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FALL 2025

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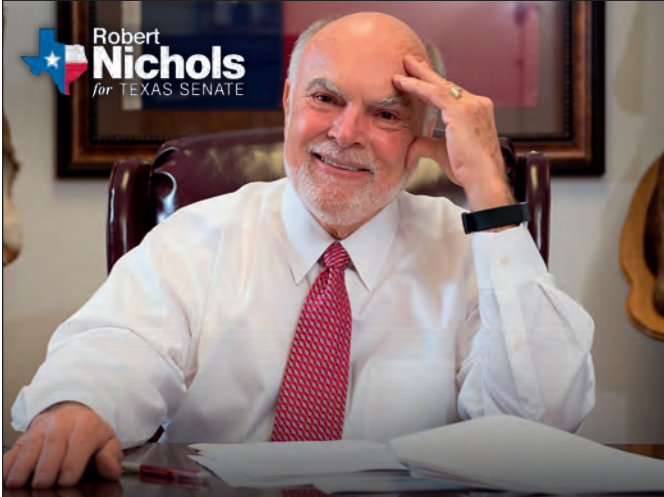



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FROM YOUR
EDITOR

Goodbye summer, hello fall

Summer is over and fall has arrived, with cooler breezes beginning to blow across East Texas. School has started and the glow of the Friday night lights has returned, with some very exciting football action expected this season.

Spotlighted in this issue is the historic Tomato Bowl, designated as the No. 1 high school football stadium in Texas through a contest sponsored by Dave Campbell's Texas Football. Enjoy a little history on Jacksonville High School's stadium as well as highlights from a special community celebration commemorating the honor.

In this edition we also visit Vine on Main, celebrating its fourth anniversary; as well as Bob Lee Bows, a premier bow maker located right here in Cherokee County; and columnist Chris Keller educates us on Czech born, German engineered Pilsner. Also, look for a few familiar faces in our Around Town photo pages.



PennyLynn Webb

PennyLynn
Editor of *Jacksonville Daily Progress*
and *Cherokee County Living*

I'd like to express a special thank you to our readers and advertisers for making this magazine possible and supporting local journalism.

Beyond the pages of Cherokee County Living, the Jacksonville Daily Progress invites you to follow along with the news of the day throughout our print and digital outlets: the printed-edition of the Jacksonville Daily Progress and our web home page jacksonvilleprogress.com.

Wishing you the best fall season, with lots of community and family fun!

PUBLISHER

Lange Svehlak

lsvehlak@athensreview.com

EDITOR

PennyLynn Webb

editor@jacksonvilleprogress.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Michelle Dillon

mdillon@jacksonvilleprogress.com

Jay Neal

Chris Keller

BUSINESS OFFICE

Ann Bland

abland@jacksonvilleprogress.com

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Haley Jenkins

hjenkins@corsicanadailysun.com

CIRCULATION/

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Charlotte Whitaker

circulation@jacksonvilleprogress.com

ADVERTISING

Shannon Carpenter

scarpenter@jacksonvilleprogress.com

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All-American Bob Lee BOWS

hitting target since 1951



Rob Lee and his son JJ Jackson talking shop.



The Bob Lee Bows crew; standing from left, JJ Jackson and Rob Lee with Pearl; seated from left, Jenni Lee with Nitch and Leo Martinez.

STORY BY PENNYLYNN WEBB *Cherokee County Living*

In the world of archery, Bob Lee Bows are renowned for their quality, design and performance – ranking number one in field tests. This brand – made in Jacksonville, Texas – and its founder Bob Lee, have received many accolades over the years and continue to set the standard in the archery industry with their all-American made product.

Company founder, Robert “Bob” Eugene Lee was born in Birmingham, Alabama, but spent a majority of his childhood in Austin.

According to his family, Bob started fletching his own arrows as a young child out of items he found around his home. Bob was said to have been “very

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resourceful.” They said he would visit a Texas Confederate Home near his family’s residence, showing off his arrows he made and visiting with the men that lived there. Bob started selling his arrows at a country club in his youth and eventually tried his hand at making a bow.

His daughter-in-law, Jenni Lee – married to his son Robert “Rob” Lee, said Bob told the family his first bow “shot great,” but the second and third were “a horrible disaster.”

“He said the first one he finished, it shot great, it was on point and he thought, ‘There’s nothing to this bow building,’” Jenni shared. “Then he found out there’s a lot to this bow building. You’ve got to have a piece of wood, that has to be very specific, that will flex but not break and withstand the strain. The wood from a Bois D’Arc tree is a big one for archery. So, he said he had thought, ‘There’s nothing to this,’ and then said, ‘Later I realized, I don’t know what the heck I’m doing.’ He said it was only by the grace of God that that first bow he made turned out well, or just dumb luck, or whatever you want to call it, but he said, ‘Had [the first bow failed] I would have never attempted doing that again, ever.’”

Bob Lee was 23-years-old when he founded Wing Archery in 1951 in his garage in Houston, Texas. He funded his start up by selling gators and frogs he killed with his bow in Houston’s Oyster Creek.

In 1959, Bob successfully lobbied for Texas’ first archery-only hunting season. He also helped Glenn St. Charles form the Pope & Young Club, archery’s equivalent to the Boone & Crockett Club, in January 1961. He was also an active member in the early stages of the Archery Manufacturers and Dealers Association which later became the Archery Manufacturers Organization. He was said to have been instrumental in helping to establish the industry standards.

In 1963, Bob created the first three-piece detachable limb recurve bow, the Wing Presentation II. Jenni said the bow was an immediate success and served as a forerunner to the takedown bows on the market today.

In 1965, Bob relocated the company to Jacksonville where his company quickly became one of the city’s largest employers. At the company’s peak they were producing and shipping out more than 300 bows per day, everyday. Jenni said in its heyday, Wing Archery was the third largest manufacturer in

the world.

Jenni said Bob was a “big wig” around Jacksonville, helping to put in the Cherokee Club and Pine Crest Estates and the golf course through their company Bob Lee Builders. He also owned some manufacturing businesses.

Jenni said a member of the Wing company’s staff won gold at the Munich 1972 Summer Olympics.

