

Great Customer Service Every Day

Your co-op values customer service, day in and day out



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER ALAN LESLEY

IT SEEMS LIKE THERE'S A DESIGNATED DAY or week for everything. We honor administrative assistants on a particular day, bosses on another. Other ideas, like customer service, are important enough to merit an entire week. Although we think National Customer Service Week is a fine idea, we don't need it: We celebrate customer service every day of every year. It's that important to us.

Designated week or not, we at CECA pride ourselves on our customer service all the time. From our receptionist at the front door to each lineworker or right-of-way trimmer, we make every attempt to ensure that you have a positive experience with your electric co-op.

To us, customer service encompasses all we do. It certainly begins with a cheerful face when you stop by our office, and a friendly voice when you call on the phone. It continues with the folks who make service calls to your house or business.

Customer service also includes the programs and services we offer our members, such as alternate payment plans and billing options. If you want tips on how to make your home more energy efficient, or if you've heard about renewable energy options and need more information, give us a call. Our employees spend time at area schools educating students about electrical safety. Co-op employees on the road are always ready to assist in any emergency, even those that are not electricity-related.

We also have a major obligation to our members when their power goes out. We wish we could just flip a switch and turn those lights right back on, but unfortunately, most of the time the repair isn't that easy. But please know that our crews work to find the problem and fix it as quickly as they possibly can. This is a commitment each one of us takes very seriously.

It would be unrealistic for us to expect each member to call or stop by to let us know if our customer service is up to your standards, but I'm very interested in your suggestions on what we can do to improve.

The next time you're in one of our offices or on the phone with one of our employees, please let us know if you're happy with the customer service you receive. We want to offer you the best service we can, but we can't make improvements if we don't know what needs improving.

Here at CECA, we are proud of our relationship with our member-owners. Cooperatives are all about working together, and we try to uphold that philosophy as we work for you.

Customer Service

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor



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Headed to College? CECA Can Help You

THIS YEAR, CECA WILL AGAIN AWARD four \$1,000 Scholarships for Excellence, and two \$1,000 Operation Round-Up Scholarships to qualifying students.

To qualify for the scholarships, a student must be claimed as a dependent of parents or legal guardians who are active CECA members residing within the cooperative's service area. He or she must maintain a 2.0 grade-point average on a 4.0 scale, and must meet general entrance requirements at an accredited school. Operation Round-Up applicants must also participate in the Operation Round-Up program.

The applicant can be a graduating high school senior or a student currently enrolled in a college or university.

Students are required to write an essay explaining why they chose their field of study and why the scholarship should be awarded to them. Applications must be received by March 27.

Applications can be found online at www.ceca.coop, or by contacting the Member Services Department at 1-800-915-2533 or memberservices@ceca.coop.

Youth Tour Winners Named

MADISON HAGOOD AND RYLIE MCGINNIS have been chosen to represent CECA in the 2015 Government-in-Action Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C. Madison and Rylie will travel to Austin June 10, where they will tour the Texas Capitol and the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum. Following that, they will travel to Washington, where they will tour Capitol Hill and visit their congressional representatives; the Supreme Court and Library of Congress; Washington National Cathedral; Arlington National Cemetery; George Washington's home at Mount Vernon; the Smithsonian Institution and Holocaust Memorial Museum; the Jefferson, Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorials; the Vietnam Veterans, World War II and Korean War memorials; the Washington Monument, and much more.

Madison is a senior at Comanche High School and the daughter of Brent and Leann Hagood. She is active in basketball and softball as well as a plethora of academic groups. She will be attending Oklahoma Christian University in the fall on a softball and academic scholarship.

Rylie is a junior at Comanche High School and is the daughter of Traci Pettit and Kevin McGinnis. Her activities include volleyball, basketball and softball, and she is active in her church.

Please join us in congratulating these two young women.

Rylie McGinnis, left, and Madison Hagood are headed to Washington, D.C., as the winners of CECA's Government-in-Action Youth Tour contest.



CECA

P.O. Box 729
Comanche, TX 76442

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

HEADQUARTERS

201 W. Wrights Ave.
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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

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www.ceca.coop

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Pickin' and grinnin' in Roy and Donna Thackerson's "jam area"

The Fingerless Fiddler

BY LUCCHESI GORDON

IN 1944, ROY THACKERSON PUT A MATCH TO A DYNAMITE CAP in the alley by his house in Cisco. Even though the resulting explosion blew the fingers off his left hand—so crucial for a musician—nothing would deter him from chasing what he wanted in life. “I know there’s some people that says, ‘Well, I’d do that if I had this or I had that,’” Thackerson said. But it is apparent that he isn’t one of them.

