



Lawrence and Catherine Berger

## Bergers Celebrate 50th Anniversary

Lawrence and Catherine Berger of Garwood renewed their wedding vows on their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on June 21 at 2 p.m. at Lehrer Memorial United Methodist Church with Rev. Ardie Nelson officiating, and attended by family members.

Following the ceremony, their children, Liz and Cullen Grissom and Jeff and Khristi Berger, and grandchildren, Casey Matzke, David Grissom, and Holly and Jacob Berger, honored them with a reception in the Fellowship Hall.

The golden theme was carried out in the decorations. Catherine's wedding dress was displayed be-

tween an arbor decorated with ivy. Seventy-five guests from El Campo, Wharton, Columbus, Eagle Lake, League City, Port Lavaca, Sealy, College Station, Sheridan, San Marcos, Houston, Nada and Garwood joined Catherine and Lawrence in celebrating this joyous occasion. We would like to thank everyone for celebrating with us.

House party members included Anita Meisner, Pauline Solomon, Jo Ann Bunge and Anna Wiese. Lovely refreshments of assorted cheeses and crackers, assorted tropical fruit, mixed nuts, anniversary cake and fruit punch were enjoyed.

## Parks Department Discusses Bat Benefits

Most of us seldom notice bats, and we rarely think about them much unless we hear a story on the television or read about them in the newspaper.

In most cases, bats make the news for something negative. But the real news story that often goes untold is the largely unseen and rarely considered economic and aesthetic value bats bring to our agricultural fields and our neighborhoods.

While most people are aware of the pest control benefits of bats in general (i.e. more bats equal fewer mosquitoes), new research has concluded that bats represent a gold mine in annual savings to Texas agriculture.

In a study conducted in an eight county region in southwestern Texas, researchers concluded that the 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) that captured insects over the area's cotton fields saved farmers up to \$1.7 million annually.

The savings came primarily from a reduced need for chemical pesticides.

The bats ate millions of cotton bollworm moths through the summer months, thus reducing the number of moth larvae that survived to eat the cotton crops.

In addition to the economic value of the reduced pesticide purchases, the reduction in pesticide use also means a healthier land, with fewer chemicals in crops, soil, surface water, and groundwater.

The Mexican free-tailed bat is just one of 32 bat species found in Texas.

Our bat diversity results from the wonderful variety of natural habitats here in the state.

Bats are aerial acrobats, with extremely flexible wings and

lightweight bodies, just made for capturing insect prey in dark skies.

Bats are the only mammals capable of true flight.

All the bats in Texas, with one exception, capture and eat huge amounts of insects.

For example, the Mexican free-tailed bat colony from Bracken Cave near San Antonio consumes an estimated 250 tons of insects each night during summer months.

Several bat species specialize in eating larger insects that are common pests, including roaches, centipedes, scorpions, beetles, grasshoppers, and stinkbugs.

Texas is also home to an important bat plant pollinator, the Mexican long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris nivalis*), which feeds on nectar from night-blooming agave and other cacti flowers in West and South Texas, plus Mexico.

We share our natural space with bats every day.

Bats may live nearby in both urban and rural settings using a wide variety of habitat, including cliff faces, caves, tree cavities, among tree branches, bridges, and in man-made bat houses.

By erecting a bat house, you're putting out the welcome mat and encouraging bats to live and consume insects on your property.

Bat house designs mimic the natural roosting preferences of many bat species, with narrow sheltered spaces between 1/4 inch and one inch in width, and temperatures ranging from 80 to 100 degrees F daily.

To encourage bat house occupancy, choose a site where the house receives at least six hours of direct sunlight each day, from first morning light to early afternoon.

Place the bat house 12 to 15 feet off the ground, on a metal pole to discourage climbing predators.

Avoid shady areas or those beneath overhanging tree limbs.

Locations near ponds or other water sources increase bat house success in attracting resident bats.

Bats, like any mammal, can contract the rabies virus.

In wild populations, the incidence of rabies is very low (less than half of one percent), and having one bat in a colony that is

rabid does not mean the entire colony will become rabid.

