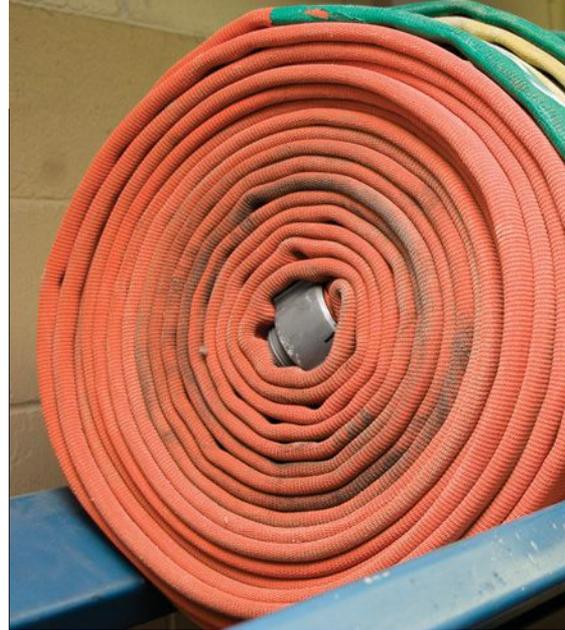
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to bring," he explained. "You go from a horrible automobile accident to almost delivering a baby. There are lots of fun moments, but then you've got others you want to forget."

Any firefighter can expect to face difficult and dangerous situations, and



Randy was no exception. Because he has lived in Waxahachie his entire life, he felt an even stronger connection to the citizens he helped. However, that connection also caused him anxiety. "That was one of the things I hated about working in Waxahachie and living here," Randy said. "You never knew when you got called on a wreck if it was going to be your family member or one of your friends."

Randy also faced pressure throughout his career to continually be alert and ready to go at a moment's notice. Firefighting is a precise skill that must be perfected. "Fighting fires doesn't give



you second chances,” he admitted. “You have to learn how to talk to it, let it talk to you, learn how to read it.” He had to learn many skills on the job, including lifesaving techniques. “The medical part surprised me more than anything. You see things you sometimes have to talk

out to get out of your mind.” Some parts of the job never got easier, even after 25 years. “The worst part was dealing with death. You never get to where it doesn’t bother you,” Randy stated. “That’s the hardest part — the firefighting stuff is easy compared to that.”

Although the job was difficult, Randy loved serving the community and made



great friends during his years with the Waxahachie Fire Department. “Some of it’s harder than you think,” he shared. “It’s the same thing every day, but it’s also different every day. That’s what keeps you there. There’s no better job.” Before Randy was promoted to main pump



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engineer, he worked 23 years with the same group of firefighters. “You’re gone a third of your life,” Randy said. “You have two families—one at home and a family away from home.” Since he retired, one of the hardest adjustments he has had to make is not seeing his friends every day. “Yeah, I miss the guys,” he admitted. “I miss them a lot.

“I miss the work, too,” he added. “You get into a routine. It’s hard to get out of it.” Part of Randy’s routine involved cooking for his fellow firefighters every day in the station kitchen. “I had been the cook for 15 years when I moved out to Station 3,” he explained. “I’d go in, and my main duty was to cook. I think what the guys miss most about me is my cooking,” Randy joked. “I’d cook, and we’d eat and start our day. Sometimes we didn’t get to eat, because the tones would drop. We’d come back to cold eggs.”

For Randy, the decision to retire and hang up his helmet was difficult but obvious. “Everybody asks, ‘When do you retire?’” Randy said. “There’s not a time. You just know it. Something inside you just tells you it’s time.”

Even though he no longer serves as a firefighter, he reflects on his career with fondness daily. “It’s just a great job,” he said, labeling his years in Waxahachie as very rewarding. Serving his community was a great experience for Randy. “The citizens of Waxahachie have given the fire department a lot over the years, and



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our way of saying thanks is to give back to them by trying to take care of them,” Randy said. “When I went to work there, our equipment was out of date, and over the 25 years, we acquired modern equipment, and it’s all because the citizens gave it to us.” He and his fellow firefighters always appreciated getting Thanksgiving dishes and Christmas cookies around the holidays. Randy also enjoyed the drawings they received from elementary school children after fire prevention demonstrations. “Watching the kids and talking about the trucks was always enjoyable,” he added.

Now that he’s retired, Randy is looking forward to spending holidays with his wife, Annita, and their son, Derek, while catching up on his “honey-do” jobs, hunting and fishing with Derek and focusing on his family business, Waxahachie Automatic Gates, which builds gates for businesses and residences. He encourages anyone who is interested in firefighting to pursue it as a career and offers this advice for aspiring firefighters: “Go to a good school. Pay attention, because you’ll use everything they teach you,” he shared. “And start young.” He hopes they will have the chance to work with great firefighters and help others like he did because, according to Randy, “It’s one of the best jobs you can have.” **NOW**

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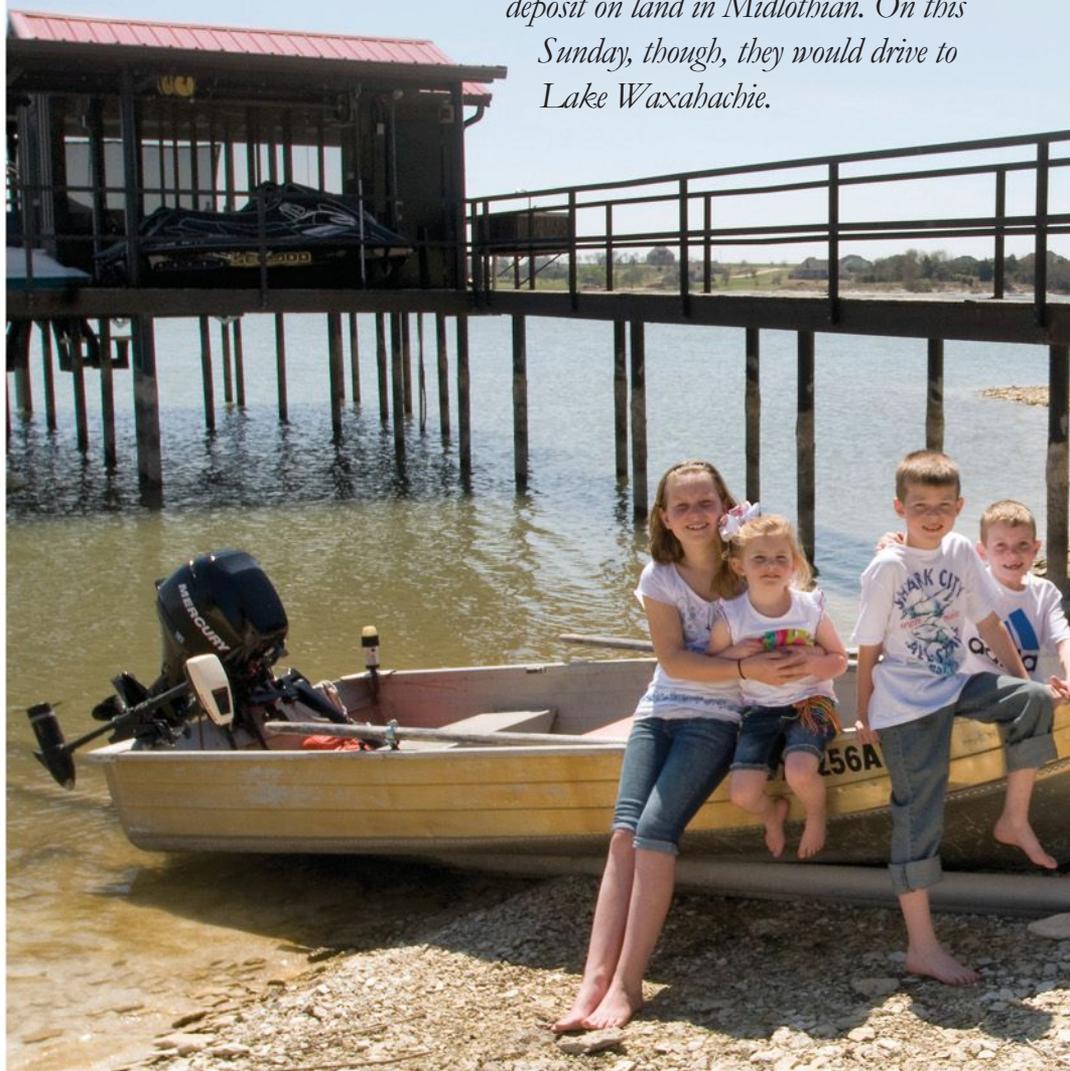
Six Little

