

Mark Your Calendars for the Annual Meeting and Fish Fry



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER ALAN LESLEY

As you are probably aware, Comanche Electric Cooperative, like almost all other cooperatives, abides by the Seven Cooperative Principles, No. 2 of which is Democratic Member Control.

As a cooperative, CECA is owned and controlled by you, our members, who exercise your control by electing a total of seven board members by district. This board determines the co-op's strategic plans, general operating policies, rates, procedures, etc. But more important, the board serves as your advocate to all things related to the cooperative. While the final decision ultimately resides with them, they do welcome member input and suggestions. Unlike an investor-owned utility, where decisions are determined by the number of shares held by an individual, at Comanche Electric Cooperative EVERY member has an equal voice.

Below are some frequently asked questions in regard to our voting process:

What does this mean for me, as a member? It means you have an opportunity equal to that of your neighbors when it comes to who makes the decisions at your cooperative. Here at CECA we encourage and urge you to be active in the voting process.

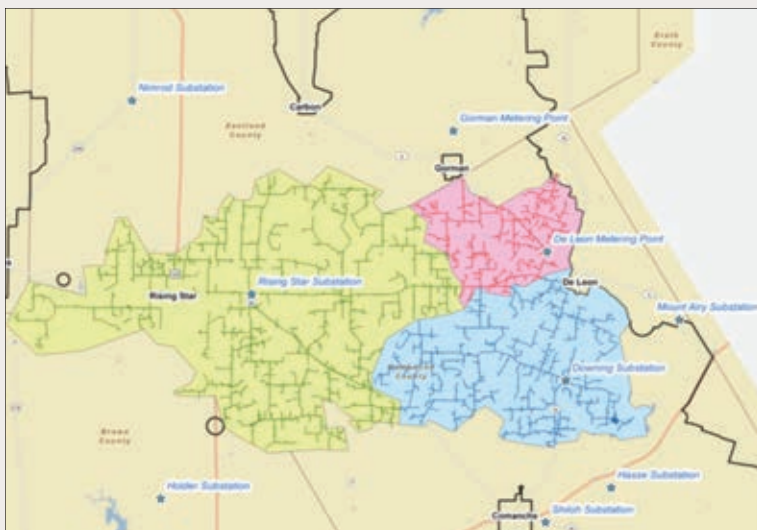
How do I exercise my right to vote? Directors are nominated by members within their respective districts, at their district meetings in August. Those nominees are placed on a ballot and all members, regardless of their district, are allowed to vote at the annual meeting of the membership.

When is this meeting? The 2014 CECA Annual Meeting will be held at Comanche City Park on October 11, 2014. Registration will begin at 9 a.m., followed by the business meeting and election of directors.

While the business meeting and election of directors will be our main agenda, rest assured that we are not "all work and no play." We will continue our tradition of providing our members with a very informative health fair prior to the business meeting. Entertainment will be provided by Class of '57, brought back by popular demand. For our younger members, Ashley Griffin from Ashley's Twist and Paint will be doing balloon art and face painting. Of course, we will still have a door prize at registration and prize drawings at the end of the meeting. You will not want to miss that! And last but not least, we will close out the day with our annual fish fry, catered by Cook's Fish Barn.

I encourage you to mark your calendars for October 11 and join us for an opportunity to exercise your right to vote while enjoying a good old family-style get-together.

CECA METER INSTALLATION UPDATE



Contract crews with Texas Meter Device, an experienced electric system installation service out of Waco, will be installing new, updated electric meters in the CECA service area. Crews are currently replacing all of the meters in areas serviced out of the Downing, De Leon, Rising Star and Highway 101 substations/metering points. This area is depicted in the included map.

The installation of the new meter will cause a brief service disruption, lasting no more than a couple of minutes or less, in most cases.

All meters on the CECA system must be changed out. Therefore, each meter location in our service territory will be visited by TMD at some time. As this project progresses, we will continue to inform the CECA membership of where crews will be working, through these pages in Texas Co-op Power magazine.