“You can still see the shrapnel right there,” he said, pointing to a dark outline in his left palm. “Been in there 70 years. Isn’t that something?” It is, but the real “something” embedded in Thackerson is not the remaining bits of shrapnel from a child-

hood accident but the rugged determination that made him who he is today.

Thackerson was 6 years old when he found what he thought was a firecracker. “It was in the house somewhere, and I found a match out in the alley,” he explained. “I always tell ‘em, if I’d wanted to smoke a cigarette, it wouldn’t have lit.” But light it did. When the dynamite cap exploded, it blew off the fingers on his left hand and blinded one eye. Doctors stitched up his hand there in Cisco and worked on his eye in a Naval hospital in Dallas. His hand healed, but his thumb, forefinger and ring finger extended only to the first knuckle—and the other two were even

shorter. The surgeries and treatments, though successful, held him back from starting school. “I always tell everybody that I had full whiskers when I was in first grade,” he laughed. “I was a year and a half older than everybody else.”

Guitars, Dobros and Fritz Hair Oil

The Thackerson family was a musical bunch. Roy’s father, mother and every one of his seven siblings was a musician of some sort. “Everybody in the family played something,” Thackerson grinned. “Some of ’em not as good as others, but” Roy had already begun learning to play the guitar before the accident, and he had no intention of stopping because of it, despite the new difficulties. One of his older brothers, Raymond, found a Dobro for him to try. “It’s like a steel guitar, a Hawaiian guitar,” Thackerson clarified. “It comes on a stand with legs and you play it with a bar.”

“Actually,” he admitted with a smile, “it was a Fritz hair oil bottle, which had a real sharp edge on it.” So Thackerson learned to play the Dobro with his hair oil bottle grasped in his injured hand and the pick in his other. But even this had its difficulties. “There wasn’t any problem with me holding it, but you need these portions here—at least the little finger—to deaden the strings as you move the bar. If you don’t, it’ll rattle.” Besides, what Thackerson really wanted to play was the standard or Spanish guitar.

“[Raymond] told me, ‘Leave the standard guitar alone. Play the Hawaiian guitar or the steel.’” But the Korean War called Raymond away from home, and his guitar was left unguarded from his little brother.

The Thackersons had a battery-powered radio that Roy’s father tuned every Saturday night to the Grand Ole Opry, live from Nashville, Tennessee. Undoubtedly, this fed Thackerson’s passion for music, but it also affected him in a much more specific way. “There was a gentleman on there they called Thumbs Carllile,” he remembered. “He played the fire out of a guitar, but he played—I thought—just with his thumbs.”

Actually, Thumbs Carllile used all his fingers to fret from the top, but Thackerson, just a kid listening to it on the radio, assumed he only had his thumbs. “I said, ‘If he can take his thumb and play like that, I’ve got a couple more. I mean, the thumb’s gone, but I’ve got a couple more that are about the same size. I ought to be able to do something with it.’ So I did.”

It was not quite as simple as he makes it sound, however. For one thing, Thackerson had to create his own fingering to replace the standard technique. “What I’d have to do was memorize, which everybody does, every fret and finger that a person did with all of his fingers,” he explained. Then he would “transpose it to where I could do it with my nubs.” Like other skills, it got progressively more difficult as he advanced. “When you get into chords—’course, there’s seven major chords—when you get into some of ’em called bar chords, and it takes all four fingers, that gets pretty hectic sometimes.”

When Raymond returned home, he was so impressed with his little brother’s level of skill that rather than continuing to pressure him to play the Dobro, “he gave me his guitar and



Roy Thackerson’s “gut strap,” crafted by James Rushing of Ranger

went and bought him another one.” Thackerson practiced on that and on an electric guitar he borrowed from a friend. Eventually he was playing gigs all around the area.

“I always told ’em I was going to play on the Grand Ole Opry, and they said, ‘Yeah, we know you are,’” Thackerson said. He started out, however, playing the new rock ’n’ roll music that was sweeping the nation. His family was not enthusiastic at first. “We were kind of the black sheep of the family as long as we were playing that rock ’n’ roll,” Thackerson chuckled.

