

Wednesday's

Editorials, Columns & Letters

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Paper 'n Ink... foodies despair...

By Lynn Brisendine
Thanksgiving is a time to reflect and give thanks. But, and it's a good thing, this holiday is known for its feast.
Baked, smoked, fried, anyway you wish to cook a turkey makes for a great dinner. Throw in some of my mother's, and now my wife's, cornbread dressing, add a little giblet gravy and I am looking forward to the holiday with eagerness.
Food is in the news, maybe as never before in some regards. Being a "foodie" has suddenly come into the fore. Clubs are springing up across the country where people join to share recipes, and pair wine with whatever is placed in a plate before them.

Television channels are filled with so many different cooking shows that you can, if you wish, watch how the pro chefs fix differing foods 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
Many of these shows feature chefs competing against each other in timed contests using selected ingredients. At times the judges, or tasters, are critical to such an extent as to be mean.

Other shows spread out over the dial see the hosts take the audience to different locations in this country and many times across the globe. Some of the foods featured aren't at all typical to West Texas and at times watching someone cook and eat various dishes is simply too much and the only option is to turn the channel.

We have different food items for different times of the year. Thanksgiving is so traditional that the turkey, maybe a ham, some dressing, a little cranberry sauce, a nice green bean casserole is finished off with a slice of pumpkin pie slathered with a large dollop of whipped cream.

At other times, say in the summer at a ballgame, the fare usually consists of hot dogs, french fries and a cold drink. But, even these traditions are changeable these days. A trip to the ballpark can find a wide selection of foods, from the simple dog on a bun with mustard to a diners delight featuring a several course meal to be eaten in a fancy suite dining room featuring white tablecloths and huge windows to watch the action on the field.

Foods are, it seems, always in the news. This past week we found out that a bakery in the DFW area was going bankrupt and, in the doing, some old-time treats may leave grocery shelves.

The bad news told us that Twinkies were going to be a thing of the past. This news was so played up that I actually had a moment where I craved one of the little cakes filled with a special cream. I said nearly craved. I sat watching this turmoil over the possibility of no more Twinkies and tried to recall the last time I actually ate one. Years floated by in my head and I honestly think

it's been decades since I ate one these mini cakes.

Somewhere, way back when, I took the criticism of these cakes to heart and decided that eating them was not the best choice. Perhaps it was one TV talking head, years back, that said if this country should ever face a doomsday nuclear attack, the only survivors would be cockroaches and Twinkies.

This bakery also produced American snack staples like Ding Dongs, Snowballs, and Wonder Bread. The first two in that list are filled with fat, sugar and artificial stuff that is both unpronounceable and hard to digest.

Of course, the demise of these food items is not welcome news. Apparently this, from the myriad reports concerning these treats over the last week, sees 18,000 people losing their employment. Goodness, I had no idea that such a number of people made their livings by making these gastronomic no-nos.

Talk, of late, is that some Mexican billionaire is considering buying the recipes and the equipment and moving the business to Mexico.

Whatever, I wish him luck, but he shouldn't count on seeing any of my money. That craving I mentioned earlier lasted only a few moments and I realized that I wasn't going to miss something I hadn't eaten in many years anyway.

But then, like so much of what takes place in today's reality, my opinion and my lack of interest in Twinkies, Ding Dongs, Snowballs and Wonder bread isn't going to make any difference.

However, one interview about this situation got my attention. The folks at the State Fair are worried that they will not be able to serve one of their epicurean delights, deep fried Twinkies. I never ate one of them either, but now...well they've got me really wanting one of the, probably, worst things you could ever eat.

Back to this Thanksgiving and all it stands for in our national tradition.
So much to be thankful for this special day in 2012. Just being an American is reason enough to say a special prayer on this Thanksgiving Day.

You and I, though, can also be grateful for being Texans, and as far as I'm concerned being a West Texan is even more reason to say thanks.
I suppose every person who enjoys living wherever that might be, mostly likes their home area and thinks themselves fortunate in the doing.

Living on the high plains has advantages. No one is lobbing missiles indiscriminately at us. We live in a land of plenty and many of us will eat too much and then retire to a couch and watch the football games. What a life...

Happy Thanksgiving.



State Capital Highlights

Compiled by Ed Sterling, Texas Press Association

Perry says no to creation of health care exchanges

AUSTIN — Nov. 16 was the deadline for Texas and the other states to declare their intentions regarding the formation of health care exchanges, as set forth in the federal "Affordable Care" law, referred to by some as "Obama Care."