Should you have any questions or concerns in relation to this project, you may contact CECA's metering department at 1-800-915-2533 or via email at meterdata@ceca.coop.



Atchley and Schwartz Attend Lineman's Rodeo

At CECA, we go to great lengths to ensure that our linemen are the best at what they do when it comes to providing you with excellent service. Through our on-the-job trainings, meetings provided to our linemen by our statewide organization, monthly safety meetings and daily tailgate meetings, these men know how to provide the best service possible—and how to do it safely.

Two of our linemen, Robert Atchley and Jake Schwartz, took it a step further when they traveled July 19 to Seguin for the annual Texas Lineman's Rodeo. No, this is not your typical rodeo; these two outstanding linemen competed from pole tops instead of horseback.

Both men did exceptional jobs competing in the Pole Climb, Hurtman Rescue, Cutout Change and Armor Rod Phase Tie events, and a written test. They reported having an excellent time, and will do it again next year!

Let's all join together in congratulating these young men for going the extra mile to keep your power on, and to do it efficiently and safely.

Back Alley Pickin' Trade Days

Year-Round Trade Days
First Friday and Saturday each month

September 5-6 • October 3-4 • November 7-8 • December 5-6

For more information, visit dlbinghamproductions.com or call (325) 330-1218.

CECA

P.O. Box 729
Comanche, TX 76442

Operating in Brown, Callahan, Comanche, Eastland, Mills, Shackelford and Stephens counties

HEADQUARTERS

201 W. Wrights Ave.
Comanche, TX 76442

EARLY OFFICE

1801 CR 338
Early, TX 76801

EASTLAND OFFICE

1311 W. Main St.
Eastland, TX 76448

OFFICE HOURS

Comanche Office: Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Early Office: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., closed from 1 to 2 p.m.

Eastland Office: Tuesday and Thursday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

YOUR LOCAL PAGES

This section of Texas Co-op Power is produced by CECA each month to provide you with information about current events, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact Shirley at the Comanche office or at sdukes@ceca.coop.



CONTACT US

CALL US

(325) 356-2533 local or
1-800-915-2533 toll-free

FIND US ON THE WEB

www.ceca.coop

 facebook.com/CECA.coop



CECA Provides Funding for Heliports

Because CECA is a cooperative, we operate under a different business model than most companies. Along with our purpose of “providing a better quality of life for our members and the communities in which we serve,” we follow the Seven Cooperative Principles, No. 7 of which is “Concern for Community.”

So when the Mullin and Gorman Volunteer Fire Departments expressed a need for air ambulance helipads in their communities, Comanche Electric Cooperative jumped right in to help. After all, what better way could we provide a better quality of life for our members AND show concern for our community than helping to build a helipad to serve the community during life-and-death emergency situations?





Picture yourself attending the **2015 Government-in-Action Youth Tour**

Washington, D.C., June 10-19, 2015

To apply for an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C.:

- *Contest open to students sophomore and above.*
- *Write an essay on the topic "Creative Methods for Energy Conservation"*
- *For questions, information and applications contact the CECA Communications Department at 1-800-915-2533 or sdukes@ceca.coop.*
- *Check it out at youthtour.coop.*

Top 5 Reasons to Enter the Contest:

1. *A tour of our Texas State Capitol and a visit to the Bob Bulluck Museum in Austin.*
2. *All-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C.*
3. *Get-acquainted cruise along the mighty Potomac River with approximately 1,500 students from all across the nation.*
4. *A whole week to visit unforgettable historic monuments, museums and the U.S. Capitol.*
5. *An experience you will never forget!*



A Barbarian in Cross Plains

Heimdul roared and leaped, and his sword flashed in a deathly arc. Conan staggered and his vision was filled with red sparks as the singing blade crashed on his helmet, shivering into bits of blue fire. But as he reeled he thrust with all the power of his broad shoulders behind the humming blade. The sharp point tore through brass scales and bones and heart, and the red-haired warrior died at Conan's feet.

