

## ***GENTLEMEN... START YOUR BATTERIES, PLEASE!***

**A CART, CAR OR KART, BY ANY OTHER NAME WOULD BE AS FLEET ...**

**A** practical purchase of a golf cart for helping to manage his rural property in Edom ignited something in Tim Freeman that's as close to a passion as anything can get. Freeman, a transplant from Natchitoches, Louisiana, and his wife, Catherine, moved to East Texas in 2000. With this move, their new home had quite a bit more acreage than they'd previously been accustomed to. Noticing that many others with property tended to use golf carts for small chores and to just get around, Tim and Catherine decided to invest in one.

With this first golf cart acquisition and Tim's rather technical mind, it was not long before he began to tinker with, repair and modify his own cart. Simultaneously, he started thinking about ways that he could turn his irregular work schedule on the oil rigs as a computer technician into something more consistent. So, as he studied and expanded his knowledge of golf carts, he began to also perform repair work for others. Then, he began buying various models of used carts to refurbish and repair, then resell via word of mouth and Internet marketing channels. With his degree in business, expanded technical knowledge, growing reputation and an entrepreneurial spirit, it was not long before Tim decided to open his own business, specializing in golf cart repair and refurbishment, resale and rental. In 2002 his business, T-Dawg's Kuntry Karts was born in Edom.

Tim says his electric carts will fit the requirements for those who need a vehicle for light to intermediate duty, and they will do it for a lot cheaper than a gas-powered four-wheeler or sport-utility vehicle. Accordingly, cost savings is one of the biggest advantages in both ownership and maintenance of an electric cart, but another substantial benefit is the quiet ride.

"It all depends on what you plan to do with your cart as to how it should be configured," he adds. Tim takes care in building each cart to meet the demands a customer will put on it.

Depending on the intended purpose of the cart, Tim customizes by adding heavy-duty springs and different types of wheels, up-to-date electronics, and more powerful motors. For aesthetics, he also has many of his carts professionally painted, and even detailed. But, whatever the



**ABOVE:** Tim and Catherine Freeman pose on the showroom floor of T-Dawg's Kuntry Karts, where customized golf carts are built as workhorses, playthings and dependable mobile helpers.

**RIGHT:** A cherry-red golf cart with enhanced suspension and tires is but one example of a golf cart transformed into a just-about-anything-cart.

refurbish project, Tim says the very first thing he always does is replace the most important component in the cart, the batteries.

Another of his work philosophies is to use only original equipment manufacturer (OEM) parts. Tim says this is important because, "Any car I build I give a six-month warranty bumper-to-bumper." Also, he says, "I have a long test track, and all of my cars go through that track" before delivery. "They are trail-rated before they are sold."

Reliability in a cart, Tim says, is important for many reasons, but mostly so for those who rely on them for things other than recreation. He says he has many customers in farm and ranch settings who use these as workhorses, and if a cart goes down, some jobs won't get done. Also, he serves several physically disabled customers. "There are many people that count on them," he says. For that reason, and for all cart users, he relays some important tips.

Gasoline-powered carts, he says, work on the same prin-

ciples as other gas engines, and regular oil and filter changes will extend the life of the cart. Performing this little bit of maintenance, even once a year, he says, is extremely important and will stave off future and more expensive trouble. For electric cart owners, he says, golf cart batteries would rather be fully charged. Even batteries that are just sitting there will slowly discharge.

He also says that owners should keep an eye on the battery cables for corrosion, and, on occasion, they should be rinsed off. A golf cart, he says, won't run if there's a missing contact on even one of the six batteries. Also, he encourages owners to keep an eye on the water level in the batteries.

For those interested in owning their own cart, T-Dawg's specializes in sales and service of refurbished golf carts with attention to the big-three brands of Yamaha, Club Car and

he's clocked his racing cart—which by all outward appearances looks like any old golf cart—from zero to 72 mph in 9 seconds. He says it's just a matter of playing with the voltage and amperage, while the rest of us might say it's a matter of guts, too. But he's evidently not the only one with the need for golf-cart speed. Tim communes with several other like-minded individuals who belong to the National Golf Kart Racing Association, which supports the sport and holds national racing events.

"Enthusiasts such as myself compete against each other and the clock," Tim explains. Depending on which class a cart falls in, Tim explains, there are various safety precautions such as helmets, roll bars, safety harnesses, kill switches and even a full safety cage. After all, these racers are speeding down an eighth-mile track and crossing the finish line in times as fast as 6.9 seconds.

As daring as all of this might sound, Tim says, "The big-picture goal is that we are pushing the envelope of electrical technology." He equates "kart" racing to NASCAR and other sports where technological breakthroughs came about because of all the information sharing and trial and error on the track. Although golf cart racing is in its infancy, Tim believes it will someday influence advancements in battery technology.

"This is all about enhancing performance," he says. "That does not necessarily always equate to speed. It can be power and/or range."