For more information about bats, bat house plans, bat house research results, and bat exclusion information, visit the Bat Conservation International website: [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org).

And the next time you spot a bat flying the evening skies, sit back and enjoy the nightly pest control in action.

If you would like to contact your local biologist, see our website at; <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildlifebiologist>.

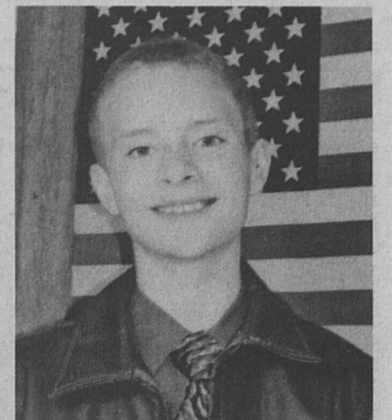
## Litzman On Who's Who

Zane Litzman of Sealy Jr. High School is being honored by the Who's Who Registry of Academic Excellence for outstanding academic achievement and extracurricular involvement. Zane is the son of Mark and Barbara Litzman and the grandson of Kay Frybert and the late Joe F. Frybert.

Litzman's name will appear in the hardback edition of the Who's Who Registry of Academic Excellence alongside other students across the nation recognizing them as exemplary students.

The Who's Who Registry of Academic Excellence is a publication honoring the nation's top students. Less than one percent of students nationwide are featured in the book. Students are listed because of outstanding academic performance and involvement in extracurricular activities in the community.

They are nominated by school



officials, leaders of youth activity groups and third party educational organizations.

Students listed in the publication are also eligible to receive a Who's Who scholarship for as much as \$5,000 toward the college of their choice. Scholarships are funded in part through publication sales.

For more information visit [www.whoswhopublications.com](http://www.whoswhopublications.com).

## Feral Hogs Causing Property Damage

Feral hogs have been a problem for many landowners throughout Texas for many years, but what exactly is a feral hog and how did they get here?

The term feral is generally used to describe something that was once domesticated and is now wild, thus this is the case with Feral Hogs.

Our current feral hogs are most likely decedents of formerly domesticated swine herds that were allowed to roam free and graze.

This is of course a far cry from the method that most use to raise hogs today, utilizing confinement pens, sterile environments and exceptional disease control precautions.

Without mans intervention

and controlled breeding, feral hogs have been able to adapt to their environments multiply rapidly.

This has lead to our current situation of feral hogs rooting up hay meadows and destroying property.

Many landowners have tried various methods for trying to control feral hogs. Everything from hunting, shooting, trapping and even exclusion, but nothing seems to have made a dent in their population.

If you are interested in learning more about controlling feral hogs, then please mark Friday July 11th, 2008 on your calendar. The Texas AgriLife Extension Service of Austin, Colorado, Fay-

ette and Washington counties will be sponsoring a Feral Hog Symposium at the Cat Spring Ag Society Hall in Cat Spring. Specialist with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Wildlife Services and Wildlife Biologists will be speaking on the feral hog biology, the best methods for controlling feral hogs, the feral hog abatement project and special considerations to utilize in dealing with feral hogs on your property.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 1:00 p.m. with registration and the program will follow around 1:30 p.m. and last until 6:30 p.m.

Five CEU's will be given to pesticide applicators. A \$20 registration fee will be charged at

the door, which will include your meal, refreshments and handout materials for the meeting.

Anyone interested in attending is asked to contact one of the offices of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Austin, Colorado, Fayette and Washington counties by July 7, 2008 so appropriate arrangements can be made.

If you have a disability that may require an accommodation to participate in the conference, please contact us at least 8 days before the program at (979) 732-2082.

Educational programs conducted by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, handicap, or national origin.

## Important Oak Wilt Disease Information

The following information is from the Texas Forest Service. More information can be found at [www.txforestservice.tamu.edu](http://www.txforestservice.tamu.edu).

### What Is Oak Wilt

Oak wilt is one of the most destructive tree diseases in the United States. The disease has killed more than 1 million trees in 70 Central Texas counties.

Oak wilt is an infectious vascular disease caused by the fungus *Ceratocystis fagacearum*. The fungus invades and disables the water conducting system in susceptible trees.

