



FROM TOP: Daphne and Gary Hatcher, owners of Pine Mills Pottery, have built an art-seeker's destination in the midst of the East Texas woodlands. The modern showroom of Pine Mills Gallery contrasts with the fact that while excavating for a pond in the 1980s, the Hatchers discovered that the property had been the site of a Civil War-era pottery kiln.

The Potters' Marks

“To a lot of people, it’s a very utopian thing that we do. Because of that, we’ve become a destination spot,” says Daphne Hatcher, one half of the artist duo in residence at Pine Mills Pottery.

The other half, co-founder and ceramic artist Gary Hatcher, says about their business and art in general, “We moved out here to a rural area because we were idealists. To be successful, there is a point where idealism and reality must converge.” Case in point: The proof of the Hatchers’ own success is paved in the reality of solid preparation.

As Gary and Daphne explain how they built their successful business in the community of Pine Mills, near Mineola, they give credit to some luck and good timing. But they also recognize the most critical component of their success lies in the fact that they were well trained, so they were ready when they met opportunity.

The Dallasites grew up going to the same elementary and high schools. They knew “of” each other but weren’t friends. A chance meeting at North Texas State University (now the University of North Texas), where Daphne was attending as an art major, and Gary had transferred to study philosophy and psychology, changed that. Between classes one day, Daphne heard someone call her name. It was Gary. Three months later they were married. Gary also changed majors, joining Daphne in art study after he experienced an elective ceramics course.

Fast-forwarding to their 1976 graduation, they both earned bachelor’s degrees in fine arts. Gary’s was concentrated in ceramics and Daphne’s in 3-D fiber art and sculpture.

Daphne says, “Gary is a very directed, focused and goal-oriented person.” He wanted to go to Devon, England, to hone his skills through an apprenticeship with brothers David and Michael Leach, who each operated their own pottery studios, Yelland Pottery and Lowerdown Pottery. Once there, Gary set about his apprenticeship, and Daphne visited weavers with the idea of setting up her own apprenticeship. The fiber artists, she says, were all helpful, but she quickly found that weaving is such a solitary art, none could use an apprentice. However, one generous weaver lent Daphne a loom, and she set it up in their room above the pottery studio where Gary was apprenticing.

Daphne would spend her days working alone, hearing the camaraderie and laughter bubbling up from the studio below.

At daily tea time, she’d join Gary and the other potters. Eventually Gary had progressed to the point where he was to study at another pottery studio in England, and Daphne decided she’d come home to the States to wait for Gary. But Michael Leach offered Daphne a job in the studio, and then, when an apprenticeship spot opened, he awarded it to her. Thus began her journey into ceramics, which was quite different from her own, or even Gary’s, previous training.

In college, classes were more about individualism and freedom of expression. Artists were encouraged to be unique and

find their own style. In an apprenticeship, the training is extremely rigid. The master potter defines the strict parameters for the exact size each item should be made.

Although an apprentice makes pots, bowls, cups and other items that will be marked with the pottery’s name, the designs are not their own. They are meant to be exact replicas of the master potter’s designs.

For a workday at the studio, there would be a chalkboard with a list of the items that needed to be made for inventory. Based on an apprentice’s skill level, they would pick an item and reproduce it to exact standards. Each item had a specific

weight, dimension and wall thickness. The measurements of the apprentice-produced pieces were required to be within 1/8 inch of these specifications. The potter would inspect all of the items at the end of the day, and those that were off would be rejected and reduced to the clay bin.

Because Gary had formal ceramics training, he was proficient at throwing on the wheel, so he began his apprenticeship making pitchers, which are a complex form with curvatures and a spout and handle. Daphne, on the other hand, had never thrown on the wheel. Her first task was to make a small and very plain cylindrical vessel with straight edges. She says she had many rejections before she learned to make the clay do exactly what she wanted. Once she mastered that simplest of vessels, she was “promoted” to making a child’s small drinking mug with a handle. Then she progressed, with each form becoming more complex.

For a period, while Daphne continued her apprenticeship at



Gary throws all of his pieces on the wheel in a precise and measured way to produce uniform and balanced pieces.



Yelland Pottery in North Devon, Gary furthered his studies working at Lowerdown Pottery with David Leach in South Devon. From there the two of them continued on together, working in potteries in France and Greece.

During the time they were in Europe, the Hatchers became entrenched in the ceramics community, visiting other pottery studios. They would participate in big projects like building a kiln (a large ceramics oven). They also participated in “firings”—the process of heating the clay objects in the kiln to transform them from soft clay into hard, finished ceramics. All of these experiences served to inform their eventual body of work.

