



R.T. BRIDGES MANS THE WHEEL OF HIS PRISTINELY RESTORED '57 CHEVY, AS FRIEND AND QUITMAN DAIRY QUEEN OWNER SHERRY DUPRE ENJOYS THE PASSENGER SEAT.

For Some in the Class of '57, **DREAMS DO COME TRUE. TWICE.**

The 1940s were a decade of paradoxes, bringing forth both a war and rationing. But it was also a decade of great technological advances, useful inventions and frivolous marvels like the Slinky, Velcro, Frisbee, Tupperware, microwave ovens and the Jeep. The year that kicked off that decade, 1940, was also the year that R.T. Bridges was born in Quitman to Lila and Robert Bridges as the younger brother of Herschell. Lucky R.T.—to be born in the '40s also meant that if you applied yourself to your schoolwork, you might just get to be a graduate of the class of '57.

R.T. was one of those students who did readily apply himself, even advancing grades to graduate with the class of '57 at the ripe old age of 16. After graduation, R.T. stayed around Quitman for a while, working on farms and at a local service station, biding his time until he turned 18. Then, on the eve of his 18th birthday, he went to Dallas for a job interview. The interview was successful, and he began working that very day catering at Dallas Love Field for the same company that employed Herschell and his cousin, who were already working in management. R.T. said it was a pretty happy arrangement. His job was to manage the stockroom and handle the purchasing supplies of food for commercial airplanes. (Remember when food was served on planes?)

It was about a year later that R.T.'s life took a detour with the unexpected death of his father. R.T. left his job in Dallas to return to Quitman to assist his mother. Once she settled, R.T. returned to Dallas, this time to work for a paper company. With his new job, it wasn't long before he made one of his own dreams come true by becoming the proud owner of a larkspur blue 1957 Chevy Bel Air convertible. Along with two of his friends who also owned '57 Chevys, he glibly named them Flip-top One, Flip-top Two and Flip-top Three. They proceeded to cruise the avenues and boulevards and visit the drive-in diners.

As life progressed, R.T. eventually sold his '57 Chevy and, in the late 1960s, made a move back to his hometown of Quitman because he wanted his daughter, Tanya, to be raised in the same wonderful small-town atmosphere he had enjoyed. After returning home to Quitman, R.T. worked in the paper industry in both Tyler and Longview for 21 years. Later, he spent 14 years in his second career working as the city secretary/manager for the City of Quitman. Along with all of these responsibilities, R.T. was also active in many church and civic organizations, such as the Kiwanis, and served on the boards of the Quitman Library, Carroll Green Civic Center and the Quitman High School Former Students Association. He was also instrumental in

organizing the all-class reunion for Quitman High School.

R.T. has always stayed busy, but he says he never forgot about that first car. He said, “Even though I’ve owned several convertibles since then, I never did forget that car.” He adding, “It’s probably more about the feeling than anything. I like old houses, old furniture and old cars. They are a reflection upon a time when things were a little less complicated. There is a peace about them.”

He said he values the craftsmanship and quality construction that was a hallmark of that time. But he is also very quick to say, “Don’t get me wrong. I like all of the modern conveniences, too!”

In the early 1990s, he made his dream come true again. He bought another ’57 Chevy convertible in Houston, sending it to Dallas to be restored and painted a brilliant matador red. If this car is a testament to R.T.’s attention to detail, he gets a top score in that regard. Since he’s owned this car, he’s brought home ribbons, awards and trophies in numerous car shows. He says he’s enjoyed every minute of the camaraderie and attention his car brings, and he also enjoys seeing other collectors’ cars. So it was only natural that he and another Quitman resident, Ben Hinds, began talking about having a cruise night in Quitman. This led to venue discussions with Sherry Dupre, owner of the local Dairy Queen, who agreed to host the first cruise-in.

The first event was so successful that it led to a second the next month, at which time R.T., with clipboard in hand, gathered contact information from those interested in starting a local car club. He was amazed at the number of names he gathered. The first meeting was set, and over 50 people showed up.

Since that first meeting in January 2010, when the Lake Country Classics Car Club was formed and R.T. became its first president, the membership has grown to encompass more than 60 families, representing more than 100 cars. Memberships are not expensive—only \$25 a year, which includes all members of an immediate family.