Water Bugs

— By Carolyn Wills



It was Memorial Day weekend 2005, and Steve and Terri Kennedy were about to test the winds of a new direction. They had been on board to build a new home in Midlothian, the community where they had lived for 20 years and where their three daughters had grown up. They had even placed a deposit on land in Midlothian. On this Sunday, though, they would drive to Lake Waxahachie.



At Home With Steve & Terri Kennedy

“We are 24/7, serious lake people,” Terri grinned. “We have a house on Possum Kingdom Lake, where Steve spent a lot of his childhood. Before that day, in 2005, we had never even thought of moving to Waxahachie.”

The house that would ultimately steer them home is an elegant, nearly 3,000-square-foot, single-story dwelling on a spacious lot edging the lake. “It was 20 years old when we first saw it, yet from the outside, it looked brand new,” she said. “The curb appeal was perfect, and although the interior needed updating, it had so much personality and quality.” The Fords built the home and were its only owners until Steve and Terri moved in.





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“Waxahachie has so many wonderful historic homes, and while this one is newer, it has the distinction of an older home,” Terri said. “We feel so blessed for it is truly the best of both worlds.”

With a brick-paved, semi-circular driveway, pristine landscaping and countryside views of open pastures, which at times, are blanketed with sunflowers, the home exemplifies substance and warmth. The front is unquestionably captivating, and the back is without equal. A spacious flagstone patio, with lovely blooming plants, gas



fireplace, flat-screen TV, outside kitchen and gorgeous outdoor furniture provides access to stunning views of the lake, as well as a stone walkway and deck leading to the Kennedys’ own boathouse.

“The original patio was small,” Steve said. “We expanded it and added the kitchen and fireplace.” From the patio down to the boardwalk is a stair-cased walkway of massive flagstone slabs. “We also added a playground for the grandkids,” he explained. “This is the hub for our family and friends.”

Inside, the home is all about style, elegance and comfort. “Terri is the decorator,” Steve said. “With our house in Midlothian already sold, we rented a house in Waxahachie for a few months,

so we could complete renovations before moving in. We gutted the kitchen and master bathroom, added archways, enlarged the patio and garage, and updated the flooring and wall colors.” Timing was so tight that Terri only had two weeks to choose paint, furniture and flooring.

“I did it all in one day,” she smiled. “A friend and I took off in the morning, and by the end of the day, had picked colors, floors and furniture. Steve was surprised and so happy, because he didn’t have to go.”

The interior is like a classic work of art in shades of cream, tan, sage and gold. Dated cabinets and appliances in the kitchen were replaced with white custom-



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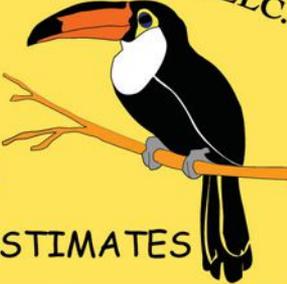
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milled cabinetry, white and tan tile, glass inserts and high-end appliances, including a six-burner gas stove with grill. “Steve is so tall, he couldn’t see into the family room from the kitchen, so we removed cabinets from above the peninsula,” Terri said. The effect is a bright, open and totally stunning kitchen.

The floor plan features three bedrooms, two-and-a-half baths, formal living, dining and family rooms plus a laundry and attached three-car garage. Floors throughout the common areas are gorgeous wide-planked, heavily knotted, medium-stained wood.

The family room, flanked on one side by an open kitchen and on the other by windows overlooking the back patio, sloping grounds and gorgeous lake, is furnished with cushy leather seating and a 102-inch television screen and projector. Also, with lakeside views, the formal living room is on a lowered level, three steps down from the main floor, and is richly decorated with antiques, ironwork and tapestry accessories.

One of three bedrooms is bright and cheery, with soft colors and a daybed. Another pays tribute to Terri’s grandmother. “I was the fourth youngest of 19 grandchildren and very close to my grandmother,” she said. “The bed in this room was hers and is the same as the bed in a photo of me as a baby.” The room is filled with an antique crib and toys.

The master suite features a cozy sitting room with tall windows and a small television. “I love to eat breakfast in the sitting room,” Terri smiled. The spacious bedroom with muted gold walls features a sleigh bed made of leather and wood, and the master bath is an absolute showplace. “We completely changed it,” Terri said. “It was dark and cave-like, so we added an arch, new cabinets, tile work, stained-glass window and solar tubes.” Above a beautiful soaking tub are bath-time baby pictures of the Kennedys’ daughters and

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grandchildren. “Our daughters, Casi, Lori and Stefani, each have a son and daughter,” she smiled. “They are our joy and love.”

Another outstanding feature in the home is the remarkably pristine three-car garage. “We enlarged it, added air-conditioning, polished floor, diamond plate wainscoting and a remote-controlled attic lift,” Steve said. “It’s my man cave.” In addition to cars, the garage is haven to a Roadster replica golf cart, a gift from Steve to Terri.