“It was the year of the terrorist event, in 1972, they had been holed up in the hotel and this guy, John Williams, who worked for Wings, he has an interview on YouTube talking about it, he said he could see the guy, right across the way. Can you imagine?,” Jenni said. “That was the first year, after I don’t know how many years, 10 or some such, the Olympics had not had field archery for some reason and they reintroduced it and that was the year. He said it was very bittersweet, accepting this gold medal, but under extreme circumstances.”

In 1968, Bob Lee sold the company to Head Ski, remaining as CEO until he resigned in 1972.

Jenni said he took a break for about 10 or 15 years when the compound bow came onto the horizons.

“He said, ‘That’s not a bow, I don’t want no part of it,’ Jenni said. “He sold the company and went into the oil drilling business. Then the 1980s came along. They went into the water-well drilling business for a while and then Rob just told him one day, this would have been in the late 1980s, he said, ‘I really don’t want this craft to pass away with you. I really want to know how to do this. So his dad said, ‘O.K., but one condition, we will never be a mass production company again. We are building one-off bows.’ So now we build two bows a week.”

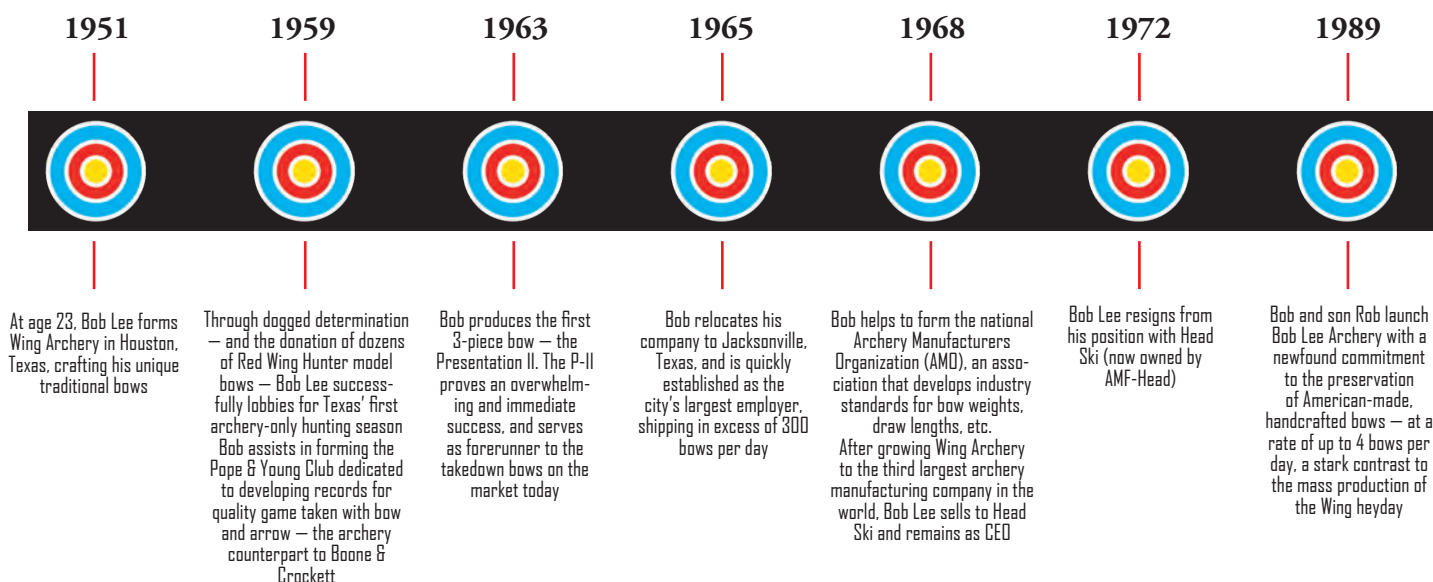
The father son duo launched Bob Lee Archery in 1989. The bows made under the name of Bob Lee Bows are all hand-finished with all-American made products, Jenni said.

Jenni said it took Rob around 10 years to fully learn the craft of bow-building from his father. Each bow takes 40 or more hours to complete.

“There are some processes where you glue pieces and then let them set,” she said. “It’s not a linear process.”

In 2007, Bob was inducted into the National Bowhunters Hall of Fame. He received a standing ovation from the audience at the dedication ceremony in Las Vegas.

She shared that Bowhunting World field tested



12 of the leading recurve bows in the nation and in 2012, Lee Bows was in the top two spots. The top spot went to the company's bow called "The Ultimate" and second place went to "The Natural."

In 2014, Bob was inducted into the National Archery Hall of Fame at the Bass Pro Headquarters in Springfield, Missouri during the grand opening ceremony of the NAHF Museum.

Bob passed at the age of 92 in February 2021. This was the same year Disney would call in an order for Bob Lee Bow Blackhawk recurve bows for its Marvel character Kate Bishop in the "Hawkeye" series. Jenni said Disney purchased additional bows with the same specs from the company to be featured at Disneyland and on their cruise ships. The action figure for Kate Bishop carries its own miniature Bob Lee Bow.

Rob, with the help of his wife, Jenni and their son JJ, continues his father's legacy today, customizing every detail including type, length, handle design, draw weight, orientation, shooting style and materials to their customers' liking. They also have pre-built bows that are ready to purchase off the shelf. Jenni said their bows range in price from \$1,700 to \$2,600.

"These are not the same bows they were building 30 years ago and the price reflects it," Jenni said.

The P3 sold for \$150. Jenni said when Bob first put it on the market, his friends in the industry told him he was 'crazy,' that 'Nobody's paying \$150 for a bow,' however it was an overnight success and he sold a lot of P3s.

"Rob wants to build the best performing, most bul-

let proof bow he can," Jenni said. "This is an extremely expensive material, it's called Micarta. That's the brand name. It's a linen based phenolic. Rob compares it to bowling ball material. It's bomb proof."

They also use carbon twill, which Jenni said is a "close cousin to what they use in cavalier, bullet proof vest materials.

Their bows are also extremely quiet on release.

"That's a big deal," Jenni said.

"We use very expensive materials," she said. "It's all sourced in the United States and made in Texas. We stand by our product. We aren't trying to be the latest, greatest and the flashiest. We just build what we build and we want to stay in the traditional realm."