“Elvis Presley, when he played round up there in Abilene, I told him, I said, ‘Presley, if I couldn’t play the guitar any better than you can, without any fingers, I wouldn’t carry one out on the stage!’” Thackerson laughed. “He looked at me—he was a little taller than I was—he looked down at me and said, ‘I don’t have to.’ And he didn’t.” He grinned again. “All he had to do was get out there and twist.”

Acuff’s Guest

What Thackerson eventually would be known for, fiddle playing, did not begin until several years later, as he began to drift

away from rock 'n' roll after the introduction of synthesizers. "DeLeon Peach and Melon Festival used to have a fiddlers contest every year along with their other festivities," Thackerson remembered. "I said, 'Son, what are they doing over there?' Said they were playing in a fiddlers contest for money. I said, 'They're not playing but three tunes.'

"He said, 'They play a waltz, a breakdown and a tune of choice.'

"I said, 'I can play three tunes on anything.' That's where we

started and why we started playing the fiddle."

First, of course, he had to find a way to hold the fiddle up, level with his chin, while he pressed down on it from the top. Thus the "gut strap" was invented. Consisting of a leather strap, an L-shaped wooden piece and an elastic band, the "rigging" or "gut strap" fastens around Thackerson's waist and holds the fiddle up in the correct position. "Sam Herring, he made one of the first. That set us up to the microphone, and we took off." And take off he did. Before long, his skillful fiddling

caught the attention of country music legend Roy Acuff.

"Roy Acuff is what they call the king of country music," Thackerson reminded me. "He put me on as a guest, his guest, on his show, more times than I've got fingers and toes—and that's even if I had any!"

Thackerson was finally playing on the Grand Ole Opry, just as he'd always said he would. Through Acuff, "me and little brother went up there several times, played the Opry. And my son, Rich ... he got to play the Opry, rhythm guitar."

He certainly didn't take it for granted. "Mr. Acuff, he made my dreams come true," he said. In Nashville, Roy met and played with many different talented musicians and country legends. He considers it one of the highlights of his music career. "Nashville has been probably the most enlightening," he said. "Not necessarily the stars, as the musicians that make the stars." He considers himself blessed to have known so many good people and gifted musicians, saying over and over, "The Lord's been good to us."

Thackerson never made his living as a musician, but his day job was no less challenging for a man with only one handful of fingers. "I had to work cable television," he told me, "climb poles for a living, underneath the electric company—48 inches, most the time."

Normally risky work, it was downright dangerous for

Roy Thackerson fiddling on the cover of his CD "Fingerless Fiddler, Volume Three."



Thackerson. “There ain’t no holding on there,” he motioned to his missing fingers, “If I can’t hold on here,” pointing to another part of his hand, “I’m gone.”

Whatever You Got Between Your Ears

Thackerson is retired from the cable television business but not from his music career. “As of late, we’ve kind of got into the bluegrass end of it,” he said. Since teaching his wife, Donna, how to play rhythm guitar, the two perform together at shows and festivals regularly. Thackerson proves that success depends not on problems you were born with or setbacks you encounter in life, but on “whatever you got between your ears,” as he says.

“If you’re gonna do something and you set your mind to it and don’t deviate from it, you’re gonna learn to do it, whatever it takes,” he said, nodding emphatically. “I don’t care if it’s a mountain or a swamp to go through, you’re gonna figure out a way to do it.”

That doesn’t mean it will be easy. “You gotta do it every day,” he pointed out. “It’s not going to come to you; you gotta go to it. In fact, that’s what I tell kids. I say, ‘You need to practice. Practice ’til you wear your fingers down to a nub.’ ”

If you’re willing to do that, nothing can stop you. “You get it in your mind you’re gonna do something, I don’t see how anybody could not do something,” Thackerson exclaimed. “I don’t care what kind of deal they got.”