The Kennedys were married in 1973. They recently celebrated Steve’s 25th year as owner of an electrical contracting company. Terri has worked off and on between children and home, including a period of selling hardwood floors and carpeting. The two love to travel and have just returned from a trip to Italy, where they special-ordered a table embedded with names of each of their six grandchildren.

“My two favorite things are the baby pictures above the bath tub and our destination pole,” Terri smiled. “Steve surprised me at Christmas with directional signs for each of the places we’ve visited. He cut the boards, and our daughter, Lori, did the lettering.” The pole is installed at the entrance of the boardwalk.

Before their interests in NASCAR, antiques, Dallas Stars ice hockey, Rangers baseball, golf and even traveling, Steve’s and Terri’s passions are clearly lake-related. With houses on two lakes, a boat, personal watercrafts, lake boards, paddle boat, floating table and one of the cutest boathouses in existence, they are outfitted for every occasion. “Our grandkids are our six little water bugs,” Terri grinned. At 1,528 acres, Possum Kingdom Lake dominates Lake Waxahachie’s 656 acres. “The grandkids call Possum Kingdom Lake ‘Papa’s lake’ and Lake Waxahachie ‘Nana’s lake,’” Terri said. “Needless to say, we love the lake!” **NOW**

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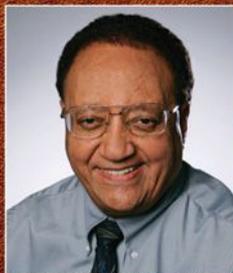
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An Unfolding

— By Callie Revell

Dream

Standing in the atrium of the newest building at Southwestern Assemblies of God University, it's easy to tell that the students, faculty and community have settled right in. Instrumental tones drift over from the music wing. Sound effects blast from speakers in the media editing room. Someone might be rehearsing a monologue on stage. The smell of freshly baked bagels and coffee waft from the new campus hot spot: Einstein Brothers Bagels. Although the Hagee Communication Center is less than a year old, it's already bustling with activity.



The facility began as a dream eight years ago during the construction surge that brought SAGU two new dorms and a fitness center. “It began with recognizing the potential of the newly developed drama and digital media programs. We realized if we were going to see those take off, we needed quality facilities,” said Kermit Bridges, president of the university. “In an era of digital media and drama, what we had in terms of facilities was completely inadequate.”

According to President Bridges, the digital media and drama programs were originally developed with the knowledge

that new facilities would eventually need to be built. “Before the communication center, we still had tremendous success with students coming out of the communication program and getting high-level jobs,” President Bridges noted. “If those kinds of kids are having that kind of success with no facilities, think of the kind of success they can have with new facilities.”

Building the communication center began with the design. “We looked at comparable facilities at other major schools and created our wish list,” President Bridges said. “We ended up

with a building on paper way beyond what we were capable of realizing.” However, the building committee refused to be discouraged, trusting the funds would somehow come. “Rather than impose the limitations of what we thought was possible, we decided to dream a little, and say, ‘Alright, if money was not an object and if resources come through, what would we like the building to look like?’”





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President Bridges said. "That's how the dream began to unfold."

Of course, that dream couldn't come true without adequate funds. In the spring of 2011, the university decided to move ahead with the project, initially borrowing \$8 million. Although a couple of donors had expressed interest in the project, the university didn't have a commitment from either of them. As summer approached, the university began to accept the building of their dreams might not be attainable and would take much longer to build than originally expected. However, help arrived just in time. "I was in Roswell for my uncle's funeral," President Bridges explained. "I received two text messages: 'You're not going to believe this,' and 'Have two checks totaling \$7 million.'"

After setting up a scholarship fund for \$2 million, the anonymous donors heard about the new communication center and came back to offer an additional \$5 million toward the project. "Over the course of the next six months, they gave us another \$3.8 million," President Bridges said. "On top of that, Dr. John Hagee, from San Antonio, committed \$2.5 million for the project, and we received another \$1 million Challenge Grant from the Mabee Foundation. We had never had gifts of that level in the history of the school." All of these donations, along with multiple smaller donations, helped make the communication center a reality.

The Hagee Communication Center features a 600-seat auditorium set up as a performance hall with all the amenities,

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The main emphasis of the facility is to serve the students on campus, according to Tom Lepper, programming manager for the Hagee Communication Center. "It's a hands-on facility. They have their recitals in here. Some people are training for film editing," Tom said. "We have a very big emphasis on theater here. What better place to learn than an actual theater?" The facility hosts student events like concerts and plays, student projects — like CD recordings and interviews, while also housing the campus choir, band and other musical groups. "It's another feather in the cap for receptions, meetings and classes. Innumerable things happen here. It's just such a blessing to have," Tom said.



The building allows current students to reach their full potential by providing the same up-to-date technology they will need when they enter the work force. The communication center will also attract potential students who might not have initially considered SAGU. "We live in a media-driven culture. The skills this building enables students to develop will position them for success," President Bridges said. "This building will give students the skills to be competitive in the marketplace." Another purpose is to train future leaders of the church. "So many churches today need communication arts, digital media and music skills to remain relevant and attract more people," President Bridges noted.

"It's such a fine facility, not just for the campus but for the city of Waxahachie," Tom said, adding that SAGU has already begun partnering with the Waxahachie Community Theater and the Waxahachie Symphony Association. "I'm communicating daily with people who want to partner with us to use this facility." The beautiful atrium can be used

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for receptions and other events. The fountain courtyard is an excellent space for concerts and smaller gatherings. The auditorium is available for plays, concerts and conferences.

“Students from all majors on campus will at some point take a class in the Hagee Center,” President Bridges said. “This building touches the entire campus, and it has potential to touch the community — not just Waxahachie, but also the surrounding area.” He hopes SAGU will have the opportunity to host many community events in the future. “I think it will enable more individuals in the community to see what Southwestern has to offer.”



The campus community has full faith the center will enable students to change the world for the better, and President Bridges encourages everyone to stop by the campus and take a tour. So far, the response from those on the campus to the facility has been extremely positive. “They’re thrilled for this quality of building to be here, they’re thrilled about the potential for the community to come here for events and the further partnerships we can have,” President Bridges said, “The only negative feedback is from former students who are sad because it wasn’t here when they were here.” **NOW**

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Child's PLAY

— By Randy Bigham

With summer around the steamy corner, moms and dads everywhere are considering ways to keep their kids cool, entertained and challenged until school activities rev up again. Busy parents, especially, want safe options for amusement and education they can depend on for their children during workday hours.