Their bows also have a long lifespan.

"They ought to last you forever," she said. "If you take care of it."

Jenni said their customers range from professional athletes to individuals who have never used a bow but are excited to get started. She said they have quite a few non-archery athletes who purchase bows from their company, including a number of professional golfers. She shared they build an extra long, tournament style recurve bow and there are several archers representing their company on the world stage in Italy for several years running.

Jenni said the company has five star Google reviews.

"We are known for our customer service," she said. "We take it very personally. We want everyone to be happy and we want to treat everyone the way that we want to be treated."

2007



Bob Lee is inducted into the National Bowhunters Hall of Fame and is honored with a standing ovation during the award ceremony in Las Vegas among his peers, family and other industry notables

2010



The company moves into a newly-constructed facility on nine acres in Jacksonville. The lobby is now home to Bob's first bow, built in 1951, as well as other vintage Wing models, memorabilia, and a multitude of trophies from Bob and Rob's hunts and tournaments

2011



The company celebrates Bob's 60th anniversary in bow-building with the unveiling of a Limited Edition Anniversary model — The Legacy featuring Stabi-Lock™, an innovative tool-free limb attachment system that uses a riser channel and limb wedge with detents

2012



A Bob Lee recurve wins "Best Bow" in the nation out of 12 market leaders tested by Bowhunting World magazine — the winning Bob Lee model is aptly named The Ultimate; 2nd place was also awarded to a Bob Lee bow (The Natural)

2014



Bob Lee receives his second Hall of Fame induction during the Grand Opening ceremony of the National Archery Hall of Fame Museum at Bass Pro Headquarters in Springfield, Missouri

2021



Bob Lee, founder of Wing Archery and partner to son Rob in Bob Lee Bows, passes away at age 92 after an extended illness. His legacy will live on in the multitude of bows cherished by shooters around the globe, and the innovations that changed the face of traditional archery. His indelible presence will remain in the hearts of his family, friends and throughout the sport he so dearly loved.

Rob Lee, son JJ, wife Jenni and their devoted team continue Bob Lee's legacy through an ongoing commitment to the sport of traditional archery. Bob's spirit of innovation lives on as well, with this year seeing the introduction of new products such as Carbon CobraCurve limbs (super recurve design faced in twill carbon) and a streamlined concealment cap for the company's renowned Stabi-Lock™ system



Jenni said that people stop in from all over the world. "We have people pop-in quite often," she said. "We are a retail shop, we sell direct. We don't have dealers. We sell a lot through our website. We have people call and say, 'Can I come in and shoot and try...' We had customers show up one day that had driven all-the-way here straight from Maine without stopping. Husband and wife, taking turns driving. They each bought a bow. That was 10 or 12 years ago and they have become very good friends."

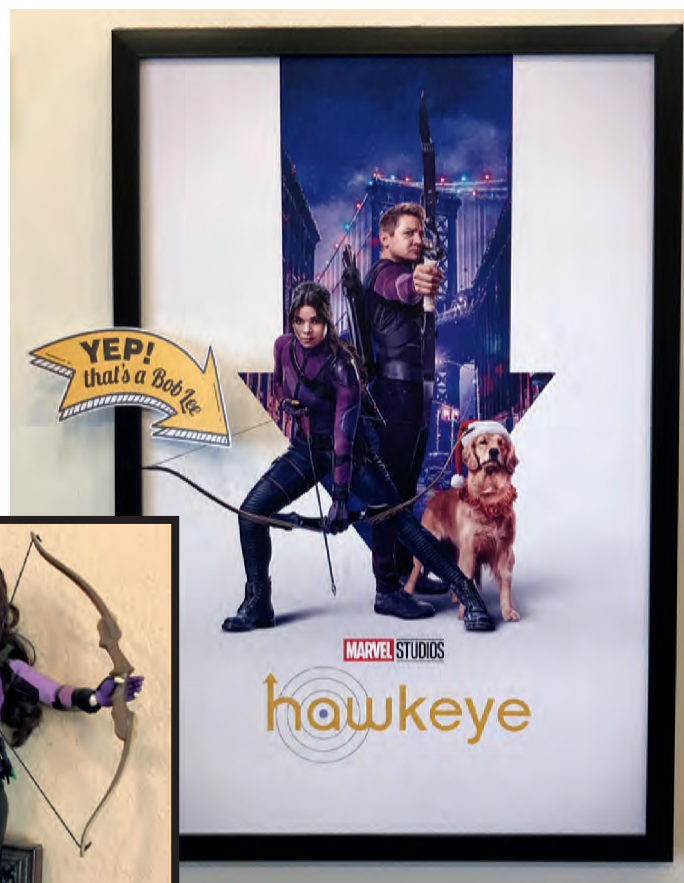
She shared that another couple had flown in from Sussex, England to see the shop. They stayed for two weeks and came back a year or so later, buying bows for the family.

Jenni said they ship bows all over the world to places like Sweden, France and Italy.

While their son JJ started out in sales, he is now an apprentice under his stepdad Rob and grandfather Bob as a third generation bowyer.

BOB LEE BOWS FEATURED IN MARVEL UNIVERSE

Disney used a Bob Lee Bow Blackhawk recurve for its Marvel character Kate Bishop in the "Hawkeye" series. Disney purchased additional bows with the same specs from the company to be featured at Disneyland and on their cruise ships. The action figure for Kate Bishop carries its own miniature Bob Lee Bow.





INFLUENCER BRINGS HISTORY TO LIFE



STORY BY MARY BETH SCALLON
Cherokee County Living

If the terms “followers” and “friends” on social media are synonymous, then Jacksonville resident Parker Edmondson, aka Dr. Parkinstine, has more than a million friends around the world.

In fact, 1.1 million TikTok users follow Jacksonville’s famous resident. On Facebook, the electrical-antique-vintage-some-what-of-an-expert is followed by 7,000 (and growing) fans. Sixty-three thousand follow him on YouTube; sixty-thousand follow him on Twitter; and on Instagram, Dr. Parkinstine has 179,000 followers.