When they returned to the United States, they knew they wanted to open their own pottery studio. They also knew that they wanted to fire with wood as opposed to some other fuel. Wood firing produces an ash that enhances the surface and glaze of ceramics, unlike that of other types of kilns. They began looking for property in wooded areas that would give them ready access to the fuel they would need in abundance. Travel took them up and down the East Coast, but eventually they decided to settle closer to home.

They took jobs in Dallas and moved in with Daphne’s parents to save up for the land where their studio stands today. That property consisted of 2.7 acres and a 1927 Sears catalog house that was built for the schoolmaster of the day. By the time they bought the property and moved in 1979, the Hatcher family had become a family of three, with the addition of their baby boy, Gabriel.

The Gallery at Pine Mills is filled with beautiful and useful handmade pottery, ranging from full dinnerware sets to platters, bowls and art pieces.

Once set up, the two artists began making pots in two rooms of their house. When they felt they had enough to show, they attended their first trade fair. And that’s where luck and preparation first converged. They met a restaurateur with a concept for an “arty” salad bar to be outfitted with varied handmade pottery. The entrepreneur had met with many potters previously, and none of them had the ability to replicate, to exacting sizes, the volume of crocks, bowls and plates that would be needed. But thanks to their apprenticeships, the Hatchers were prepared “to make the clay go exactly where needed,” to meticulous standards. If they needed to produce a pint-sized crock over and over, they could do that.



Daphne uses the slab method and hand-molded elements inspired by nature.

The restaurant chain eventually was franchised and saw phenomenal growth—from one to 115 stores in a matter of four years. Moreover, the franchise agreement had defined Pine Mills Pottery

as the only source for the volumes of pottery needed for each store. In the four years that the restaurant chain grew, this work eventually overtook every aspect of Pine Mills Pottery.

To meet demand, the Hatcher family hired others, which put Daphne and Gary in managerial roles they say they did not relish. They also did not like others making their forms. This all-consuming work had also taken them away from their artistry. So, although grateful for the past opportunity, when the

restaurant chain announced bankruptcy, the Hatchers say they were relieved to re-envision their pottery business.

They found themselves at square one for customers. But, thanks to the restaurant work, they were starting over with many more resources than they began with. They had built a kiln and the buildings to support the past high volume. Although the pottery was somewhat repetitious, the restaurant allowed the couple freedom to decorate and glaze the pots in any way they wanted. So the four years of making all of those vessels had allowed the two potters a wealth of experimentation with glazes, while helping to satisfy a small creative outlet. Those very glaze tests resulted in the perfection of the rich color palette that is a hallmark and signature of Pine Mills Pottery studio today.

Once the studio was back to just the two of them, the Hatchers began creating works and attending fairs, shows and exhibits, and their client list and acclaim began to build. Media coverage followed, which led to Gary's being contacted by the University of Texas at Tyler to fill in for a semester for an art instructor who had fallen ill.

That job morphed into a yearlong lecturer's position, eventual tenure, and a chair position where Gary designed the entire art curriculum and grew the art department from 10 majors to 150. He also oversaw the building of an \$11 million fine arts complex that boasts four degree programs. He's since stepped down as chair to return to more creative pursuits, but is still engaged in teaching a full load.

As Gary spent more time at the university, Daphne concentrated on managing Pine Mills Pottery, taking responsibility for all bookkeeping, customer interface, marketing and customer databases, and growing their customer lists to more than 3,000. Today their studio boasts customers from all over the world, and more than 95 percent of what they sell is sold from their showroom and gallery in Pine Mills.

They've worked together for more than 40 years, but Gary and Daphne remain two distinct artists, each with their own style, process and outcomes. Gary throws all of his pieces on the wheel in a precise and measured way, while Daphne gravitates toward the slab method, with hand-molded elements inspired by nature. They each produce, finish and mark their pieces with their own "seal" and the Pine Mills Pottery stamp. They coproduce the precision dinnerware, with Gary making the pieces and Daphne glazing them. Together, they fire all the pieces in their wood-fueled Bourry Box Kiln, a days-long, labor-intensive process that requires hand-stoking the fire.

"We wanted to do something real and grounding," Daphne says. "We wanted to make things you can't get anywhere else. We have followed our inspiration to reach this spot."

"In terms of other potters, we had great training," Gary says. "But we made a lot of good decisions, too. The thing about

being an artist is you must marry the creative urge with something practical. You can't just make anything that nobody wants. Your art must be sustaining."