Summer Camps

For many parents, grandparents and guardians, the tried-and-true youth camp offers an ideal solution to boredom and inactivity for their kids. As schools close their doors for summer break, camps around North Texas open their, drawing children of all ages to the same games, sports and campfire sing-alongs, which have provided fond memories for older generations. But, as the website for Ultimate Camp Resource makes clear, “there’s more to camp than kickball or four-square.” Modern summer camps offer a wide variety of both age-appropriate and inclusive outings, games, art projects and theatrical skits. “We





encourage you to plan all activities using the ‘everybody plays, everybody wins’ philosophy,” the site suggests, adding by changing the rules to give a personal touch and not keeping score helps make competitions upbeat and fun.

Susan Merrill, director of programs for Camp Fire Camp El Tesoro in Granbury, believes in the importance of reaching children through activities for all tastes and skills. In her 25 years in the camp industry, Susan has observed the positive effect the interactive enjoyment of work, play and team building has had on young campers. “Going to camp should be a part of every child’s life,” she said. “The experience develops their independence and confidence, and it provides the opportunity for children to learn decision making.”

At large camps, some extraordinary features include: horseback riding, canoeing and kayaking, hiking,



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basketball, tennis and soccer. Whatever children's interests might be, Misty Luttrell, director of overnight and family camps at Camp Fire, recognizes a common denominator: togetherness. "With all the electronics out there, kids spend more time plugged in and less time interacting face to face," she pointed out. "But camp fosters an atmosphere that allows kids to build relationships with peers and their counselors."

Vacation Bible Schools

Another staple, yet ever diversifying, alternative for meaningful summer activity for children is Vacation Bible School. Nearly every church sponsors a program blending faith-based instruction with challenging amusement, covering a range of ages.

Nora Beane, a contributor to the online clearinghouse Yahoo Voices, cites five good reasons for parents to consider VBS as a viable outlet for kids' entertainment and education:

1. Scheduling: "The majority of VBS programs run for a single week and many only operate for a half day during that week. Almost every family can plan around that."
2. Content: "There are a million sites where kids can go to learn how to play baseball, but considerably fewer places where kids can learn to respect others and have faith in God."
3. Quality companionship: "Parents can guess that their child will be



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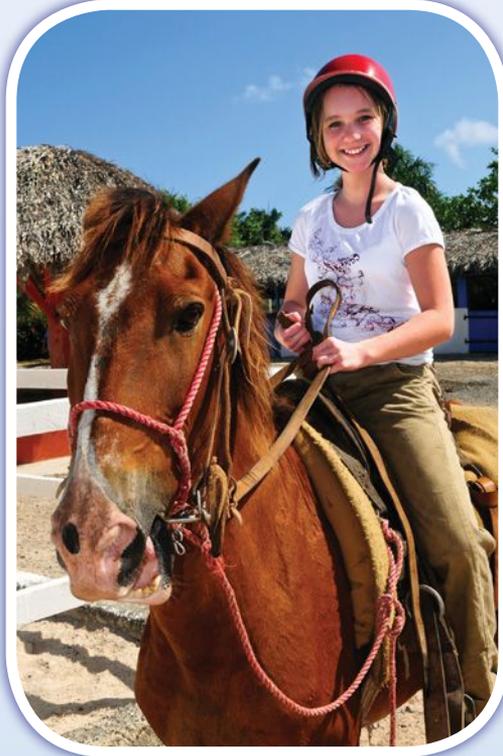
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attending VBS with other kids who come from families where values are important and faith is central.”

4. Engaging entertainment: “Kids at VBS don’t just spend time reading the Bible. VBS programs have curriculums built for and around kids that are full of adventure.”

5. Economic value: “Because they are church based, most VBS programs are not set up to make a profit. They are set up to share a message.”

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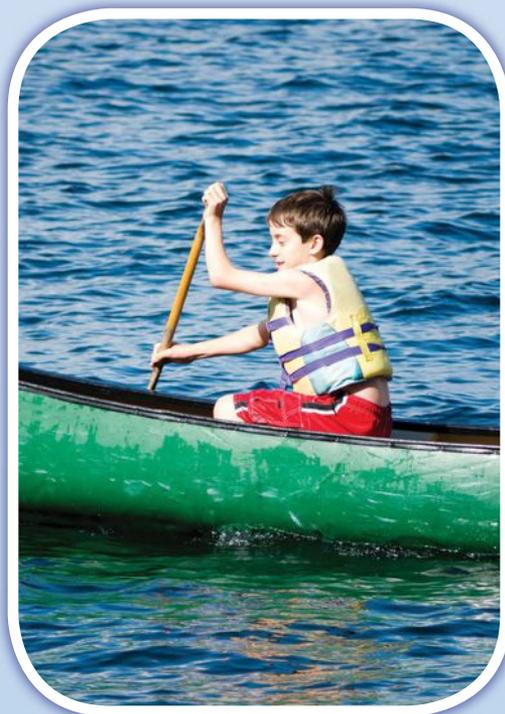
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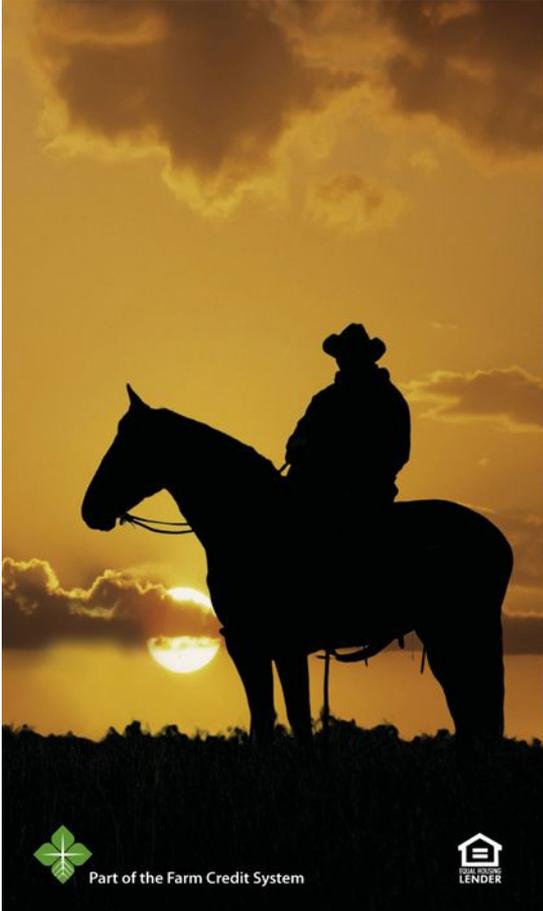


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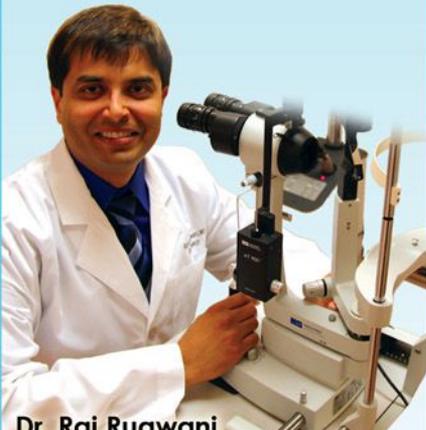
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libraries select themes each summer for their programming, which involves not only literature but special events. Local themes for summer reading programs in the recent past have included tie-ins to popular family movies, cartoons and comic books.