Quickly becoming a household name, Dr. Parkinstine is actually Parker Edmondson, a native of Jacksonville who grew up in Carrollton.

"I've had that nickname since I was really little," Edmondson said. "I guess it was because I was always interested in making something, or repairing something, electrical."

That interest led him at an early age to build a replica of Nikola Tesla's magnetic transmitter, commonly known as the Tesla Coil.

His magnetic transmitter works on radio frequencies that are sent via the earth's magnetic field.

"It works like a radio," Edmondson said. "You transmit electricity wirelessly through the earth to different designations. A transmitter is tuned to a particular frequency, it goes through the earth, is captured by a receiver attached, for instance, to a light bulb, and the light bulb can be lit from miles away."

Indeed, his apparatus was able to transmit light some 918.6 miles away in 2021 to an engineer in Chicago, who is a follower on Dr. Parkinstine's TikTok broadcast. The engineer, Nikolas Matsuki, learned how to build a receiver with instructions from Edmondson, and the pair successfully lit a light bulb in Chicago from the transmission originating in Carrollton.

His magnetic transmitter uses three coils, as did Tesla's, but modern transmitters use two, Edmondson explained.

At the age of 21, Edmondson was invited to speak to a crowd of 50-60 at the Energy, Science and Technology Convention in Spokane, Washington, explaining the



magnetic transmission technology.

Edmondson is still very much interested in the field of electricity and wireless transmission, but nowadays, he has become something of a novelty around Jacksonville, with his vintage clothing and love of antiques.

Combining his love of all things vintage with his knowledge of most things mechanical or electrical, Dr. Parkinstine uses his media content to share his findings with the world at large.

Currently, he posts daily on TikTok; every other day on Instagram and Twitter, and once a week on YouTube.

Dr. Parkinstine's posts are not only informative; they are also lucrative, at least for him. He earns a modest income, most of which he saves for the house he eventually hopes to buy.

"I have one in mind that I want to buy and turn into a museum and bed-and-breakfast," he said. "I hope to move in by the end of the year."

Once in, Dr. Parkinstine (or Edmondson, if you prefer), will display his large collection of vintage furniture, appliances, lamps, and clothing. He has researched and can tell those who are interested, more history than one could ever expect to know about almost everything in his vast collection of memorabilia.

While he is currently most interested in the late 1800s and early 1900 items in his collection, he has been interested in antiques from an early age.

“I used to like the 1950s era when I was young,” he said. “I would listen to the music and really liked it. Now I am more interested in the Victorian age.”

In the apartment where he currently lives, Edmondson cooks on a 1917 Electric stove that uses coils made of nichrome wire.

“That’s a cross between nickel and chrome,” he said. “That makes it highly resistant for heating, much like an incandescent bulb.”

In storage at his grandmother’s house, Edmondson also owns a Stone 1908 Home Comfort wrought-iron stove that is heated by coal. It gets too hot for summer use, and that is why he uses the vintage electric stove.

He uses a 1934 Monitor-type GE refrigerator to keep things cold; a model that houses the compressor on top.

For entertainment, Edmondson listens to a 1918 Edison diamond disk phonograph. As Dr. Parkinstine, he plays the music, and often sings along – and sometimes dances to the ragtime music.

“Instead of the lateral cut of most records,” he said, “these cuts



are up and down.”

Much of what Dr. Parkinstine owns and displays has been given to him by fans of his broadcasts. He owns an 1870s bed and dresser, given to him by fans in Eastland, TX. His “gossip chairs” were donated by Shane, a blacksmith in Fairfield. Gossip chairs were once used to share juicy bits of news with others, in the days when telephone party lines were in use.

Some of the items Dr. Parkinstine acquires have to be repaired. For instance, he bought the box for his gramophone on E-bay; but had to order his amplification horn, also called a witch hat horn, and reproducer, separately. He then created the whole unit from the spare parts.

The 22-year-old became interested in electricity at a young age. “I wired my first outlet at three,” he said.

When he was six, he found an old metal fan at his great-grandpa’s house and asked his dad if he could have it. His dad, Chris Edmondson, said he could, as long as he cut off the cord so he wouldn’t hurt himself.

The allure proved to be too much, though, because the next day, he installed another cord, and it’s been working ever since, he claims.



Edmondson also works, as needed, for the Hotel Ritual on El Paso Street owned by Whitney Graham. The hotelier also owns Ritual Restaurant, and Ritual Laboratory and Soda Fountain in downtown Jacksonville.

At the hotel, Edmondson provides “music therapy” for guests who want an extensive relaxation session. At the restaurant, he occasionally helps out as needed, and at the ice cream shop, the entrepreneur – who is also gifted musically – plays on a piano brought outside for the day.

“Parker has been such a delight to work with, so much fun, “Gra-

ham said in an earlier interview. “He has such a unique outlook on life. His interest in the older way of life gives a mindset to keep things simple, leaving more time for enjoyment, and I think the world needs that, too.

“He has the ability to make the world a better place,” she said.

Dressed sometimes in his top hat and tails, but always dressed in vintage clothing, Edmondson offers passersby rides in one of his vintage vehicles, although currently neither his 1926 Model T, 1928 Durant, or 1926 Ford truck are in driving condition.

“My dad and I are working to restore the Model T,” he said. “We’re working from the ground up, to get it

in top shape for the tour I am taking soon with my friend, Gavin Rice.”

Rice is a jazz musician who also specializes in music from the 1920s. He also owns a Model T, and he and Dr. Parkinstine plan to drive their vehicles across the nation. Rice has contacted some news outlets and hopes to have the tour televised. At any rate, one can be reassured that stops on the tour will be shown on any of Dr. Parkinstine’s social media accounts.

Paula Rozell said her grandson has always been interested in

unique things and the discovery of how they work.

"He was interested in the way things work almost from the time he was born," Rozell said. "He loved to watch the vacuum cleaner and the washing machine; he was interested in barbed wire and anything electrical."

Rozell shares grandmotherhood with her sister, Trish Helm of Jacksonville. When Helm's daughter, Natalee, found out she was expecting, it was not a good time in her life, so the family arranged that her cousin – Paula Rozell's daughter and son-in-law, Chris and Corrie Edmondson – would adopt her child.

