... Friends of the RLCC

(Continued from previous page) A karaoke machine has been purchased and will be put under the Christmas tree for the residents. The auxiliary will also be giving the residents a new blanket throw and socks as individual Christmas gifts. The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 am.

The next monthly meeting will be held in January 2025.

Pooling Together

By Amanda Ogle Just before 5 a.m. on March 24, a pair of EF1 tornadoes spun down in northern Parker County, west of Fort Worth. Both cut tracks of more than 5 miles with winds that peaked at 100 mph, toppling trees and power lines, damaging homes, and injuring folks near the small community of Poolville.

One of them carved a path through history.

That tornado toppled the steeple at the Oak Tree Baptist Church as it moved northeast through town and headed straight for the historic Poolville Cemetery. There the town's 120-year-old tabernacle-and an even older oak tree-were flattened, strewn among headstones.

Poolville, population 2,300, was established in the early 1880s and named for a large pool in the Clear Fork of the Trinity River that was fed by cold springs. The pool was a popular place for early settlers to gather. Over time the town grew, and around 1903 a tabernacle made of bois d'arc wood was built for the community.

The tabernacle's dirt floor (until concrete was laid in the early 1950s) was the meeting place for the community. church services, Revivals, funerals and just about anything that you could call a gathering was held under the 50-by-75foot structure. "Up until it was destroyed by the tornado, it was still being used for sunrise Easter weddings services. and hootenannies," says Denise Yankie, fifth-generation а Poolville resident and retired teacher and coach.

"It was the only open, public structure that could be used for funerals, and it was loved and appreciated by everyone in the community," says Chris Van Rite, a 35-year resident. "Even the kids would go and have ice cream socials there. You just got this reverent feeling when you walked in. It was special."

Doris Sanders has lived in Poolville for 64 vears. "Everybody grew up with the tabernacle," she says. "It was the landmark of Poolville."

Towering over the old wooden structure was a giant, sprawling post oak tree. Yankie, a member of Tri-County Electric Cooperative, believes the tree was 150-200 years old when it was ripped from its roots by the tornado.

The tree fell toward the Methodist church, and the tabernacle flew about 50 feet north, with part of the roof resting on the slab. The town sprang into action. "We had the tabernacle down within a day, and people were already coming down, wanting to take pieces of it," Yankie says.

But the locals knew they couldn't let Mother Nature take this piece of history away from them.

The salvageable pieces of the tabernacle were stored away, awaiting the day they could be used in construction of a new tabernacle. But before that can happen, a lot of funds are needed.

It's believed that the new structure will cost at least \$150,000. In late June, the community held its first tabernacle fundraiser, with food trucks and a concert. They have



Christmas Activities! Robert Lee Care Center residents were treated to an outing to San Angelo recently to spend time with family and friends. After a meal at Henry's, the group toured the Christmas lights at Fort Concho.

raised about \$81,000 so far plus pledges for most of the remainder. Wood slabs from the oak tree-some of them handpainted by Van Rite's motherin-law, some laser etched-were sold at the event, adding about \$2,600 to the total.

Another fundraiser was held at the annual Lord's Acre community festival in October. Much of the wood from the oak tree was also saved, so more woodworks will be built and

sold, including tabletops from the larger pieces. "It had an unusual burl in it, with all these curlicues throughout the grain,"says Van Rite, who is leading that effort.

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