Gary was recently awarded the UT Tyler B.J. Dub and Riter Professorship for research and study related to Mingei, which is a Japanese term for "art of the people." In April, the Hatchers also will be participating in a two-day exhibit and lecture at the



Lotus Shop of the Crow Collection of Asian Art in Dallas. And they will continue their years-long tradition of participating in the Dallas Pottery Invitational in Addison, April 17-19, as well as the Texas Clay Festival in Gruene the last week of October.

Greenware, which is unfired pottery, awaits the final touches before being placed in the kiln for firing.

Hard work and planning were a big part of their success, but the Hatchers also credit those who helped them along the way. "People have been very generous with us," Daphne says. "Our mentors paved the way for us to be successful. We are now at a time in our lives where we want to return that."

As a destination spot for shoppers, the Hatchers welcome visitors to the showroom while recommending that they call ahead for a loose appointment to ensure that someone is available. For visitors who want to experience an extended bit of Pine Mills utopia, the Hatchers can help with that, too. Collectors, birders, naturalists or those just seeking a woodland rest can now rent a fully furnished two-bedroom cottage next door to Pine Mills Pottery, called Peace and Quiet Cottage. It's artfully decorated with original artworks and, of course, many items from Pine Mills Pottery.

The Hatchers have been members of Wood County Electric Cooperative since 1979. The gallery is located at 5155 FM 49 in Mineola, and the phone number is (903) 857-2271. You can learn more about the Hatchers and Pine Mills Pottery at pinemills.com. For information about the cottage rental, visit peaceandquietcottage.com.

Paying the Price of Power Theft

IT'S OFTEN AN "INVISIBLE" CRIME: Someone illegally hooks into a power supply, hooks up a line that has been disconnected, or tampers with a meter to avoid recording electricity use. Legitimate electricity consumers do not engage in these behaviors, so the impact of electricity theft—including the danger—is frequently unrecognized.

Power theft carries deadly risks. Many thieves pay for the power they steal with their lives. Electricity theft is not just dangerous for those who steal. If you are on the same power line as someone who steals electricity, you could pay the cost for their theft, too. The power line could become overloaded with electric energy, which could harm your electronics and appliances that are designed to receive a certain, steady amount of electricity.

Electricity theft makes power service less reliable and lower quality for paying customers.

Electricity thieves may also unknowingly feed energy back into the power line. This is dangerous for linemen who may assume that the line they are working on is de-energized.

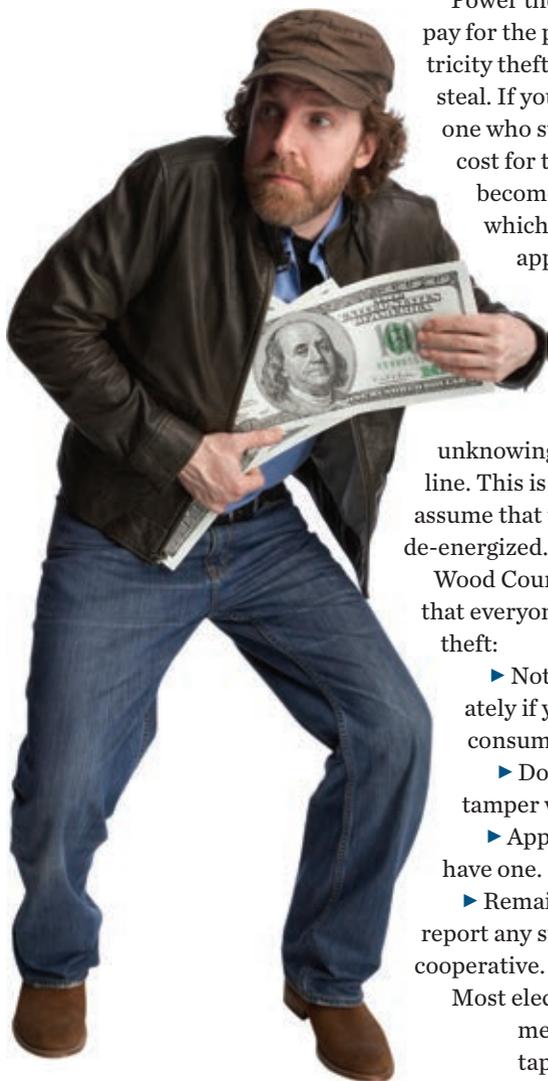
Wood County Electric Cooperative reminds you that everyone can help prevent and reduce power theft:

- ▶ Notify your electric cooperative immediately if you know of an illegally connected consumer.
- ▶ Do not cut the seal on your meter base or tamper with your own meter for any reason.
- ▶ Apply for a legal connection if you do not have one.
- ▶ Remain aware of your surroundings and report any suspicious activities to your electric cooperative.