"We decided a long time ago, that if we were going to do this, there would be no secrets about it," Chris Edmondson said. "As a result, Parker Edmondson has always had close ties with his birthmother and her family. He calls her "Nattie," and calls Trish and Johnny Helm, Grammy and Big Daddy. He calls his Rozell grandparents, Moo and PawPaw, and of course, he calls Chris and Corrie, Mom and Dad."

Because both grandmothers – and at least one grandfather – come from a musical background, it seems only natural for Parker to inherit their musical ability, but he thinks his electrical interest comes from Chris, who owns his own electrical contracting business.

His interest in vintage cars began in his teenage years. Chris Edmondson said he bought a car that he intended to give to Parker when he turned fifteen. Instead, Parker begged for a vintage vehicle, and that is when he acquired

the Durant.

"He found the car (online) in Florida, and we had it shipped to Carrollton," he said. "He and I would work on it. We took the motor all apart, and I showed him how to work on it. From that point on, he didn't need my help," he said.

The elder Edmondson said they always encouraged Parker to be himself.

"We never tried to make him fit into a box," he said. "He has always been unique. He's played piano as long as I can remember. When other kids bang on pianos at three or four, Parker was making music."

Parker's friend, Anna Sanford, said the best things about Parker are his loyalty and helpfulness.

"If I call him for advice or my car is broken down somewhere, which happens often, he's there," she said. Sanford also dressed in vintage clothing to appear in a YouTube video with Dr. Parkinstine recently, highlighting the 1890s era.

Once his museum is open and his vintage items are unloaded, Dr. Parkinstine also hopes to open a photography studio featuring tintypes. He has already bought a Rembrandt wet-plate camera.

He also hopes others will help to make his dream come true by contributing to a GoFundMe page, "Help Restore History: Dr. Parkinstine's Museum."

All in all, his focus is to improve the world, to teach and learn as much as he can.

"My focus is to inspire the world. I like to make people happy, and I want to make the world a better place," he said.





Celebrating four, and hopefully many more!

STORY BY PENNYLYNN WEBB
Cherokee County Living

Jacksonville celebrated Vine on Main's fourth anniversary in August with a bevy of activities including giveaways, special sales, food, cocktails and fun.

Many may not realize that Becky Hesterley and the Jacksonville Economic Development Corporation

grant program are largely why our city gets to celebrate four great years, and hopefully many, many, many more with this one of a kind boutique.

Vine's owner, Jennifer Darr owned Lindale Floral for 12 years and then opened Vine on Main on Aug. 17, 2021.

Jen shared that she is from Lindale. She said when she first married her husband they lived on Lake Jacksonville. They later moved to Tyler and then moved back to Lindale where her family's ranch was



Location: 218 S. Main, Jacksonville, Texas

Phone: 903-339-1341

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Instagram: www.instagram.com/vineonmain/

Facebook: www.facebook.com/vineonmain

Email: vineonmainstreet@gmail.com

Store Hours:

10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday

9 a.m. to 5:30p.m. Wednesday to Friday

9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday



and that is where they live now, however, they also still have a weekender home on Lake Jacksonville.

Jen said her step daughter had been encouraging her to open a store in Jacksonville when Becky Hesterley, a real estate agent for Homeland Real Estate, began telling her about grant programs that JEDCO had to offer.

Jen said Becky was actually the one who found the building for Vine on Main.

"She is the one who actually found this building for me, because she said, 'If you ever decide to open up a store, you need to be close to Ritual.' The place we are currently in became available and she con-

tacted me. We ended up putting a bid in on the place and bought it. And the reason that we bought it is because of the JED-CO program. It was kind of a no-brainer.”

Jen said she ran the flower shop in Lindale for a year after opening Vine on Main.

“And then I decided I was going to put all my eggs in this basket,” she said.

The store is filled with boutique apparel, shoes, jewelry, purses, accessories, home and holiday décor, home fragrances, petite florals, gourmet treats, drink mixes, gift items with something for everyone including women, men, infants and children.

Jen said the concept of the store has stayed the same, with the exception of men’s items. They still carry men’s gift items, but they no longer have men’s clothing.

“Pretty much we’ve stayed the same. We still carry gourmet foods, we occasionally do fresh floral, when I have time to make them. We do gifts of all kinds and clothing. Where we have grown tremendously is



just clothing,” she said.

The store’s inventory also includes a wide-array of Christian gift items.

“That’s super important to me,” she said.

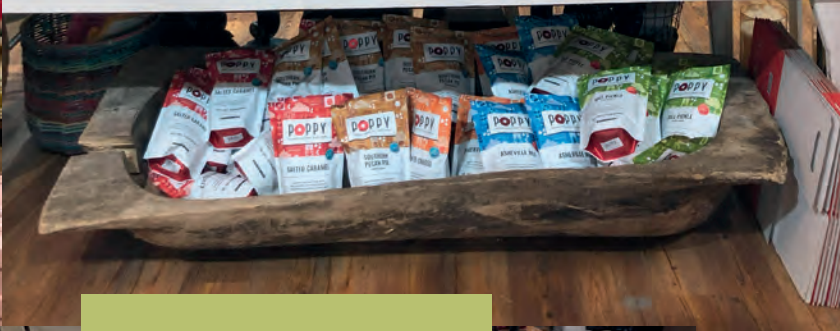
“I prayed very hard about this place before I opened it, and I just felt that God was leading me here. He has certainly blessed it and the community has just

been amazing in accepting and supporting us. That’s just part of my DNA. I was raised in church, I have a strong Christian background and that is super important to me. I’m not perfect by any means. I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior and I think God has really led me, directed me, he’s still forgiving me and leading me. We are going to continue to carry Christian gifts here as well.”

If you follow Vine on Main on social media you can enjoy an almost daily post from the store including an “Outfit of the Day.”

Jen said one of their videos went viral and that really changed things for her store.

For I am the vine,
you are the branches.
— John 15:5



“It just exploded and opened up a whole new audience for us,” she said. “We are shipping out all over the United States.”

Jen said her most popular brands include Julie Vos, enewton, Jon Hart and any of their clothing lines.

“Our clothing just flies out of the store,” she said.