Gov. Rick Perry's declaration came in the form of a Nov. 15 letter to U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

"As long as the federal government has the ability to force unknown mandates and costs upon our citizens, while retaining the sole power in approving what an exchange looks like, the notion of a state exchange is merely an illusion," Perry wrote, adding, "It would not be fiscally responsible to put hard-working Texans on the financial hook for an unknown amount of money to operate a system under rules that have not even been written."

Perry originally declared his intention not to implement a state exchange or expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act in a July letter to Sebelius.

Meanwhile, on Nov. 15, state Sen. Rodney Ellis, D-Houston, filed Senate Bill 84, legislation proposing to create a state health care exchange. The legislation would make it possible for Texas families and individuals who are unable to obtain coverage through their employer to purchase a reasonably priced policy through the exchange.

Ellis said SB 84 "will bring tens of billions of dollars to the state, expand Medicaid to approximately 1.5 million additional Texans, set up a state health insurance exchange that works for Texas and guarantees that the Commissioner of Insurance has the tools necessary to ensure rates are fair and affordable. The expansion of Medicaid costs less in four years than what Texas hospitals spend on the uninsured population in one year. The needs of these individuals will not disappear if we fail to expand Medicaid, but we will lose out on a nine to one match that other states will utilize and we will continue to pass the cost down to local hospitals and ultimately to taxpayers," Ellis added.

Ellis, in his effort, faces Republican majorities in the

state Senate, the state House and the governor's veto power, should SB 84 pass both Senate and House.

Prediction: busy Texas roads

Texans who travel over the Thanksgiving holiday will have plenty of company on the road, Texas Department of Transportation reported on Nov. 14.

According to TxDOT, results of a reader survey from Texas Highways — the state's official travel magazine — show "48 percent of Texans plan to travel, and among those, 92 percent said they will be traveling by car on Texas roadways."

Before setting out, drivers can check road conditions by visiting DriveTexas.org.

Officials call for drug screening

Gov. Perry on Nov. 14 was joined by state Sen. Tommy Williams, R-The Woodlands, state Rep. Brandon Creighton, R-Conroe, and other Republican lawmakers to call for reforms to the state's welfare and unemployment benefit programs, including authorizing drug screenings for those applying for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Unemployment Insurance benefits.

Sen. Jane Nelson, R-Lewisville, pre-filed SB 11 for the upcoming legislative session to require drug screening for temporary assistance program applicants, and Williams, the governor's office reported, plans to file a bill to require drug screening for unemployment insurance applicants.

A governor's office news release reported the Texas Association of Business and National Federation of Independent Business joined the officials in a news conference in support of the proposed welfare reforms.

Tax revenue increases again

State sales tax revenue in October was \$2.03 billion, up 8.2 percent compared to October 2011, Texas Comptroller Susan Combs said Nov. 7.

Combs pointed out that the growth in sales tax revenue continued to be led by collections from the oil and natural gas-related sectors, while strong consumer spending drove gains in retail trade and the restaurant sector.

Combs said she would send November local sales tax allocations totaling \$611.5 million to

cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts, up 5.4 percent compared to November 2011.

Unemployment figures improve

Texas Workforce Commission on Nov. 16 reported the state's unemployment rate dropped to 6.6 percent in October from 6.8 percent in September.

Also, employers added 36,600 total nonfarm jobs in October for a total of 277,400 jobs added in Texas over the year. The national unemployment rate was reported at 7.9 percent.

Thinking in Type... A Tale

By Brian Brisendine

I'm a history buff and enjoy tales of the past about any location, but particularly a place I know as well as my own hometown.

That's why I was fascinated by an article printed in 1955 on an inside page of the Amarillo Daily News, brought to my desk by a faithful reader who located the item recently while sorting her mother's belongings.

Written almost 60 years ago, it recounts a story that was 50 years past at the time, making the happenings around the turn of the last century.

The article, on yellowed newsprint, bears the headline: Brownfield Just Can't Live This Story Down.

Written by Laura V. Hammer on Page 22 of the paper, I reprint the interesting, if not entirely factual, article here:

"The Panhandle of Texas is the youngest section of the state, an upstart among other portions. It is brash and forward-looking with little time and less tendency to build up traditions. Yet one Panhandle town, Brownfield, still a small town, cannot rid itself of a story that has been its albatross for 50 years or more.

"Terry County was a contented cow country until nesters drifted in and started a movement to organize the county.