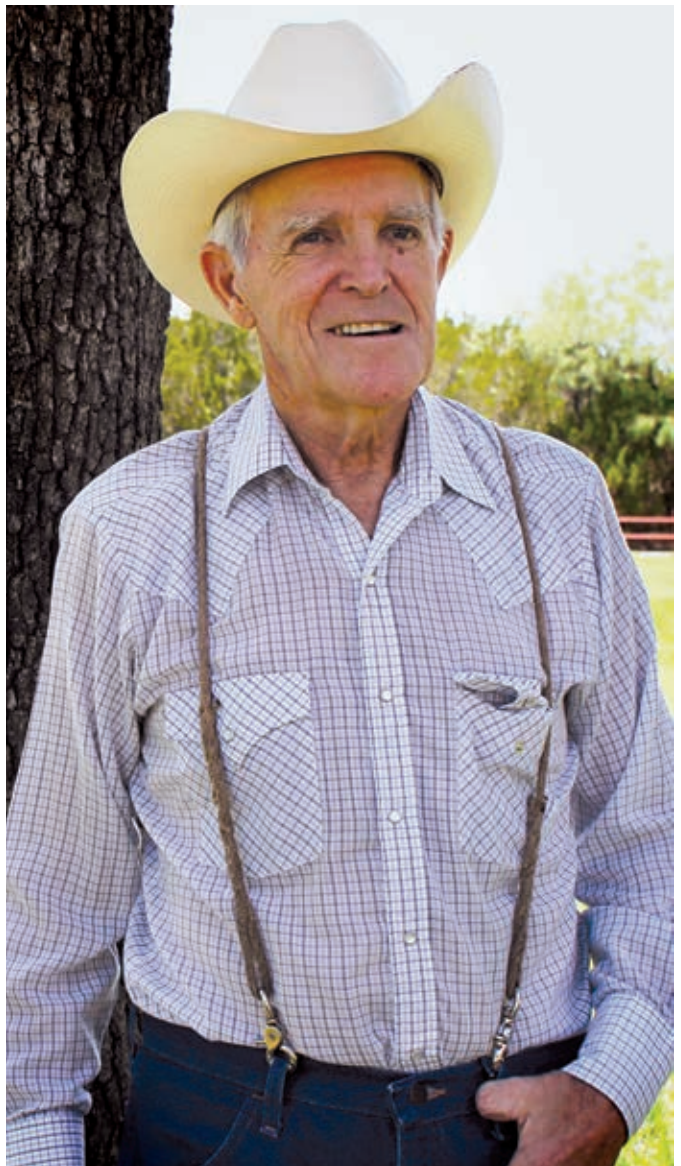
Thackerson knows that not only from his own experience but also from others he has inspired. “There was a championship fiddle player that played in the Grand Masters fiddlers contest,” he said. “He sawed his fingers into the ... saw, some-way. The doctors and everything put ’em back on there, but they wouldn’t bend in the right direction. He said, ‘If you can play that fiddle without any fingers, I can surely do it with these here.’

“He went back and he had ’em broke. The doctor actually broke the end of the fingers where they would bend down—and he won that Grand Masters fiddlers contest!”

He isn’t the only musician inspired by Thackerson. He remembers a little girl who was born without all her fingers—“She had a pretty good thumb and a piece of an index finger,” he said—who taught herself to play the fiddle after watching Thackerson. A young man from Oklahoma played with Bill Monroe but lost fingers in an accident at his work. “He said, ‘If that old man can do it without any fingers, I can do it with mine.’ And they proved themselves to be professionals.”

Occasionally, his injury brings about surprising results. Such was the case with one story he told involving a certain left-handed guitar. “There was an ol’ boy that had a over \$3,000 Martin left-handed guitar, brand new,” he said. “He’d ordered it from Martin. Took ’em years to build it. ‘Course I didn’t pay any attention to him being left-handed, but I said, ‘Glen, can I borrow your guitar?’ And, boy, he jumped that high, handed me that guitar.”

Thackerson immediately realized that it was not a standard guitar. “Soon as I sat down to play it, I seen that the bass



“If you’re going to get a picture of me, we’re going to put a hat on,” said Roy Thackerson outside his home in Ranger.

