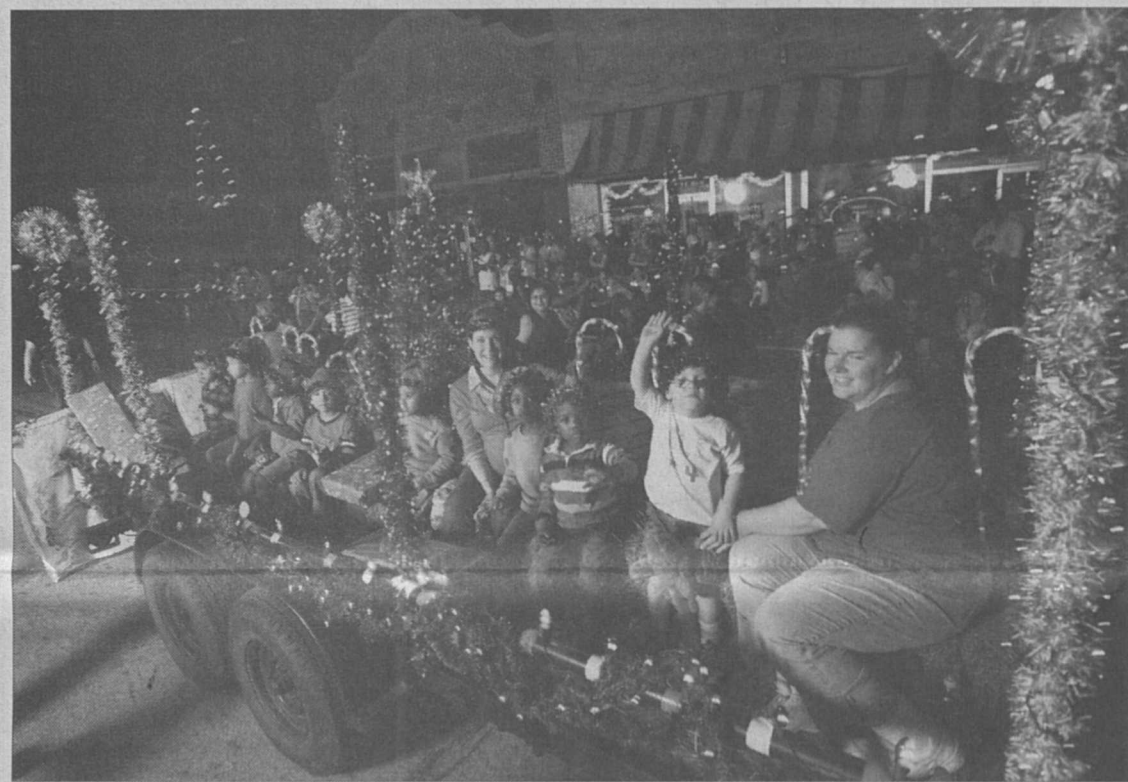




Birdie's Flowers and Gifts won the Best Commercial Category.



Gus Seaholm and his grandchildren Talon and Drayton Canaris won the Best Use of Lights Category.



Columbus Head Start won the Best Theme Category.

Views Around The Lake

by Cindy Klopsteck

"As I sat on a sunny bank on Christmas Day in the morning, I spied 3 ships come sailing in."
—Washington Irving

As I drove into Eagle Lake on a sunny Monday morning 15 days before Christmas, I spied 4 18-wheelers, through my rearview mirror, in a precise line hovering directly behind my slowing car. Meanwhile in front of me were 5 trucks lined in equal precision, and speeding to my left, headed in the opposite direction, were 3 more. We were an uneasy close-knit group.

So there were 12 big 18-wheelers and me in my little compact car.

When I got to the office the first thing I wanted to know was if the Rice football team had won Friday night - and I learned the score, checked the numbers and happily found they had won again - by 1 point.

Christmas approaching..... and numbers, numbers, numbers. I remembered the above quote from memorized verse some many years ago. Mr. Irving seemed to be experiencing a peaceful Christmas scenario, but what's significant to us - number-wise - in Eagle Lake?

***On the 12 days of Christmas our hometown offers us ---
12 - 18-wheelers (big, bad and always rolling).

11 - Raiders Running. Aren't we all proud of the success of the Rice football program and each individual involved: waterboys to players to cheerleaders to coaches to parents....and those behind the scene.

10 - Lighted Parade Floats. The annual Eagle Lake Christmas Parade was a lighted sight to behold, and all participants were happy and small-town proud.

9 - Muddy Rice Fields. Or 9+, but the fields are an important part of our history, our economy

and our heritage.

8 - Leafy Square Trees. Not many town squares can boast the 8 large and lovely trees that we have lining the perimeter of the city hall and post office - our central town square.

7 - Trees a-lighted. And speaking of that central square, we get to view 7 lovely lighted Christmas trees in store front windows, with additional holiday decorations provided for our enjoyment by the local garden club.

6 - Trains a-whistling. Like the 18-wheelers, our history with transportation confronts us daily - and loudly. But there's also beauty in a passing train - and visit the restored depot when you get a chance.

5 - Flying V's of Geese. Face it, we will never tire of the overhead beauty of geese in flight. Regardless of whether or not it makes us "The Goosehunting Capitol of the World", we are proud and content

in our own right to accommodate these annual visitors.

4 - Blocks of Store Fronts. I always feel the great nostalgic American painter Norman Rockwell would have loved our small-town USA atmosphere. We should love and appreciate - and therefore keep maintained - that very precious atmosphere.

3 - Attwater Prairie Chickens. (The population is successfully growing.)

2 - Lonely Alligators. (You know they are around here - and you KNOW there's more than 2.)

1 - Big Town Lake. No matter how you "figure" it, this all "adds up" to a lovely rural small-town Christmas scenario. And aren't we lucky to be able to "count" our everyday-kind-of-blessings in Eagle Lake?

Happy Small-Town Christmas to You and Yours!

Livestock Market News

For the week ending Dec. 8, cash feeder steer prices at Texas auctions were down somewhat from the previous week's average, with most of the decline coming late in the week.

However, prices remain higher than at this time last year.

Fed cattle prices were also lower than last week, but higher than a year ago.

Cotton prices finished the week lower as increasing harvest-time supplies continue to pressure the market.

Wheat prices were higher again this week, with ongoing concerns about U.S. and international supplies pushing the market higher.

As for futures markets, feeder cattle futures closed the week lower, while finished cattle, cotton, wheat and corn were higher. Unseasonably warm temperatures prevailed statewide until a weekend cold front dropped temperatures, but brought little rainfall.

Winter wheat continues to suffer from dry soils with most of the acreage in fair to very poor condition.

However, the dry weather did allow rapid progress on cotton, grain sorghum, pecan and citrus harvest.

Pastures were rated in mostly fair to good condition with supplemental feeding on the increase.

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TAX TIPS from RAY

If you have already recognized capital gains in 2007, you should consider selling securities (that have declined in value) no later than December 31, 2007. These losses will be deductible on your 2007 return to the extent of your recognized capital gains, plus \$3,000. **Tax Tip.** These losses may have the added benefit of reducing your income to a level that you qualify for other tax breaks (e.g., the child tax credit, the HOPE credit and IRA contributions). **Planning Alert.** If within 30 days before or after the sale of loss securities, you acquire the same securities, the loss will not be allowed currently because of the wash sale rules.

Until Next Week...

Raymond L. Viktorin, Jr.
Certified Public Accountant

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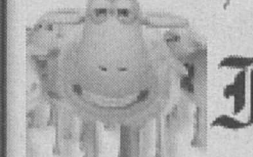
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