From "Gods of the North," by Robert E. Howard

BY LUCHESE GORDON

A 'Honing to Write'

Cross Plains of the '20s and '30s was as far removed from the misty battlefields of ancient Britain, the exotic temples of the Orient and the rich plunder of sea pirates as a sparrow is from a bird of paradise. It was then, as it is now, a small, rural town that offered good, honest living, but little glitz or glamor. Yet it was from Cross Plains that came some of the most sensational adventure stories, the most chilling horror tales and the dangerous exploits of Conan the Barbarian. From a typewriter in a tiny porch bedroom in a little white house on the edge of town, Robert Howard sent readers through fantasy worlds the other residents of Cross Plains likely could never have conceived.

Robert E. Howard was born in 1906 to a country doctor,

Isaac Howard, and his sickly wife, Hester, who were living in Peaster at the time. They moved often—Howard lived in seven different locations during his first eight years—but in 1919 they settled in Cross Plains to stay. He had few friends and there was seldom company in his home since Dr. Howard was usually out and Mrs. Howard was usually sick, but aside from having a little more chance for loneliness than most kids, he seems to have spent a normal, untroubled childhood there. He went to school in Cross Plains, where he was remembered as quiet and reserved, neither at the bottom of his class nor the top, except in history, which he loved and at which he excelled.

Apparently, Howard wanted to be a writer from the beginning. As an adult, he said, "I've always had a honing to make my living by writing, ever since I can remember." He certainly wasted no time in pursuing his chosen profession, writing his

first story when he was 9 or 10 and sending his first submission to a magazine at the age of 15. His mother and father may not have planned to raise a writer, but they had been unwittingly feeding his love of literature since he was a baby. Dr. Howard was very knowledgeable and read about a wide variety of subjects. Mrs. Howard, also a great reader, loved poetry. People who knew the Howards remembered that their living room was crammed with books—books filling the shelves and walls, piled on the tables and even stacked on the floor. As Arlene Stephenson, curator of the Robert E. Howard Museum, points out, “It’s no wonder [that he wanted to write]. Robert grew up in a world of words.”

“He was so well read,” she goes on to say, “and it just fed his imagination. That was what was so unusual about Howard, in that day, was his imagination and creative sense, without having exposure to travel, to the Internet ... Cross Plains didn’t have a library. He read everything that was in the high school library that was of interest to him.” He later professed that during the summer he would sneak into the area schools to steal, read and then return their books. He amazed his friends with the speed at which he read.

At the time, Texas public schools only went through the 11th grade; Cross Plains only taught through the 10th. When Howard finished high school at Cross Plains, he and his mother moved temporarily to Brownwood so that he could complete the 11th grade. The Brownwood school paper, *The Tattler*, was the first to print one of Howard’s pieces. In 1922, “Golden Hope Christmas” and “West is West,” two of his short stories, were published. More would follow.

When Howard returned to Cross Plains with his high school diploma, he attempted a number of different jobs, including working as an oil field news reporter, a public stenographer, an assistant to a geologist, and his most hated occupation, a jerk at a soda fountain. He chose or was forced to give up each of his successive jobs for different reasons, from health issues to simple dissatisfaction with the work. Behind it all was the undeniable fact that he did not want any career but that of a writer. His father, however, had other ideas.

The Trial Year

Dr. Howard wanted his son to go to college and earn a degree, but Howard loathed the idea of returning to school. He argued that he should be allowed to pursue a career as a writer. Finally they came to an agreement: Howard would attend Howard Payne University in Brownwood. After he received a degree in bookkeeping, he would have one year to prove that he could make a living as a writer. If he failed, he would look for a bookkeeping position.

Wisely, Howard did not wait for graduation to start trying



to establish himself as an author. His collection of rejection letters grew steadily, but in 1925, a pulp fiction magazine (popular collections of short stories and poetry published on cheap pulpwood paper) called *Weird Tales* published “Spear and Fang,” a short adventure story set in a Cro-Magnon village. He sold a few more stories to *Weird Tales* while at Howard Payne, wrote a little for the school paper and graduated without much incident.