The ALA lists the three main benefits for youth-geared summer reading programs as:

1. Maintaining reading skills between grades.
2. Attracting reluctant readers by activity-oriented events.
3. Encouraging reading as a lifelong habit.

YMCA and Community Recreation Centers

More fun in the sun opportunities for kids this summer at local YMCA centers or other community recreation facilities include: basketball and football, swimming, outdoor art installations, tie-dyeing T-shirts and numerous other craft projects.

One North Texas area YMCA craft idea proved especially popular last summer with young children returning from a field trip to a popular water park, and it promises to entertain many again this year. Boys and girls created a souvenir of their outing by gluing sand and shells onto a wooden or particle board backing in the shape of a starfish or dolphin. These were then affixed to a painted stick or straw, which girls in particular enjoyed waving around, calling the toy their "mermaid wand."

Whether camping out or taking a dip, curling up with a new book or displaying artistic creations, the summer sky's the limit. There are plenty of choices available for exciting recreational and educational opportunities for your kids this year! **NOW**

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Saratoga Springs shares its secrets of health, history and horses.

As with certain people, some places work a kind of magic. Such is the special grace of Saratoga. Nestled in the foothills of the Adirondacks, Saratoga Springs combines Old World charm with modern day conveniences. Health attracted people to Saratoga as early as the 1700s, when the area was sacred ground to the native Iroquois Nation. In the early 1900s, the wealthy came from near and far to take in the healing waters in America's European-style bathhouses. Today, visitors still enjoy The Queen of Spas' natural, flowing waters at local spas or on a walking tour.

Decades ago, the city embraced its slogan: Health, History and Horses. Taste-testing the healing water is just one attraction for the hundreds of thousands who come

back to Saratoga year after year. Victorian streets — lined with specialty boutiques, art galleries and studios, exquisite cuisine, cozy coffeehouses, jazz hot spots and so much more — are walked year-round by visitors content to enjoy the charm of Saratoga Springs.

Horses and Saratoga go hand-in-hand. The Saratoga Race Course, named one of the Top 10 Sporting Venues in the World by *Sports Illustrated*, celebrated its 150th year of racing in 2013. Some of the finest and greatest thoroughbred horses have raced on Saratoga dirt and turf. Saratoga hosts a 40-day meet from mid-July through Labor Day. The meet's first and final weekends are marked by two free music festivals, Hats off to Saratoga and Final Stretch. Horses are also found at the Saratoga Casino and Raceway — with one of the most beautiful harness tracks in





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the country — as well as on local farms, in horse sculptures throughout town, at the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame, in national horse shows, at the Fasig-Tipton Sales Pavilion and in every store offering Saratoga memorabilia.



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The city's rich history is apparent while strolling Broadway or quiet side streets filled with grand Victorian and Gothic buildings and homes. Registered historic districts within Saratoga city limits ensure preservation of over 1,000 existing structures. Museums celebrate horse racing, dance, military and automobiles. Saratoga National Historical Park marks the spot where heroes fought the Battles of Saratoga and American rebels overtook the British military forces. The park's over 3,000 acres offer breathtaking landscape, virtually untouched since the 1700s. Saratoga has been fondly noted as the birthplace of the potato chip, the first bottled water and the oldest, continuously operating coffeehouse.

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One glimpse of Broadway and downtown makes it easy to see why Saratoga was named one of "America's Best Small Towns" by *Money* magazine. While searching specialty shops for treasures, take time to taste Saratoga's grace. Dozens of eating establishments suit every palate, from award-winning cuisine and wine from around the globe, cozy coffeeshops and jazz clubs to scrumptious bakeries and ice cream treateries. Culinary events include Saratoga County Restaurant Week in early December, and the Saratoga Chowderfest warms visitors every winter in early February.



Saratoga's fabulous art scene — rounded out by a designated art district, a dedicated arts center, numerous artist studios and galleries featuring local artists — hosts ever-growing and popular festivals, including the four-

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day SaratogaArtsFest at the beginning of June and First Night Saratoga, an alcohol-free, family-friendly New Year's Eve celebration. Saratoga is home to the prestigious artist retreat, Yaddo, recently awarded as a National Historic Landmark for its significant and tragic past. Skidmore College, located at the north end of town, offers not only a liberal arts education, but also the first-class Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery along with the state-of-the-art Arthur Zankel Music Center.



Locals and visitors enjoy year-round entertainment, education, outdoor recreation and fun in Saratoga, a place of grace easy to get to from anywhere. The closest commercial airport is Albany International Airport (ALB), which is about 30 miles south of downtown Saratoga Springs. Bus services, taxis, limousines and rental cars offer daily service to the downtown. Private pilots make use of the Saratoga County Airport, and Amtrak serves a station in Saratoga Springs (SAR) only about one mile west of Broadway.

When exploring downtown, visitors are awed by Saratoga Spa State Park, a 2,200-acre park just off Broadway. This National Historic Landmark is filled with classical architecture, two golf courses,