All oaks can be infected with oak wilt, but some species of oak are more susceptible than others. Red oaks, particularly Spanish oak (*Quercus buckleyi*), are very susceptible to the fungus.

White oaks, like post oak (*Q. stellata*) and bur oak (*Q. macrocarpa*), are resistant to the fungus and rarely die from the disease. Live oaks (*Q. virginiana* and *Q. fusiformis*) are intermediate in susceptibility to oak wilt.

However, they are seriously impacted by the disease because of their tendency to form root sprouts that result in a vast interconnected root system allowing the disease to easily spread to adjacent trees.

### How Does Oak Wilt Spread

Oak wilt spreads to other oak trees in two ways – long distances with the aid of certain beetles or locally through common or grafted roots.

Sap-feeding (nitidulid) beetles are believed to be responsible for much of the long distance spread of oak wilt. During the spring, the oak wilt fungus forms special spore-producing structures called fungal mats on red oaks.

Nitidulid beetles are small (about 1/8-inch long) and are attracted to oak wilt fungal mats because the mats have a sweet, "fruity" smell.

Mats form underneath the bark of diseased red oaks and

are not known to occur on live oak trees. The fungal mats apply pressure under the bark causing a tiny crack to form.

These mats can be found on the trunk and major branches of red oaks.

When a nitidulid beetle feeds on an oak wilt fungal mat, spores of the oak wilt fungus will cling to the body of the beetle. Nitidulid beetles also feed on tree sap associated with fresh wounds.

If a beetle contaminated with oak wilt spores lands on a fresh wound on a healthy oak, then that tree can become infected. Tree wounds can be made by man or nature, but nitidulid beetles are attracted to both.

Once established, the fungus moves from one tree to the next through common or grafted roots.

### How Can I Prevent My Trees From Getting Oak Wilt

Prevention plays an important role in the management of oak wilt. Landowners and homeowners can take an active role in oak wilt prevention by taking the following steps:

1. Avoid pruning or wounding oaks between February 1 and July 1. This is the time of year when oak wilt fungal mats are most likely to form and nitidulid beetles are active.

If a nitidulid beetle carries oak wilt spores from a fungal mat to a fresh wound on an uninfected oak tree, the fungus could become established in the disease-free tree.

The least hazardous periods for pruning are during the coldest days of midwinter or extended periods of hot weather in mid- to late summer.

2. Sterilize/Sanitize all pruning equipment between trees using denatured methyl alcohol (shellac thinner), isopropyl alcohol, or a general purpose household disinfectant such as Lysol, Lister-

ine, Pine-Sol or related products. Using household bleach is NOT recommended as it can be corrosive to pruning tools as well as people.

3. Immediately paint all wounds on oaks to prevent contact with contaminated beetles. Wounds should be painted, regardless of the time of year they were made, with commercial tree wound dressing or latex paint (color doesn't matter!). Wounds can be either man made or natural and include freshly-cut stumps and damaged surface roots.

4. Do not transport or buy unseasoned firewood. Fungal mats may form on unseasoned red oak firewood infected with oak wilt making it possible to spread oak wilt to uninfected areas. Seasoned firewood (dried for at least one year) should not present a threat of spreading oak wilt. Also, burning infected wood cannot transmit oak wilt.

5. Promptly remove and either burn or bury all red oaks that are dying or have been recently killed by oak wilt. Generally, this would

be oak wilt-infected red oaks that die in the late summer or fall. This will prevent nitidulid beetles from spreading spores from fungal mats that may form on the trees in the fall or the following spring.

### When Is The Best Time To Trim My Oak Trees

New oak wilt centers are started when a contaminated beetle finds a fresh wound on a healthy oak tree.

Insect populations in general increase during mild spring like weather and mild spring like weather is when fungal mats are most likely to form. So the most likely time a contaminated beetle will find your tree is when the weather is mild.

The best time to prune is when a contaminated beetle is least likely to find your tree. The heat of summer and the cold of winter are when the beetle populations are the lowest and fungal mats are least likely to form. Therefore that is the best time to prune to prevent against an oak wilt infection.

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