"Nesters outnumbered cowmen and cowboys, who resented the thrust of the plow into their good pasture sod. Nester-cowman antagonism was further inflamed when the nesters started a town, Gomez, and took it for granted that Gomez would be the county seat.

"M.V. Brownfield, cowman, was indignant. He rode the ranges. 'Don't you think it is a shame for those lints to come here, with cotton still sticking to 'em, and try to run things in a cow country?' he



Teddy Roosevelt

asked cowmen. 'If the nesters can start a town, why can't we cowboys start one? We can do it and we can outvote 'em too.'

"The town of Brownfield was started by the cowboys and the county seat fight was on.

"The nesters counted on winning by numbers. They did not realize that there was a residence requirement in Texas law that qualified voters, and that few nesters had been in the county long enough to vote.

"Cowboys could vote. In those days, county lines meant little to a man who had followed herds where the cattle wanted to go, and had let cattle select his residence. When civilization came, the cowboy retained his indifference to invisible boundaries. He voted where his hat happened to be.

"When the day came to choose a county seat the towns of Gomez and Brownfield were rivals. A good many cowboy hats happened to be in Terry County. Brownfield won.

That county seat feud was bitter but not violent and Terry County determined to establish a reputation for harmony and right living, yet that peaceful little town of Brownfield woke up one day to find that its privacy had been invaded. It had somehow got written up in a big paper in New York City. An unfavorable reputation was given a town that still does not give even a good-sized dogfight, a

town where everybody loves everybody else.

"When Teddy Roosevelt, Aug. 18, 1908, wrote to his friend, the late Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, calling Lodge's attention to an article in the New York Herald the Sunday before, there was not a mile of railroad in Terry County, there was less than a thousand people, there were no saloons that are even mentioned today, and the citizens were law respecting people and not ruffians. There were no avowed Republicans. Yet this story -- this article was sent to the Herald from Fort Worth.

"Word has reached Fort Worth of Brownfield, a little Western town, that the residents had, on Thursday preceding, erected a life sized statue of the President, Theodore Roosevelt, that at the unveiling a street fight had occurred in which 50 shots were fired. Nine were wounded and one killed. The statue represents Mr. Roosevelt in hunting costume and stands on the town square.

"Brownfield is 100 miles from the nearest railroad, the T&P. Its population is 1,500, composed largely of cattlemen, cowboys and planters. The erection of this statue was opposed by Democrats and even some Republicans, but it had been ordered from Denver and the citizen's committee refused to be turned from their plans. The unveiling was opposed because the President was still in office, and because the Democrats wanted a Bryan statue on the opposite side of the square and the town was not able to afford two statues.

"Efforts were made to steal the statue and it was buried for a week as a protection. During the ceremonies on Thursday, cowboys rushed toward it, evidently to demolish it, but were met by a determined crowd. Revolvers, fists and clubs were used but the statue was not disturbed. After the riot was over, a mass meeting was held

and a compromise agreed upon. If Bryan is elected, another statue will be set up near Roosevelt's and the two will remain.

"This story brought more than one curious investigator to Brownfield. Twenty years later, one man came and looked the place over. He found a little county seat town with a courthouse topped by its customary cupola set in the center of court square. He found good stores built all around the square, good residences on side streets, a railroad and highways. Even after all those years, the town numbered only about 3,000 people, none of whom gave indication of viciousness or violence.

"No statue could be seen. Around and around the square he went. Still no statue. He asked first one and then another but no one had heard this story. At last he found a man who had lived there in those early days.

"The whole thing was just thought up in a minute by some Eastern reporter who wanted to send in a good story," he said.

"There was not one word of truth in it. I guess that reporter just looked at the map for some distant town in sparsely settled locality so as to make his story more exciting and incongruous. His finger must have lighted on Brownfield. It would have broke Brownfield to pay for a statue at that time and no one wanted statues then. They wanted food and shelter and means of livelihood... That story keeps bobbing up in print ever now and then. Letters sometimes come asking what became of the Roosevelt statue."

Leave it to a reporter spin such a tale for the sake of a byline. Oh well. It makes for a fun read and a little glimpse into our shared history.

From my family to yours, Happy Thanksgiving. -BB

The Brownfield News welcomes and will publish engagement and wedding stories under a long time policy. The News will accept and publish for free weddings which are newsworthy. We will provide our readers this service with the understanding that we reserve the right to edit the content for space. We will not accept (for free) a wedding story which details an event more than one month old. Should you wish to have a story published concerning an event more than a month old, we have an affordable and workable wedding package available.