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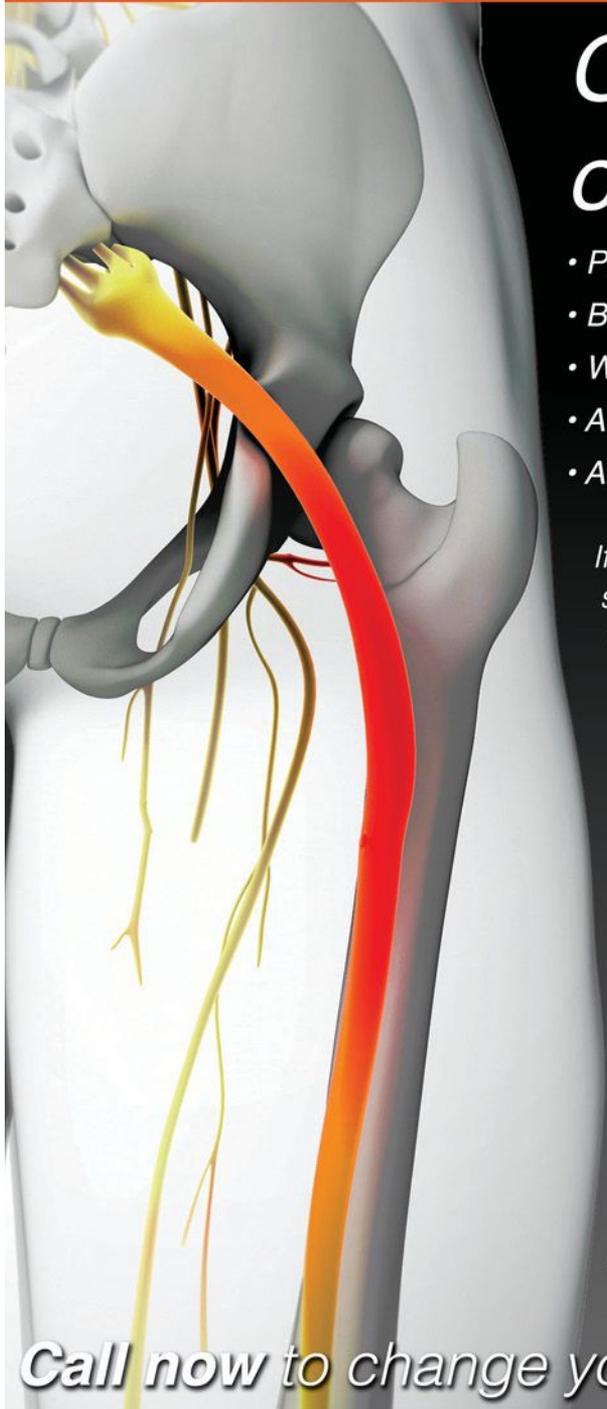
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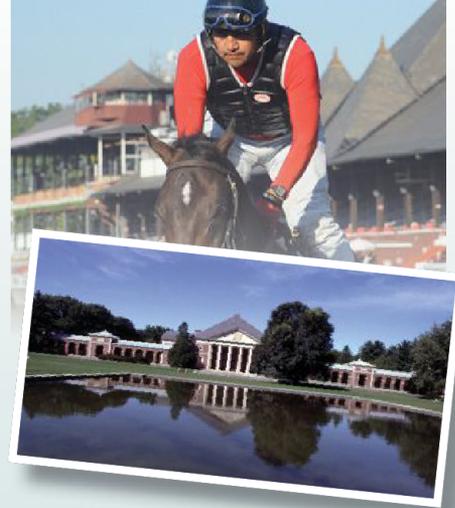
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two swimming pools, a Georgian hotel circa 1930s, an exquisite spa, two museums including the National Museum of Dance and Hall of Fame, nature hiking trails, pavilions with picnic areas, playground, geysers and mineral springs — plus a stocked creek! The nationally known Saratoga Performing Arts Center is also hosted there as the summer home to the NYC Ballet in July and Philadelphia Orchestra in August, along with dozens of pop concerts and festivals, including Freihofer's Saratoga Jazz Festival the last weekend in June and Saratoga Wine & Food Festival and Concours D'Elegance every September. Hidden in the park is the intimate Spa Little Theater that hosts Saratoga's own theater company, Home Made Theater, as well as the Saratoga Chamber Music Festival in August and Opera Saratoga in June and July.



Surrounded by horse farms, apple orchards, corn fields, peaceful lakes, rivers, preserve lands and national and state parks, Saratoga Springs is an outdoorsman's paradise. Year-round adventures are easy to arrange, whether hiking, biking, kayaking, fishing, skiing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing or ice fishing. Affectionately known as the city in the country, Saratoga graces every visitor with the amenities of a big city in an intimate setting. For more information, visit www.saratoga.org. **NOW**

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Making **Clients** Comfortable

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— By Sandra Strong

Wolverton Air is just as dedicated to quality service, products and customer care today as they were when they opened for business in Waxahachie in May 1999. In fact, it's been the company's priority for three generations. "My grandfather, H.W., opened the first store in Dallas in 1939. My dad, Thomas, took over operations in the late '40s, early '50s when they moved to Duncanville," Keith Wolverton explained. "I grew up in and around the business. I remember installing units during the summer months from the time I was 16." Thirty-five years later, he's still in the business of providing comfort for their many clients. "We may still be considered new to the community,"

he added, "but we are definitely not new to the heating and air conditioning business."

Although the focus has changed to energy-saving features and going green, the No. 1 priority is still the clients. "Customer satisfaction," Keith stated. "We have always believed in treating people fairly, the same way we want to be treated. We are in the comfort business." The staff at Wolverton Air also welcomes any questions customers may have in relation to their HVAC needs. They believe an informed client is a satisfied client.

Fall and winter months are spent in maintenance mode. In fact, Keith said that's the best time for clients to take advantage

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of the maintenance agreements that can be obtained at Wolverton Air with new installations. "We are busy with inspections and A/C checkups during the off-season," Keith said. This time period also offers clients opportunities to make informed, educated decisions on the new products available that offer energy efficiency, as well as comfort. "When something breaks in the summer months, the choice is usually immediate because people enjoy their comfort, and they don't want to wait. Most calls we receive in the summer are considered emergencies."

Being experts at maintaining and repairing comfort systems, both commercial and residential, comes easy for Wolverton Air because of the quality products they offer their clients and their knowledge of and familiarity with those products. "We are prepared to help customers choose the comfort system that best fits their needs," Keith shared. "We also take great pride in knowing installations will be professionally completed correctly the first time."

Consumers have so much more to choose from, thanks to the advances in technology. HVAC units have evolved in leaps and bounds from what they once were. "The new products are saving customers hundreds of dollars on their utility bills," Keith explained. "In some cases, customers have told us their monthly bills have been cut in half. They no longer feel as if they are wasting money on comfort."

Being skilled at matching the right product with the right house is what keeps Keith and his crew of 10 in the comfort business. Wolverton Air uses the whole-house approach when helping customers decide on what they want, and more importantly, what they need for year-round comfort. The design of the home can make a sizable difference in choosing the system for the home. "To gain the most effective system for the home and your wallet," Keith stated, "Wolverton Air will design a system specifically for you, your family and your business."

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Madi Patterson is ready to go to the Allen Cheer Competition where her team from Wild About Cheer won National Champions for her age group.



Rosa Castillo, 5 and pretty in pink, is ready to shop with her parents at Target.