Back at home, Howard was finally able to devote himself entirely to writing. Without school or another job to drain away his time, he pumped out stories at an amazing rate. He sold more and more stories, at first only to *Weird Tales*, but later breaking into the pages of other pulp fiction magazines of the day. Soon it became apparent that he would never have to take up bookkeeping.

Boxing Champions, Celtic Warriors and Middle Eastern Adventurers

Over the next few years, the tiny enclosed porch that served as Howard’s bedroom echoed constantly with the clatter of his typewriter—and often the roar of his voice, as he was wont to loudly narrate his stories as he typed them. The magazines snatched up his stories eagerly. Before too long, Howard was making more money than his father.

Cross Plains did not know what to think of it all. As Howard explained to fellow author H.P. Lovecraft, writing was “a profession absolutely foreign and alien to the people among which [my] lot is cast; a profession which seems as dim and faraway and unreal as the shores of Europe.” The idea of someone making his living that way “seemed, in that hardy environment, so fantastic that even today I am sometimes myself assailed by a feeling of unreality.”

But Howard was too engrossed in his fantasy worlds to care too much about how the town perceived him. He tended to write in phases, finding something in history or real life that fascinated him and running with it until he was lured away by another topic. When he was in a phase, he was completely absorbed, researching it thoroughly, turning out stories and characters



Sword and Sorcery

One of Robert E. Howard's most significant but lesser-known characters was King Kull, whom many view as the inspiration for and predecessor to Conan. However, Kull is significant in his own right because it was in a Kull story that Howard first combined supernatural elements with a hero-centered adventure plot and thereby created the "sword and sorcery" genre of fiction. Not only has the genre become one of the main branches (if not the main branch) of fantasy writing, it also has left its mark all over popular culture. It is the most long-lasting and influential of Howard's creations.

centered in it, and even integrating it into his own life. One of his first was his boxing obsession. He had followed boxing as a sport since he was a boy and, beginning when he was a soda jerk, boxed regularly himself in matches at the local icehouse.

He produced streams of boxing-centered stories, complete with detailed hit-by-hit narrations of the fights. The way he planned these out did not improve his neighbors' view of his sanity, Mrs. Stephenson points out, because he would act them out himself to make sure they flowed correctly. "People thought he was crazy because he was doing this going down the street," she laughs, painting a picture of him swinging, ducking and blocking imaginary punches and muttering dialog under his breath as he walked through Cross Plains.

Beginning a trend that he would continue throughout his writing career, he started writing multiple stories revolving around a single character, producing dozens of short stories about Sailor Steve Costigan. The sailor was the bumbling heavyweight champion of the merchant ship *Sea Girl* whose gullibility and love of drink was forever getting him into scrapes that he had to smash his way out of.

His next obsession was ancient Britain. He was fascinated with everything from the Picts (a people who were some of the first known inhabitants of the British Isles) through the arrival of the Romans. He was especially interested in the history of ancient Scotland and Ireland, going so far as to teach himself bits of the Gaelic language. His most famous character of this phase was Bran Mak Morn, the last king of the Picts before they were defeated by the Celts. He was so engrossed in his Celtic "kick" that it spilled over into his Oriental phase. "The Treasury of Tartary," "Swords of Shahrazar" and others featured an Irish descendent of the Celts adventuring through an exotic Asian or Middle Eastern setting.

Toward the end of his career, Howard began to explore the history of the American West and his home state. Sometimes with his family and sometimes with friends, he traveled all over Texas, enjoying its beauty and rich past. He created several Western characters, most notably Breckenridge Elkins, a slightly dim-witted cowboy whose blundering attempts to help out his friends usually resulted in saloon brawls. Howard would die before he ran out of stories in this vein.