With his hobby so integrated into his work, Tim stays on top of technological improvements and advancements. So it's no surprise that he's planning a research and development project that uses new maintenance-free batteries. Because these batteries have only been on the market a few years, he's going to use them in a project to give them what he calls "a fair test." He wants to be confident in the batteries' reliability and quality before using them in his carts. However, if they do work out,

he'll soon have some maintenance-free carts in his lineup.

Until then, buyers can get four general types of carts from Kuntry Karts: stock golf carts, light duty, hunting carts and tricked-out neighborhood cruisers that can get pretty fancy, including stereos, marine speakers, LED light kits and chrome tire rims. Tim's built a car for just about every purpose under the sun, including working, playing, just cruising, or racing.

While speedy on the track with his race car, or off the track with his repair services, Tim says, "I have never claimed to be fast, but I do claim to be good. If you want it fixed right, come to me."

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*Tim and Catherine Freeman are members of Wood County Electric Cooperative. For more information on T-Dawg's Kuntry Karts, e-mail: [tdawg@kuntrykarts.com](mailto:tdawg@kuntrykarts.com), call (903) 539-4621 or go to [www.kuntrykarts.com](http://www.kuntrykarts.com) to view cars for sale and also watch some racing.*



EZ-Go. Generally he has anywhere from 12 to 20 carts for sale. Tim also restores and customizes just about all types of carts for a multitude of uses, including mobility for seniors, regular everyday chores, hunting, and for work at company and industrial sites. And, not unexpectedly, he even outfits them for golf. What is surprising though, is that Tim says that only about 20 percent of his business is golf-related. And, maybe even a little more extraordinary—Tim himself doesn't even play golf.

What he does do as a hobby, though, is directly related to his enjoyment of mechanics and electrical technology, and his customization of golf carts into just-about-anything carts. In his younger years, Tim said, he'd always had a love for motorcycles, Jet Skis, and speed racing in general. So, he smilingly says, "It was inevitable that somebody like me would begin to experiment by adding voltage and amperage, to see how fast I could make a cart go."

How fast can he make a cart go, you ask? Well, to date,

# Members Suggested ... We Listened

*The results are a new computerized outage reporting system*

**D**oes everybody remember last winter? The employees of WCEC surely do, and we are not likely to forget it anytime soon. We shiver to remember those winter storms in February and April that were responsible for 8,000 and 12,000 WCEC member power outages, respectively. Obviously, with that many members affected across nine counties, both events left many members out of power for several days.

current repair status during large-scale outages and then report their outage.

WCEC did, in the past, have a computerized outage reporting system to enable members to input outage information with their phones, and it worked just fine. However, the number of simultaneous calls it could receive was extremely limited. Our updated system has the capability to immediately record outages with just

gested that members keep their number handy. But, if it's not close by, a phone number is the easy way to go. That's why it's important for members to call us if they've had a phone number change. The computer can only find an association with a member if their phone number is in our system. To ensure successful use of the outage-reporting system, a member should call the cooperative to update with current numbers. Don't wait until a power outage to discover that this easy and effective tool won't work for you.

Another great feature of the system is that members can request a call back that tells them their power has been restored. Members can even input a number to be called back, so if they're not at their primary number, they'll be notified of power restoration. This feature is also important for another reason. In a very few cases, WCEC workers may believe power has been restored to an entire region. However, one or two services might have isolated issues that have left them without power. In this event, the callback option notifies the member that WCEC believes that power has been restored at the location. If that is not the case, the member then knows to call the cooperative again.

This system is simply a tool to help members give and get information during times of large-scale power outages. It does not replace our member services staff but is intended to allow en masse reporting when the need arises. For day-to-day business, it's operations as usual, and members should continue to call the regular phone number at (903) 763-2203. They can also drop us a line at [info@wcec.org](mailto:info@wcec.org).



While our members were understanding of the challenges and hard work needed to restore all power, there was one universal frustration expressed: the inability to report their outage or even get progress reports because the local phone hubs and/or WCEC's phones were continuously busy.

We heard you. We know our members want better communication during a major event, and we've come up with a solution. We have implemented a tool that allows us to handle virtually unlimited calls simultaneously. Members can now call our additional toll-free outage reporting line to hear the

a few phone button pushes. This system will "recognize" members by their account numbers or the primary phone numbers they have listed with us. Additionally, it's hosted outside of our rural phone hub, so we've circumvented the very limited capacity that was previously available to us.

It's important to know that this system associates a member with the records that we have on file. It "recognizes" members by their account numbers or their phone numbers. Naturally, most members don't remember their account number off the top of the head; so if using that option, it's sug-

**WCEC POWER OUTAGE HOTLINE  
1-866-415-2951**

**Save this toll-free number.** It's a tool for members to report an outage any time and will also have pertinent news when outages are large in scale. Before calling, have your account number or the telephone number on file at WCEC handy.



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