Jen said her apparel sizes range from extra small to 3XL, with something for everyone’s price range.

“It’s very important to me to try to have something for everyone, because you have people who have more money to spend, that want something designer or higher end and then you have people who are so-budget friendly, and you’ve got to keep everybody in mind when you are buying,” she said. “We try to do just a little bit of something in all price ranges to be able to accommodate.”

With its booming online business, inventory is constantly turning over. If you see something you like, buy it now, it most likely won’t be there if you wait.

Top brands and collections

Glasshouse
Tyler Candles
Sweet Grace Candle Company
Jon Hart
Julie Vos
Roundtop
enewton



AROUND TOWN



From graduation to back-to-school seems like such a short time, but many fun events came in between. In traditional form, the Class of 2025 graduated at the Historic Tomato Bowl. Jacksonville hosted the forty-first annual Tomato Fest, bringing many visitors to town. The city remembered Juneteenth and the actual freedom that enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation brought to the enslaved people of Texas. Also celebrated during Juneteenth was the grand re-opening of Lincoln Park – with its new amenities that including a splash pad, all-ability playground apparatuses and exercise equipment. July Fourth was celebrated in Rusk, the Cherokee County seat, with the annual parade, Gauge Lankford Memorial Fireman's Challenge and a new addition – children's tricycle races. Before heading back to school, seniors were allowed to paint their parking spaces. Parents of younger children walked them to class for the first day of the new school year.







PILSNER: CZECH BORN, GERMAN ENGINEERED

STORY BY CHRIS KELLER

The first pale lager, pilsner beer, is a style invented out of desperation. It was created using the most advanced methods known in brewing at the time and is still considered one of the great crowning achievements of brewing. Named after Pilsen, Czech Republic, it is a regional style developed by a foreigner that quickly went global. There's hardly a beer-drinking country in the world that doesn't produce one. The style uses a simple recipe and an extended production process. The style is practically synonymous with beer! The story of the pilsner is colorful, to say the least, and begins rather ominously: with bad beer.

Anyone who has made beer can tell you that it doesn't take much to make bad beer. I'm not talking about beer you just don't like. There's plenty of good, well made beers out there that you're not going to like. Those aren't bad beers, that's just preference. I'm talking about when things go wrong in the process between the farm and your glass that can cause any number of stomach-turning flavors. If barley was grown, harvested, malted, or stored poorly it can make beer taste musty. Hops can get a stinky cheese flavor if not stored right. Take too long to mash and you'll draw out tannins, bitter flavors like over-steeped tea. A poor boil can give the beer a creamed corn flavor. Not properly sanitizing vessels and equipment can lead to many bad flavors from contamination. Oxygen exposure starts as wet cardboard and turns sour. These are only a few examples of the many ways off flavors can develop. Nothing

that can live in beer can hurt you though, so rest assured if you get a bad one it won't make you sick. It's just going to taste bad. Maybe a little bad, maybe really bad.

Thanks to a world-wide understanding of farming, malting, refrigeration, fermentation, and microbial contaminants, it's pretty easy to find good beer nowadays. I've worked in beer as a brewer, distributor, and a retailer. Every place I've worked we did our best to keep only good, fresh beer in the market. It takes constant diligence and commitment to excellence. Two hundred years ago in Pilsen, Bohemia, now Czech Republic or Czechia, that was not the case. While Bavaria, a German kingdom just 50 miles to the west, was having a brewing renaissance, Pilsen was stuck in brewing dark ages. The local beer was described as undrinkable, tasting like "burnt grass," was sour, cloudy with "floaties," and was often contaminated by bacteria and wild yeasts. Travellers to Bavaria came back reporting of the delicious lager beer available there and it wasn't long before the locals had had enough. In 1838 the residents of Pilsen revolted and dumped 36 barrels of the awful stuff in the town square, right in front of city hall. The message was received loud, clear, wet, and stinky!

City officials quickly got to work. They decided to start from scratch and commission a public brewery for the city. Since the townspeople were so jealous of Bavarian beer they hired two Bavarians, brewer Josef Groll and architect Martin Stelzer to design



and build a state of the art brewery brewing a modern, tasty, beer. The two men wanted to use the most up-to-date brewing techniques and ingredients while still making it unique and regional. Steltzer had never built a brewery so he visited some of the most modern breweries in Europe to learn the latest technologies. Groll, whose father operated a brewery in the Bavarian city of Vilshofen, was well versed in the cold-fermenting lager beers that Germans had been making for several hundred years by that point. Their beers were dark and smokey at that time due to woodfire dried malt, but the English had just introduced an air-kilning process which produced a pale, smoke-free malt. Sounds like a road trip! Steltzer returned from his visit to England with one of these kilns and, using the local barley, it was soon employed in malting the palest malt ever seen in industrial brewing. Groll sourced spicy Saaz hops from the nearby town of Zatec and the men located a place for the brewery by the Radbuza River where they could dig deep, cold lagering tunnels and the aquifers there supplied a very unique soft water which was very different than the other mineral-rich brewing water of the time.

In 1842, four years after the beer rebellion, the Burger Brauerei, German for citizens' brewery, unveiled this new beer to the public. Never before had there been such a clear golden-colored beer. The glowing color combined with the liberal use of the spicy, herbal hops, the soft water, the cold fermentation, and the long conditioning period created a crisply-flavored, refreshing, and miraculously translucent beer. It was named pilsner, meaning "from Pilsen." The malt being produced with the English kilning method turned out to be far lighter than what the English were producing with it. To this day



the lightest colored malt you can buy for brewing is Pilsner malt. At that time glassware, previously only available to the wealthy, was being produced on an industrial scale. Pilsner's golden glow was uniquely suited to being served in glassware and very well might be the reason clear glass began replacing the ceramic mugs and steins in the Biergartens.

