

TEXAS CO-OP POWER



‘So Big and Impossible’

Georgia O’Keeffe found inspiration in the Panhandle



Trinity Valley EC
Local News
SEE PAGE 18

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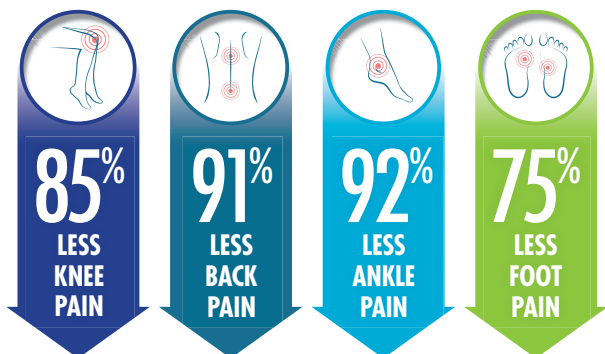
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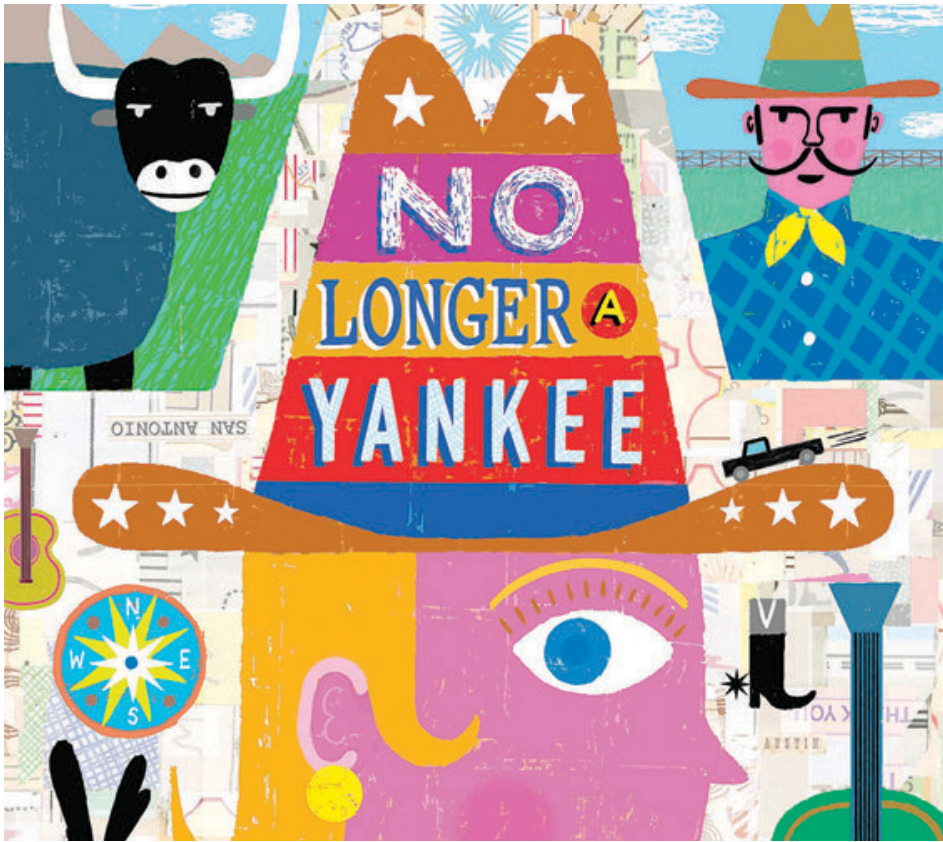
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Story by Pam LeBlanc | Illustration by Noah Woods

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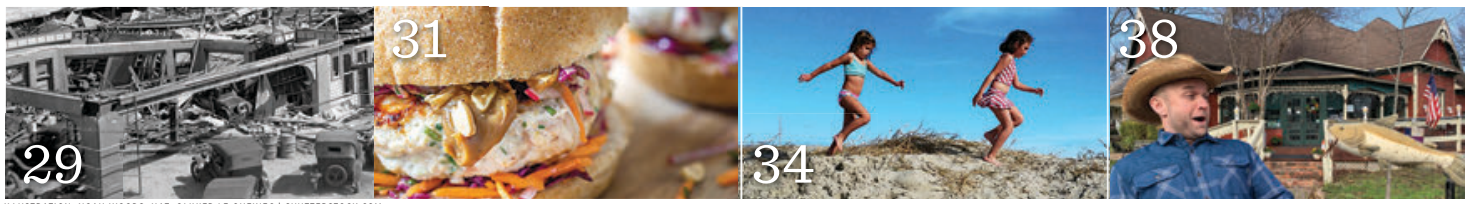
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NEXT MONTH

MYTX *What does it mean to be Texan? We asked a variety of folks who have special connections to the state.*



ON THE COVER A photo of Georgia O’Keeffe in Canyon—and Palo Duro Canyon, her muse in Texas. Canyon photo by Rob Greebon | ImagesfromTexas.com

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Stark Memories

My family lived in Orange during the mid-1950s [*Firmly Rooted*, May 2020]. I recall a classmate was the grandson of the Stark-Lutcher marriage. I recall being invited out to a huge plantation house by his parents to spend the day with him playing and exploring the land.