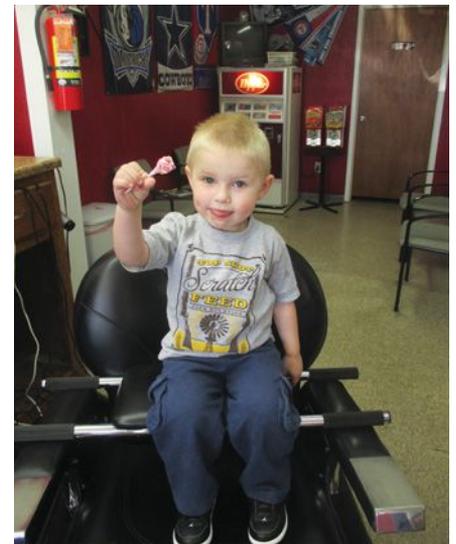
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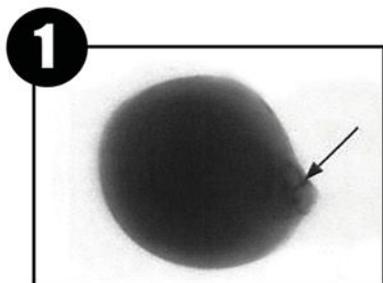


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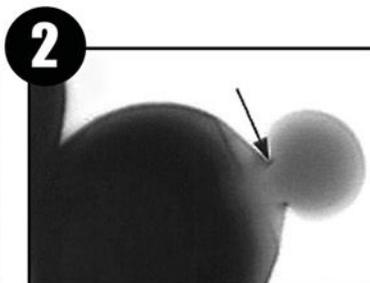
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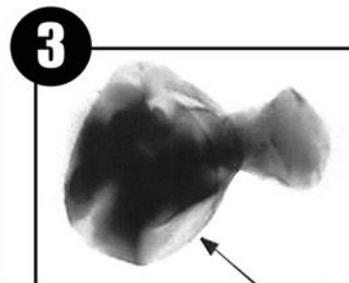
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Will your retirement savings be up to the test? Here's what to consider:

Picture your retirement.

Whether you're planning to travel extensively or kick back by a lake, your income will need to support your desired lifestyle. Once you decide how you'd prefer to spend your retirement days, you can map out a strategy that could help get you there.

Assess your finances.

Take a realistic look at your current financial position. Note such things as how much you've saved, the debt level you're carrying, the amount of life and disability insurance you carry and what you have available in emergency funds. Talk with a financial professional about your options.

Increase savings.

It's never too early — or too late — to add to your savings. If you've got plenty of time before retirement, save as much as you can to take advantage of interest compounding. If retirement is near, look into catch-up contributions, which can help improve your financial picture. Even small gains matter: Increasing your retirement contribution by 1 to 2 percent each year adds up over time. Evaluate your savings progress with a retirement calculator.

Knock out debt.

Most financial professionals recommend keeping debt level manageable — no more than 35 percent of your income. Getting rid of high-interest debt such as credit card balances is always a good idea. And before you retire, you'll want to eliminate as much debt as possible so that you aren't servicing it with your savings. Consider paying off your home before you stop working, too.

Monitor your plans.

Review your retirement plans with a financial professional at least annually to see that they still work for you. (It's also a good idea to review your insurance coverage periodically, and any time your life changes, such as when you marry or have a baby.) As you near retirement, you might decide to shift some of your savings to income-producing investments, such as annuities. Or, to keep your nest egg intact, your plan may be to continue working a few years more into retirement.

To review your insurance coverage as part of your retirement and financial strategy, contact your financial adviser. **NOW**

Neither State Farm nor its agents provide tax, legal or investment advice. Please consult your own adviser regarding your particular circumstances.

Adam Rope is a State Farm agent based in Waxahachie.

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May 2 — 4

Waxahachie Community Theatre presents *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*: **Friday** and **Saturday**, 7:30 p.m.; **Sunday**, 2:30 p.m.; Chautauqua Auditorium, Getzender Park. Tickets are \$12 for seniors and students; \$15 for adults. Preschool children get in free with a paid adult admission. Tickets can be purchased online at www.waxahachiecommunitytheatre.com and are also available at the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce, The Ellis County Museum and the offices of Jerry Ellis DDS in Midlothian. For more information, call the box office at (972) 646-1050 or email at www.wct.texas@gmail.com.

May 10

Filthy 5K Mud Run: Lakeview Camp. Call Mary Sword at (469) 383-9007 for more information.

May 16, 17

Waxahachie Old Fashioned Singing: **Friday**, 7:00 p.m.; **Saturday**, 3:00 p.m., historic Chautauqua Auditorium. This is a staged musical featuring quality arrangements of several well-known hymns and gospel songs. Contact artistic director R.G. Huff at (972) 923-2709 or visit www.WaxaOFS.com.

May 23 — 25

48th Annual National Polka Festival: Ennis. Largest city festival showcases authentic cuisine, sounds and costumes of the Czech and Slovak heritage. For more information, call the Ennis Convention & Visitors Bureau at (972) 878-4748

June 7

Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-in: 8:00-11:00 a.m., Mid-Way Regional Airport, located off Hwy 287 between Waxahachie and Midlothian. Breakfast tickets: \$6, adults and children 8 and over; \$3, children under 3. Free parking. Event will include classic airplanes, open cockpit biplane rides, full motion simulator instructional flights, helicopter rides, fly-overs, live music, activities for children and so much more. For more information, call (972) 923-0080 or visit www.mid-wayregional.com.

Ongoing:

Fourth Mondays

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meetings: 6:30-8:30 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Ave.

Fourth Tuesdays

Ellis County Technology (ECT) meetings: 6:30 p.m., LaQuinta. For more information, call Wendy Merritt at (469) 256-8989.

Fridays

Business Networking International meetings: 8:00-9:30 a.m., LaQuinta, 311 Stadium Dr. For more information, call (469) 222-9160.

Third Saturdays

Waxahachie Jamboree: 7:00-9:15 p.m., Women's Building, 407 W. Jefferson St. Reserve tickets are \$10. When still available, tickets can be purchased at the door for \$7.50. For more information, call Hoyt Patterson at (214) 535-3473 or Gary Kirchmeier at (214) 707-7826.

Fourth Saturdays

Bristol Opry: 7:00 p.m., featuring local singers and musicians. For more information, contact Jim Gatlin at (972) 846-2211.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to sandra.strong@nowmagazines.com.



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When It Comes to Colorectal Cancer, Put Facts Over Fears

Nobody likes getting a colonoscopy. But the fact remains that it's the best way to prevent colorectal cancer or catch it in its earliest stages. If you are over the age of 50 and have never had a colonoscopy — or if you are 60 or older and it has been 10 years since your last one — it's time to talk to your physician about getting a colonoscopy.

Likewise, men and women with a digestive disease, such as: inflammatory bowel disease, ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease, or who have a family history of colorectal cancer, should talk to their physician about colonoscopy much sooner. The procedure typically is not as bad as most people think, and it's the best way to stop colorectal cancer early, or before it even starts.

Knowing the Facts

- **A leading cause of cancer deaths.** According to the National Cancer Institute, colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States.
- **Equal opportunity offender.** Unlike some cancers, colorectal cancer impacts both men and women in nearly equal numbers. In 2013, the American Cancer Society estimates approximately 73,000 men and 69,000 women were diagnosed with a form of the disease.
- **No symptoms doesn't mean no problems.** Unfortunately, most people won't experience any symptoms of colorectal cancer, such as pain and bleeding, until it's already in its later stages, often making treatment more difficult.
- **Prioritize prevention.** By removing precancerous tissue called polyps from the colon during a colonoscopy, you can prevent them from ever becoming cancer.