Word travelled quickly about this new style of beer and it wasn't long before the surrounding areas began brewing their own pilsner lagers. German and Austrian brewers were producing their own versions as well, quickly producing their own pale pilsner malts and using their own hop varieties. German pilsners in particular were, and still are, more hop forward. The advent of refrigeration meant that lagers no longer were confined to caves in cooler climates and could now be brewed anywhere. Pilsner quickly became a global style. So much so that the Burger Brauerei and the city of Pilsen itself fought to keep other breweries from using the name pilsner, trying to keep regional status on their pride and joy. Many breweries agreed to shorten the name of the style to "pils" but the campaign was largely unsuccessful. The genie was out of the bottle and had long been granting delicious and refreshing golden wishes all over the world. Unable to keep the pilsner name for themselves, in 1898 the brewery branded its beer "Pilsner Urquell" which

means “original source pilsner.” They wanted there to be no doubt that theirs was the original.

The Pilsner truly became the world’s beer, influencing even more styles of golden lagers. The hiccup in innovation and technological growth was the 20th Century. Two world wars, prohibition, the Great Depression, and the spread of communism through Eastern Europe all had a stifling effect on world brewing. Half of Germany and Bohemia were incorporated into the Soviet Union after World War II. The Soviets closed most breweries and nationalized the larger ones, including Urquell. Productivity, profitability, innovation, and efficiency were discouraged at best and punished at worst. Surviving Czech and East German breweries were perpetually stuck in the 1930s until the fall of the Soviet Union. The UK was focused on ale brewing and the US was making light lager with corn and rice and calling it pilsner. West Germany and Austria, after recovering from war, were really the only countries making world-class versions of the style and they were rarely exported. Pilsner was being seen as generic beer and its golden light was fading.

The craft beer boom in the 1990s ignored pilsners and other lagers and, with few exceptions, featured ales predominantly. These craft brewers were rebellious and were directly opposing the flavorless lagers that flooded the beer market. Lagers require long fermenting and conditioning times and are very unforgiving when it comes to flaws where an ale is ready to drink in a week, is relatively easy to brew, produces a very flavorful beer, and was very anti-establishment for the time. No one wanted to brew a pilsner when Miller Lite proudly states “a fine pilsner beer” on the label.

As craft brewing became more established, craft brewers got better and the real scientist brewers were intrigued by the tasty, refreshing pilsner. Not just because a well made pils can have a lot of flavor while remaining crisp, clean, and refreshing, but also because it is very hard and time consuming to make a good one. Lagers produce off flavors that must be conditioned out. The very word lager is German for storage, and that storage is important to make a good one. They ferment cold and slow, requiring closely-monitored refrigerated fermentation. Pilsners are more heavily hopped than other lagers, which appeals to craft brewers and drinkers alike. I love

introducing craft beer drinkers to a proper pilsner. They’ve purposely avoided the style thinking it to be swill, but *au contraire*...

The Czech style is hopped with spicy Czech Saaz hops and has a roundness from the decoction, where they boil part of the mash and caramelize the malt sugars. German style Pilsners are aggressively hopped with the very herbal “noble hops” from the Hallertau region of Germany. German pilsners taste super clean too thanks to krausening, a conditioning process where active yeast is added to a freshly fermented beer. The yeast will absorb excess diacetyl, a byproduct of fermentation that has a buttery flavor and a slick mouthfeel, making German pilsners the crispiest. American brewers have been tackling the pilsner, paying homage to the European styles while doing it their own way. They might make it hoppier, or use non-traditional hops. Dry hopping is a very American practice that produces great hop aroma and can work wonders on a pilsner!

Pilsner is the brew that turned beer on its head and took over the world. It went through a rough patch thanks to being mass produced and overly available, but now it’s getting vindicated by the craft brewing community producing some of the best versions of the style. Pilsner Urquell is still the original and is more available than ever. They updated the brewery to modern standards while still retaining the original recipe. They have recently improved things by getting rid of the green bottles which cause a skunky flavor from light-strike and packaging in cans and amber bottles. Even though they now have a fully modern brewery brewing over two million hectoliters a year, Urquell still produces a small amount of the original pilsner fermented in the caves under the brewery in the old wooden vessels. It’s unfiltered and available only at the brewery in Pilsen. My old boss at Saint Arnold Brewery said drinking this beer was a “religious experience.” I can see how he feels. Drinking a beer that was, and still is, a marvel of engineering, in its original form, at the very place of its birth. To quote my pastor when he comes across a sharable bit of wisdom: “That’ll preach.”

Chris Keller has worked in beer sales for a distributor, as a brewer for Saint Arnold Brewing Co. in Houston, and is the owner of Pint and Barrel Drafthouse in Palestine, Texas.

UPCOMING EVENTS



OCTOBER | 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 **16** 17 **18** 19 20 21 22 23 24 **25** 26 27 28 29 30 **31**

7 National Night Out

Jacksonville and other area cities are hosting National Night Out events Tuesday, Oct. 7. Each features free food, music and family fun. In Jacksonville, the event is set from 6 to 9 p.m. along Commerce St. in downtown. The Alto event is slated from 7 to 10 p.m. at Alto High School. Bullard will host its event from 6 to 9 p.m. at 114 S. Phillips Street. The event in Rusk is also scheduled from 6 to 9 p.m. in the downtown square.

16 Coffee with a Cop

The public is invited to Coffee with a Cop from 8 to 9 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 16, by the Order of the Daughters of the King. The event will be hosted at Trinity Episcopal Church, 1000 S. Jackson St. in Jacksonville.

18 Scarecrow Trail

The annual Scarecrow Trail opens from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 18. The event, hosted at the Ruth B. Nichols Arboretum, 1015 SE Loop 456, in Jacksonville, will remain open through Nov. 1, with the exception of Sundays. Admission is \$1 or one canned food item, benefiting H.O.P.E. Jacksonville.



18 'Fall in Love with Jacksonville, Texas'

The Jacksonville Community Arts Alliance is hosting a 'Fall in Love with Jacksonville, Texas' event from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 18, followed by an outdoor concert from 5 to 8 p.m. at Hazel Tilton Park. The public is invited to a day of art, music, shopping, dining and family fun. Follow the Jacksonville Community Arts Alliance Facebook page to keep up-to-date as details are posted.

18 Solid Rock Baptist Church Fall Event

Solid Rock Baptist Church is hosting a fall festival from 3 to 7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 18, at its 29720 US Hwy 69 location in Rusk. Enjoy food, drinks, candy and games.