“It’s a family-based club, and we do not permit anything at our events that would be detrimental to a family atmosphere,” R.T. emphasizes.

The club meets on the third Monday of each month at 6 p.m. at Oak Ridge Marina Restaurant on Lake Fork. They meet to enjoy dinner and car talk, followed by a business meeting. Also, from March through the fourth Thursday in August, the good times roll at the Quitman Dairy Queen, where the hottest cars and the coolest treats meet for a cruise-in, and a People’s Choice Award is always

given. At that event there is always a four-wheeled head-turner or two, like the club’s current president Ted Shock’s 1929 Plymouth or Larry Barnes’ 1940-model Chevy coupe roadster that has won numerous awards. There was even one evening when a club member showed up in his early-1950s Ford once owned by Elvis Presley.

These regular meetings are always fun, but they are just the precursors for all of the other formal and informal events the club supports. Members participate in various car shows and local parades, often with one of the club’s cars carrying the local festival princesses. R.T. says the club is also working to support charity events, with plans to visit an assisted-living facility and to give scholarships to youth who want to further their education in the automotive field.

The club also held a fish fry late last year for all members and their families. To enhance future events, the club is in the process of purchasing canopy tents, which will serve as resting spots and give visibility.

Last September, with the club still in its first year, it hosted its first car show, Classics in the Park, where there were more than 100 cars judged at Governor Jim Hogg City Park in Quitman. In addition to the car show, there was entertainment by Dale Cummings “The C,” and the Arboretum and Botanical Gardens and Stinson House were open for tours. There were several food vendors as well. And the second annual show is already shaping up to be bigger and better, R.T. says. It will be held on September 10 at Governor Jim Hogg City Park.

R.T. encourages anyone with an interest in cars and trucks—particularly vintage, classic and muscle cars and street rods—to come out to one of the meetings or to stop by one of the cruise-ins at Dairy Queen. “They don’t have to own an old car to belong to our group,” he says. “They just need to enjoy looking at them and talking about them. It’s a lot of good fun and good fellowship.”

As the song goes, “The class of ’57 had its dreams.” And even if you aren’t lucky enough to be from the class of ’57, with a little bit of elbow-rubbing with the members of the Lake Country Classic Car Club, who knows? You may make your own dream of owning a GTO, Thunderbird or that Little Deuce Coupe come true. Or, at least, you will enjoy talking about them.

To learn more about the Lake Country Classics Car Club or its cruise nights, visit their website at www.lakecountryclassics.com or contact R.T. Bridges at lostn50s@hotmail.com or (903) 763-4437.

BELOW, FROM TOP: THE INTERIOR OF R.T.’S CAR IS OUTFITTED WITH ALL OF THE ‘MODERN CONVENIENCES’ OF THE DAY, RIGHT DOWN TO THE STAINLESS STEEL TISSUE BOX. THE CLASSIC PROFILE OF A TRUE AMERICAN BEAUTY.



East Texas Rural Electric Youth Seminar

Free Weeklong Leadership Camp!

WCEC is sponsoring, all expenses paid, 10 high school sophomores and juniors on a weeklong leadership camp, the East Texas Rural Electric Youth Seminar (ETREYS).



The purpose of this camp is to enhance leadership and problem-solving skills in a positive learning environment on a college campus. ETREYS was also developed to promote leadership skills and the cooperative philosophy, ideals and values among young people.

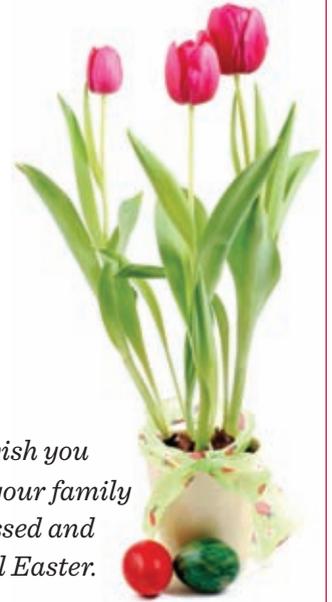
The program consists of a week of workshops, seminars and peer-group activities. Participants meet and learn from outstanding motivational speakers and participate in planned activities developed to promote team building. The program is sponsored by nine East Texas electric cooperatives, and about 125 high school students from across East Texas attend.