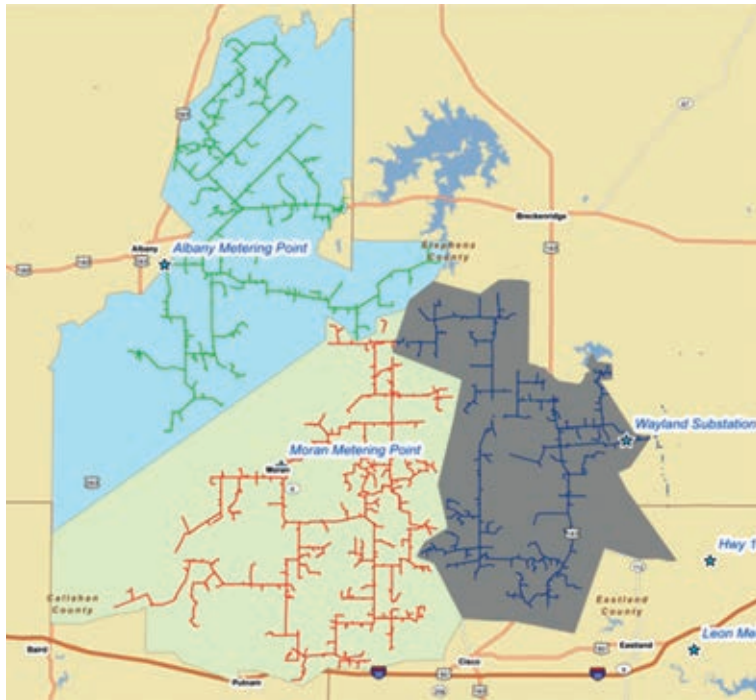
strings are on the bottom.” But, true to character, he figured out a way around that rather than handing the guitar back. He started picking out a song as if he played left-handed guitars every day.

“All I had to do was turn my nubs this-a-way,” he said, twisting his hand around to illustrate the point. The man who owned the guitar was shocked.

“He said, ‘Do you see [him] do that!?’ ” Thackerson laughed heartily. “He said, ‘I’ve handed that to a thousand people and nobody’s been able to play it!’ ”

Nobody but the Fingerless Fiddler, at least.

Roy Thackerson is in recovery from a recent heart surgery, but he knows he’ll be back playing his usual rounds soon. For more on this incredible musician, check him out on YouTube or go to fingerlessfiddler.com to learn when and where you can catch him live.



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Power Tip

Seal air leaks with weatherstripping and caulking, and be sure your house is properly insulated. This could save you up to 20 percent on heating and cooling bills while increasing home comfort.

CECA AMI 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 or will be replacing all of the meters in areas serviced out of the Albany and Moran metering points and the Wayland substation. These areas are depicted in the map above.

The installation of the new meters 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 through Texas Co-op Power about where crews are or will be working.

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



DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

BEGINS SUNDAY, MARCH 8. REMEMBER TO SPRING FORWARD!



Did You Know?

A 10-watt compact fluorescent lamp turned on for 100 hours would consume 1 kilowatt-hour of electricity.

A 100-watt incandescent lightbulb would consume the same amount of electricity in just 10 hours.

—National Geographic

Let's Go Paperless



Because of the extreme heat and cold we deal with here in Texas, keeping electric bills affordable is a high priority. CECA strives to offer the lowest price possible at the least practical cost, but we need your help to do that. You can help us keep your utility bill at a minimum by using our online bill pay and e-billing options.

When you sign up for e-billing, you:

- 1.** Help us keep costs at a minimum, thereby avoiding the need for a rate increase due to the rising cost of supplies and postage.
- 2.** Save paper and trees.
- 3.** Save time and money, thus simplifying your life.

When you go paperless, you are electing to receive your bill via email. Each month you will receive an email letting you know when your bill is ready, along with all the same information that would appear on your paper bill.

Concerned that you might need a paper copy of your bill at some time? No need to worry. By accessing your online account, you can print out a bill for any month you might need it, or you can contact CECA at the end of the year and receive a printout of your yearly bills—a much better option for your income tax reporting than the bulk of a year's worth of bills.

To sign up today, visit www.ceca.coop. Click on the Account Services tab below the green Pay Bill Online button. You will find the E-Notifications field in the My Account section of the customer portal. Simply click on E-Bill, select the account you want to switch, and choose E-Bill under Billing Method. (Note: If you have more than one meter, you must switch each one individually.)

If you have an iPhone, iPad or Android, why not go ahead and download our mobile app? Go to the App Store and type in Comanche Electric Cooperative and follow the download instructions. It's free and easy, and you can do everything with the mobile app that you can do online on your laptop or tablet—PLUS you can report outages.

For questions or problems, give us a call at 1-800-915-2533.



Manage your account online or with our new mobile app. It's fast, easy and convenient. Make the switch today.



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