18 Troup Community Block Party

Residents in Troup are invited to a Community Block Party from 4 to 7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 18, in the library parking lot, 102 S. Georgia Street. The event features bounce houses, a mechanical bull, food trucks and family fun.

25 Jacksonville WIC offers free flu shots

The Jacksonville WIC Office is offering free flu shots from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 25. The office is located at 335 Neches Street. For more information, call Lourdes Camacho at 903-721-4248.

31 Scare on the Square

The annual Scare on the Square is set for 4 p.m. Friday, Oct. 31. Businesses and organizations will give out candy around the square. The event lasts until the candy is gone.



Jacksonville celebrates **Tomato Bowl** being named **No. 1** high school football stadium in Texas

STORY BY MICHELLE DILLON
AND JAY NEAL
Cherokee County Living

The Tomato Bowl has managed to transcend other high school football palaces in Texas by being a historical beacon for Jacksonville, as well as serving as a link to the past for many families while remaining the hub of the community and for the Jacksonville Independent School, owners of the jewel.

After the school district received approval in August 1939 for the Tomato Bowl to be built under the Federal Works Progress Administration, construction began in early 1940 after bonds valued at \$20,000 were issued in December 1939.

The stadium was constructed on the site of the original East Side School.

Bleachers were built into the hillside on the west (home) side of the facility, concession stands, observation decks and a couple of large rooms for the working media were constructed at the top, on the foundation of the old school.

A competition track encircled the football field and the track hosted the annual Tomato Bowl Relays for decades. What had previously been the school's basement area was converted into dressing rooms and equipment storage areas.

The red iron ore rocks, that are still in place today, have an important role in the building's history.

Not only were the stones cemented together to form the walls, arches and support columns, but

many were sold to the school district by county residents who hauled them into town from their farms in order to earn a little bit of extra money.

Descendants of some of those farmers continue to proudly call Cherokee County home.

The name “Tomato Bowl” was selected as a tribute to the agricultural roots of the community – Jacksonville was known as “The Tomato Capital of the World” at that time.

Desperately needing a face lift and some repairs, the Tomato Bowl went through a \$15 million renovation project in 2018-19 after voters approved a bond issue to modernize the venue.

Many amenities such as an artificial playing surface, new stadium lights, new dressing rooms, new concession stands and ticket booths, a new scoreboard with a video screen and chair back seats were added to the Tomato Bowl.

One thing remained the same and that was the red iron rocks – a symbol of local pride and tradition-- that have been a key component of the Tomato Bowl since its inception.

The Tomato Bowl continues to be recognized as a state-wide treasure.

In 2019 the stadium was voted as the Best Public Improvement for a city under 50,000 population by the Texas Downtown Association.

This past summer the Tomato Bowl was selected by Dave Campbell’s Texas Football as the No. 1 High School Football Stadium in Texas.

The facility is also a member of the Texas Football Stadium Hall of Fame.

The 8,343-capacity stadium is the home of Fightin’ Indian football and soccer teams as well as Fightin’ Maiden soccer.

Jacksonville High School’s annual graduation ceremony is also held at the Tomato Bowl.

In the past, concerts, youth soccer tournaments and even a stage play have been featured at the Tomato Bowl.

The Jacksonville community formally commemorated the Historic Tomato Bowl having been named as the No. 1 high school football stadium in Texas for its first game of the 2025 season.

The award was determined by the number of votes cast in a contest sponsored by Dave Campbell’s Texas Football during the summer.



A few minutes prior to the kick off of the Fightin’ Indians’ season opener against Center, state Sen. Robert Nichols, along with Mayor Randy Gorham and City Manager James Hubbard presented Jacksonville Independent School District superintendent Brad Stewart with several awards noting the achievement that was bestowed upon the stadium that will turn 85-years-old next month.

To wrap up the festivities, a skydiver from East Texas Skydiving out of Gladewater descended from the skies and made a perfect landing on the Indian logo at midfield, all while carrying a large American flag.

In the late afternoon, the party got started with tailgating, games such as cornhole and super-sized Jenga, face painting and food trucks in front of the Tomato Bowl entrance along Austin Street.

Many in attendance said they faithfully voted for the Tomato Bowl in the poll and that they were thrilled to learn the facility had beaten out 63 other stadiums in Texas to win the honor.

One of those taking part in the fun was Dave Anderson.



Anderson said he hoped the recognition would give Jacksonville an advantage when it came to hosting a playoff game.

Others came in support of their children who were taking part in the evening's events, such as Amber Vasquez.

Her daughter Olivia is a Cherokee Charmer. Both had voted in the poll. The senior Vasquez said she thought it was awesome that the Tomato Bowl was named best high school stadium. The younger Vasquez said it was good to see everyone coming together instead of distancing themselves and she

hoped everyone would have fun.

Shunetta Reed and other parent volunteers grilled hamburgers for the cheerleaders. Reed said the food was also given to Charmers and other students. She noted that the Tomato Bowl was a beautiful stadium and hoped the [football] team could earn a win.

School board member Dean Dublin said there was a good turnout for the event and said it was a good build up to a new year. He said he hoped to see the kids play hard and looked forward to the program continuing to grow.





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Ernesto Gómez
P.O. Box 2554 • Jacksonville, TX 75766
903.284.8645 • egomez8645@gmail.com

 **FREE ESTIMATES**

Meet Our Team

jacksonville.ebby.com



Bo Jackson

903.393.9732
bojackson@ebby.com



Brandy Sampson

430.272.0310
brandysampson@ebby.com



Brenda Stahelin

903.780.9900
brendas@ebby.com



Cheryl Rea

903.743.5489
cherylrea@ebby.com



John Magouyrk

903.339.5399
johnm@ebby.com



Max Briley

903.393.2460
maxbriley@ebby.com



Stacy Williams

813.944.7822
stacywilliams@ebby.com



Tonya Sanford

903.721.0048
tonyasanford@ebby.com



Vickie Lough

903.721.2888
vickielough@ebby.com



EBBY HALLIDAY
— REAL ESTATE —

Kelly Lowe

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR | 903-283-6358
kellylowe@ebby.com

Melanie Baker

SALES LEADER | 903-360-0771
melaniebaker@ebby.com