Creating Conan

The phase that produced his most well-known character, however, was a little different than the others. Whether the mysterious, almost spiritual light that Howard cast around the formation of Conan the Barbarian is truly what he felt at the time or merely a device to intrigue readers is debatable, but Howard claimed that Conan "simply grew up in my mind a few years ago when I was stopping in a little border town on the lower Rio Grande. I did not create him by any conscious process. He simply stalked, full-grown, out of oblivion and set me at work recording the saga of his adventures." Howard told a friend that Conan had been created by "some mechanism in my sub-consciousness" that combined "the dominant characteristics of various prize-fighters, gunmen, bootleggers, oil field bullies, gamblers, and honest workmen I had come in contact with."

Conan is not a humorous character like Steve Costigan or Breckenridge Elkins, nor is he a righteous warrior like Solomon Kane. Conan, with his “square-cut black mane” and “smoldering blue eyes,” is ruled only by his changing passions. First a thief by trade, he ascends to the throne by murdering the king of Aquilonia. Conan’s adventures were more varied than those of any other Howard character, ranging from leading pirate ships to detective work to battling supernatural enemies. Most important, Conan was always smarter, faster, stronger and hardier than everyone else. Conan was immensely popular with readers—so much so that, while El Borak, Bran Mak Morn, Wild Bill Clanton and his other characters faded slowly from popularity with the pulps, Conan lives on in comic books, novels, movies, television and video games to this day.

The Lamps Expire

Though modern psychologists are fairly certain that Robert Howard was not manic-depressive, as is sometimes conjectured, he was prone to dark moods. When his mother, whose condition had been steadily growing worse, fell into a coma from which the nurses predicted she would not wake, Howard went to his room and wrote:

*All fled, all done
So lift me on the pyre.
The feast is over
And the lamps expire.*

Leaving these last words on his typewriter, he took a pistol he had borrowed from a friend out to his car, sat down inside and shot himself through the head.

Though he was only 30 years old when he ended his own life, he had published a staggering number of short stories and written many more that would be printed after his death. As the father of the “sword and sorcery” genre and the “Prince of Pulp Fiction,” Howard’s writing had an impact on popular literature and culture that is rare for such a short career.

Today, the little white house where Howard lived still stands at the edge of Cross Plains. In the 1990s, Project Pride restored and opened it as a museum of the author’s life and writings, as well as a vivid picture of everyday living in the 1920s and ’30s in Texas. Every June, the annual Robert E. Howard Days celebration features panel discussions, poetry readings, speakers, a swap meet and auctions, drawing Howard fans from all over the world. In the middle of Howard Days, Cross Plains gathers for the Barbarian Festival, a fair and festival involving most of the town. The Robert E. Howard museum does not have scheduled hours. To arrange a tour, contact Arlene Stephenson at projpride@yahoo.com or (254) 725-4993.

Special thanks to Arlene Stephenson for providing so much helpful information for this article.



Meet Our Newest Co-op Connections Member

Austin Street Opry

DLBingham Productions presents Austin Street Opry, your once-a-month music event celebrating faith, family and freedom through country, gospel and bluegrass music. The Opry showcases a variety of entertainers who range from our very own local talents to professional recording artists, bringing you wholesome entertainment and fun for the entire family. Like us on Facebook or visit our website at austinstreetopry.com for show schedule and information.

LOCATION: 111 S. Austin St., Comanche
PHONE: (325) 330-1218
HOURS: Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
EMAIL: austinstreetopry@gmail.com
WEBSITE: austinstreetopry.com
OFFER: 10 percent off ticket price

Austin Street Opry happens the fourth Saturday of each month. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; show starts at 7:30 p.m.

Upcoming Dates

September 27
October 25
November 22
December 13

For more information, visit austinstreetopry.com or call (325) 330-1218.

Going Back to School? CECA has a Program Just for You!

Adult and nontraditional student scholarships

Through our Operation Round-Up Program, CECA is proud to offer a nontraditional scholarship to adults returning to college or going to college for the first time. To qualify, you must be an active member of CECA residing within the cooperative’s service territory, and participate in the Operation Round-Up Program. For program guidelines or to find out if you qualify, contact CECA’s Member Service Department at 1-800-915-2533 or memberservices@ceca.coop.