

Daniel Lanigan

Mrs. Dorman

4th Grade ELAR

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It's Christmas Time in Lufkin, Texas

On November 18, 2017, the people of Lufkin, Texas gathered in the parking lot at the Lufkin Mall to witness the collision of two episodes in the community's history. "The Thundering 13", the 2017 U.S. Little League baseball champions, lit the Rudolph pumping unit and the start of the Christmas holiday season was marked for the 51st year in a row.

For many years the Lufkin Mall parking lot has become a local historical landmark with the arrival and lighting of Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer. People make trips through Lufkin just to get a glimpse of it. In 1967, when Lufkin Industries provided a pump-jack decked out as Rudolph, a local historical landmark was established. Lufkin Industries provided, assembled, maintained, disassembled, transported, and stored Rudolph for forty-eight years, until General Electric purchased Lufkin Industries in 2016.

Since Rudolph's arrival in 1967, generations have come together and watched his lighting as a family to start the Christmas season. Grandparents and great-grandparents come with their families to watch the pumping unit light up Lufkin's night sky. Mrs. Edwina Mills, a Lufkin High School teacher, remembers the first lighting at the Lufkin Industries Foundry on Angelina Avenue in 1967. According to her, Rudolph was moved to the Lufkin Mall from the

Foundry, so that more people in the area could admire him driving around the loop. There was also more room at the mall for spectators to watch the lighting.

People were afraid that Lufkin's Christmas landmark would disappear with the transfer in ownership of Lufkin Industries to General Electric. People in the Lufkin community organized and signed a petition for General Electric to save Rudy and they responded. Rudolph the Red Nosed Pumper would remain as a Lufkin historical landmark for years to come.

Rudolph's lights can be seen from miles away as people travel through Lufkin on Interstate 69. Because Lufkin is a hub city for east Texas, people from all over the region know about his popularity. Local radio stations and television stations, such as Kicks FM 105.3 and KTRE9, broadcast the annual lighting of pumper jack Rudy. People from all over the Gulf Coastal Plains region flock to Rudolph to capture their annual Christmas pictures.

If Rudy were to be removed from the Lufkin community, there would be much disappointment. Because of the recent purchase of Lufkin Industries by GE, many people lost their jobs. Because of layoffs people had to move away from Lufkin. People remember Rudolph from their childhood. Since the closure of Lufkin Industries, pump-jacks are no longer manufactured in Lufkin. However, one can drive throughout Texas and still see the Lufkin Industries name on pump-jacks being used. Our Rudolph is the only pump-jack in the Lufkin area that unites the community to remember such a vital part of our local history. If GE were to ever stop this holiday tradition, our community would have a hard time finding something to replace it.

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