Most electrical theft crimes occur through meter tampering, bypassing meters and tapping power lines. Other less frequent crimes include tapping into neighboring premises, using illegal lines after being disconnected, self-reconnection without consent and electrifying fences. Possessing fraudulent electricity bills is also a federal crime and is punishable by law.

Everyone is affected by power theft, and detecting and reporting illegal activity will help reduce the price that everyone pays.

—SafeElectricity



Electricity thieves are not just stealing from your cooperative. As co-owners of the co-op, they're stealing from all our members, too.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



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Cranberry-Orange Pork Roast

- 1 boneless pork loin roast (2½–3 pounds)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 can whole-berry cranberry sauce (14 ounces)
- ½ cup orange marmalade
- ¼ cup honey
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg

1. Cut roast in half and place in slow cooker. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.
2. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over roast.
3. Cover and cook on low 4 to 5 hours. Let stand 10 minutes before slicing.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 4 ounces. Per serving: 343 calories, 22.7 g protein, 14.3 g fat, 27.6 g carbohydrates, 0.5 g dietary fiber, 161 mg sodium, 68 mg cholesterol

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Legal Notice

THE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE of Wood County Electric Cooperative will meet at the cooperative office at 501 S. Main St. in Quitman at least 40 days prior to the annual meeting. The committee is composed of the following members:

Carolyn Bryant
201 E. Oak St.
Yantis 75497

Clarence Meiske
1547 FM 2659
Hawkins 75765

Judy Peoples
1646 VZ CR 1222
Grand Saline 75140

Willie Cicero
1010 State Hwy. 64
Ben Wheeler 75754

Glenn E. Morris
268 FM 900E
Mount Vernon 75457

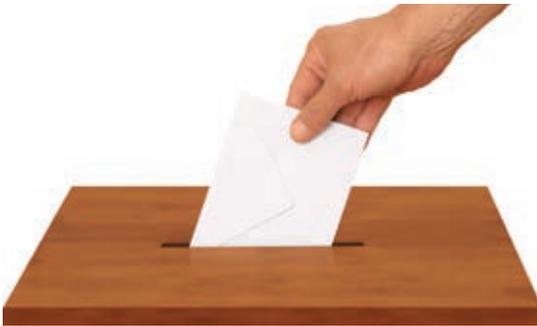
Dr. Beverly Waddleton
P.O. Box 996
Quitman 75783

James D. (Jimmy) Hamm
583 CR 4815
Winnsboro 75494

Nomination and election of directors is defined in Article V, Section 3 of the WCEC bylaws. Copies of the bylaws are available upon request by calling the cooperative at (903) 763-2203, or online at wcec.org.

The Elections Committee shall make nominations for directors for Districts 1 and 4. Directors whose terms are expiring are: Pat Lindley, District 1, and Brent Glenn, District 4.

The Annual Meeting of Wood County Electric Cooperative will be 2 p.m., October 9, at Gov. Jim Hogg Park, 101 Governor Hogg Parkway in Quitman.



DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

BEGINS SUNDAY,
MARCH 8. REMEMBER TO
SPRING FORWARD!



Wood County Electric Cooperative

501 S. Main St. • P.O. Box 1827
Quitman, TX 75783

CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Debbie Robinson

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Dennis Wright, Vice President, *District 3*
Lewis D. Young, Secretary-Treasurer, *District 7*
Burke Bullock, *District 2*
Brent Glenn, *District 4*
Jane Roberson, *District 6*
Cathy S. Roberts, *District 5*

MEMBER BENEFITS AND SERVICES

- Online account access and bill payment
- Paperless E-Bill services
- Free bill-paying app
- Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover accepted
- SmartPower prepay electric system
- Scholarships and youth programs
- Safety and energy conservation programs

MOBILE CONVENIENCE CENTER

Monday, First Methodist Church, *Van*
Tuesday, Family Dollar, *Mount Vernon*
Wednesday, City National Bank, *Hawkins*
Thursday, Brookshire's, *Winnsboro*
Friday, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*



Contact Us

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info@wcec.org

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1-866-415-2951

FIND US ON THE WEB
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