Overcoming Your Fear

Here are three common fears (or excuses) physicians hear for not getting a colonoscopy, and why they shouldn't hold you back anymore:

- **The day before:** Preparing for a colonoscopy usually involves fasting and drinking a laxative to flush your system before the procedure. In the past, patients often complained about the taste of the laxative. However, depending on where you're having the screening done, the laxative may just consist of a powder mixed with Gatorade, so it tastes much better.

While there is no way to sugarcoat the diarrhea that accompanies a laxative cleanse, keep in mind that for most people a colonoscopy is a once-a-decade screening, and it could save your life.

- **Pain and discomfort:** Patients are under sedation for the duration of the procedure, which usually only lasts 20 to 30 minutes. Normally, patients come out of sedation with no memory of it. Even if polyps are found and removed during the procedure, it doesn't hurt.

In addition, advances in colonoscopy over the last 10 years have improved the procedure. For instance, often CO₂ is used instead of air to access the colon with the scope, which is absorbed much quicker by the body. So the gassy feeling that some patients were once left with after a colonoscopy is normally much less now.

- **An abnormal finding:** Some people fear medical tests because of what might be found. But that should serve as motivation. Especially with a colonoscopy, since it is one of the few screening tests that can also eliminate potential troubled tissue at the same time, all while you're sedated. And not only is cancer, if found early, more treatable, the treatment is usually a lot easier. **NOW**

Valerie J. Gorman, MD, is chief of oncology, chief of surgery and a general surgeon on the medical staff at Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie.

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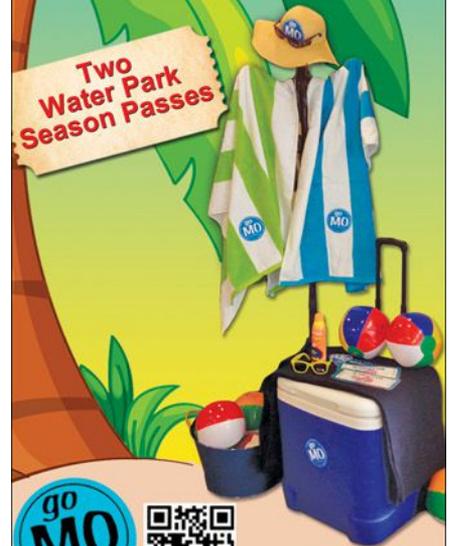
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In the Kitchen With Sarah Sherman

— *By Randy Bigham*

Restaurateur and cookbook author Sarah Sherman came by her love of good food via a family gifted in the kitchen arts. Her mother, both grandmothers and an aunt were her inspiration as a little girl. “I always helped them cook,” Sarah recalled. “They let me pull a chair up to the counter right beside them, and I’d get to roll out biscuit dough.”

Sarah admitted the experience paved the delicious way for a lifetime of cooking, as it did for her sisters, Burnell and Martha. “All three of us have cooked for our families and friends,” Sarah said, “and shared recipes and baking tips through the years.” This trio of gourmets still enjoys cooking together, specializing in cookies and cream pies, all baked from scratch. **NOW**

Chicken Taco Soup

- 1 26-oz. can chicken and rice soup**
- 1 12-oz. can Swanson’s chicken breast**
- 1 small or medium can diced Ro-Tel tomatoes**
- 2 pkgs. dry Hidden Valley ranch dressing mix**
- Grated cheese of choice, in desired amount**
- Tortilla chips, in desired amount, broken**

- 1.** Combine first 4 ingredients in a Crock-Pot. Heat on high for about 20 minutes, or until flavors blend. Turn pot to low until ready to eat.
- 2.** Pour into individual bowls; top with cheese and chips.

Oven-baked Ritz Chicken

Serves 6-8.

- 8 boneless, skinless chicken breasts**
- 2 sleeves Ritz Crackers**
- 1/4 tsp. pepper**
- 1/2 cup plain yogurt**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray a 9x13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
- 2.** Cut breasts lengthwise.
- 3.** In a bowl, crush crackers into fine crumbs. Add pepper; toss to blend and set aside.
- 4.** Place yogurt in another bowl; dip chicken in yogurt and roll in cracker mixture. Place chicken in dish; bake 30 minutes. Turn meat over, bake another 30 minutes.

Flaky Pie Crust

Makes 5 9-inch crusts.

- 4 cups sifted flour**
- 2 tsp. salt**
- 1 1/2 cups Crisco shortening**
- 14 tsp. ice water**

- 1.** With electric blender, mix flour, salt and shortening until texture resembles coarse corn meal. Sprinkle water over mixture. Stir with fork until large ball of dough forms.
- 2.** Turn dough onto a floured board or waxed paper. Roll dough in flour, cut into 5 equal portions.
- 3.** Roll each portion out to fit a 9-inch pie

- tin or plate with an inch hang over. Roll edges under, crimp or flute with fingers.
- 4.** If recipe calls for baked pie crust, prick dough all over with fork. Bake in a 400 F oven for 15 minutes, or until crust is browned.

Basic Cream Pie (With Variations)

- 1 1/2 cups sugar**
- 4 level Tbsp. flour**
- 1/8 tsp. salt**
- 4 eggs, separated**
- 2 cups whole milk**
- 2 Tbsp. margarine**
- 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla**
- 1 9-inch baked pie crust**

- 1.** Mix together sugar, flour and salt. Add small amount of milk to mixture to make a thick paste.
- 2.** Mix beaten yolks, remaining milk and margarine.
- 3.** Cook in microwave on high setting at 2 minute intervals, whisking between intervals. Three times is enough. Add vanilla. Pour into crust.
- 4.** Top pie with meringue (see meringue recipe below). Brown 15 minutes at 300 F.

Variations:

- For coconut cream:* Add 1 cup of angel food coconut to filling. Sprinkle coconut over meringue.
- For chocolate cream:* Add 1 pkg. Nestlé Pre-Melted chocolate or 2 level Tbsp. cocoa to step 1 of recipe.
- For pineapple cream:* Add 1 8-oz. can crushed pineapple (drained) to filling.
- For banana cream:* Slice 1 or 2 bananas into crust before pouring in filling.

Sibling Rivalry Miracle Meringue

- 4 egg whites**
- 5 Tbsp. Sibling Rivalry meringue powder**

- 1.** Beat both ingredients at medium to high speed until meringue stands in peaks and does not run when bowl is tilted or turned upside down.
- 2.** Spread meringue over 9- or 10-inch pie. Swirl or make peaks with a tablespoon.
- 3.** Brown at 300 F for 15 minutes.

To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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