ETREYS 2011 is planned for Monday, June 27, through Friday, July 1, and will be held on the campus of Lon Morris College in Jacksonville. Transportation to and from the college for WCEC's 10 delegates will be provided by the cooperative. Parents or guardians will be responsible for dropping off the delegates at WCEC in Quitman.

In addition to developing skills for a lifetime, all participants in ETREYS will be eligible to compete

for various college scholarships. To apply, download the application at: www.wcec.org/community/programs.html.

HAPPY EASTER



We wish you and your family a blessed and joyful Easter.

WOOD COUNTY EC



Did You Know ...

Electric co-ops serve an average of seven consumers per mile of line and collect an annual revenue of approximately \$10,565 per mile of line, while investor-owned utilities average 35 customers per mile of line and collect \$62,665 per mile of line.

ILLUSTRATION BY CARL WIENS



© 2011 PHOTOS.COM

Don't let a thief into your home, even if he or she is disguised as a friendly contractor offering you a great deal. Take the time to check licensing at www.tdlr.state.tx.us and with the Better Business Bureau before paying anything.

Warm Weather Brings Out Scammers

Wood County Electric Cooperative will never send anyone to your house to ask you if you need work done. And when someone does come for a legitimate reason, you'll see a uniform, a truck with the cooperative's logo on it and valid identification.

Springtime is scam season. Don't be surprised if you get telephone calls, uninvited visitors looking for work and loads of door hangers offering landscaping, roofing, painting and home-repair services.

Your best bet: Say no to all of them. If you need work done around your house, visit www.tdlr.state.tx.us (Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation) or join a contractor referral network that recommends only contractors who are licensed, insured, bonded and experienced.

A few other tips:

- Be wary of contractors with out-of-state license plates or detachable, magnetic company signs on their trucks. These could be "travelers" who follow the warm weather from state to state and hire themselves out as home-improvement contractors. They're almost always unlicensed in your state, and if you discover a problem with their work later, they'll be long gone.

- When you find a contractor you think is trustworthy, you still should not pay in cash or pay up front. Instead, work out a payment schedule that allows you to pay in increments as the work is completed.

- Get bids from three reputable companies before you start. If you get one offer that's way lower than the other two, something is probably amiss.

- Don't fall for these two lines: "I just finished a job at your neighbor's house, and I'll give you a good price if you hire me today because I'm already in the neighborhood," or "I have leftover materials from a job I just did and I'll sell/install them here for a deep discount because I don't need them."

Hiring contractors can be expensive. Don't waste your money on one who's not licensed and legitimate.

LEGAL NOTICE

Tariff Change to Distributed Generation Rates

The Board of Directors ("Board") of Wood County Electric Cooperative, Inc., ("WCEC") passed a resolution on February 21, 2011, approving proposed revisions to the WCEC Tariff ("Tariff") entitled, "Distributed Generation of 3 MW or Less," and the Customer Generation Procedures & Guidelines Manual for Members. The revisions changed the rates for interconnection of qualified member-owned generation, commonly called distributed generation (DG). DG systems are small-scale power generation systems, typically in the range of 3 kW to 10,000 kW.

The revision reduces the monthly customer charge for 25 kW and smaller units from \$15 per meter installation to \$7 per meter installation. Additionally, the cooperative shall purchase power from the customer at the cooperative's avoided cost of purchased power.

These revisions are in compliance with the Federal Public Utility Regulatory Act of 1999 ("PURPA") standards regarding equitable rates for consumers.

Revision to the Tariff will become effective on Sunday, May 1, 2011, and be retroactive from January 1, 2011. A copy of the proposed revision to the Tariff will be available for inspection at WCEC headquarters, 501 S. Main Street, Quitman 75783, or on the WCEC website at www.wcec.org.

WCEC is a consumer-owned cooperative, exempt from rate regulation under provisions of Sections 41.004 and 41.052(b) of PURPA and therefore may change its rates, adopting a Board resolution approving the change and providing notice to all members.