**BILL WHEELLESS JR. | EVANT
HAMILTON COUNTY EC**

One thing the article did not mention is the church that Frances Ann Lutcher built. Known as the Lutcher Memorial Building, it was built for the First Presbyterian Church of Orange. It was built around three stained-glass windows, made by Lamb Studios, which Lutcher purchased at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. The granite was quarried in Llano.

**DAVID AND PATTY MOUTON | MEADOWLAKES
PEDERNALES EC**

Horse Sense

I enjoyed Martha Deeringer's history of the Spanish mustang in Texas [*Horses' Roundabout Trail*, May 2020]. This history is alive and well in East Texas. Vicki Ives of Karma Farms in Marshall has dedicated her life to the preservation, promotion and love of America's first horse.

**CHUCK WATERS | MARSHALL
RUSK COUNTY EC**



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My Old Friend

Every day is scary with this virus spreading like wildfire. New rules to live by: sheltering in, masks, 6 feet apart, empty grocery store shelves.

I shut all that out for a moment when I opened my mailbox and there was my old friend, *Texas Co-op Power*—arriving on the same date, entertaining, always comforting.

I don't know why, but tears filled my eyes. I was so happy to see something that had not gone by the wayside.

JANE PATTERSON | TEXARKANA | BOWIE-CASS EC



Ripple Effect

In response to *Splash Across Texas* [Currents, May 2020], there is also a Texas-shaped pool in Hilltop Lakes. My grandmother lived there, and the best memories were made at that pool.

**ASHLEY PHILLIPS | BROADDUS
SAM HOUSTON EC**

Here's my Texas-shaped pool [below] in western rural Fayette County near West Point.

**JOE W. ARNOLD | WEST POINT
FAYETTE EC**

We've had fun through the years teaching our kids and now grandkids Texas geography by swimming around the pool at Hilltop Lakes.

A favorite memory was a big family celebration of the Texas sesquicentennial in 1986. My sister was living in Wyoming, and we joked about our wonderful Texas-shaped swimming pool and the baby pool being in the shape of Wyoming—boring rectangle.

**JANA VICK | DESOTO
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC**

Name That Snake

Thanks to the article [*Common Snakes of Texas*, April 2020], I was able to correctly identify a snake that my dogs attacked. I was afraid it was a water moccasin, but it was a nonvenomous diamondback water snake.

**CINDY LUTKENHAUS | GAINESVILLE
PENTEX ENERGY**

Snakes are friends, never foes. The snakes are simply trying to survive in a home that was taken from them, in a world that is constantly changing at the hands of human beings.

RICHARD CLAY CROWELL | VIA FACEBOOK

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   Texas Co-op Power

LIFESTYLE

Social Distance at the Drive-In

AS MOVIE THEATERS across the country were forced to close to help slow the spread of the coronavirus, many drive-in theaters found themselves in a unique position to remain open, offering an increasingly rare opportunity for public entertainment while allowing patrons to maintain distance from one another.

For some drive-ins, like the Showboat Drive-In Theater in Hockley, outside Houston, it led to a momentary uptick in business. As Showboat owner Andrew Thomas told The Associated Press, ticket sales increased by about 40% one March weekend when the theater otherwise would have expected a 40% loss. “Obviously this isn’t the way you’d want it to occur, but I’m excited for the idea that there may be a new generation of people that will get to experience going to a drive-in theater,” he said.

To find a drive-in near you, check out our story *Drive In, Chill Out* at TexasCoopPower.com.



NATURE

FEATHER IN THEIR CAPS

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Audubon Texas have selected Bastrop, Dallas, Houston and Port Aransas for the Bird City Texas distinction. They are recognized for community engagement, habitat management and threat reduction for birds in the inaugural year of the campaign. Their Bird City designations last through 2022.

Fort Worth’s Coyote Drive-In



**JULY 1
IS NATIONAL
POSTAL WORKER DAY**

**1.6
million**

That’s how many copies of Texas Co-op Power magazine are mailed to subscribers—mostly electric cooperative members—every month.

CO-OP PEOPLE

Brave Faces

WHEN NICOLE CRABTREE HANEY read that her local hospital was facing a mask shortage due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Wise Electric Cooperative customer service representative got to sewing.

The rest of Decatur, in North Texas, did, too—fulfilling the hospital's need right away. But Haney, who has a sister and two daughters who work in the medical field, was undeterred. She realized that her co-workers at the co-op, who are

critical to keeping the lights on, could use the protection.

"I was able to get all the specs and qualifications of the masks that our hospital had asked to be made, and I dusted off my sewing machine and got to work," Haney said.

By mid-April, she had sewn nearly 250 masks, donating more than 100 to her co-workers and other essential workers.

"Honestly, this has turned into a bigger project than I anticipated," she said.

"It feels good to be able to help in some small way during these uncertain times that we are in."



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

It's not really summer until . . .

► **Tell us how** you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Please include your city and co-op.

Below are some of the responses to our May prompt: **The best part about being a mom is ...**

Hugs—real heartwarming hugs, not virtual hugs.

CAROLYN GOLAN | BELLVILLE
SAN BERNARD EC

Weed flowers and sticky kisses.

DEBORAH JENNINGS | HAWKINS
WOOD COUNTY EC

Getting to say, "Ask your dad."
MARK BROWNING | GOODRICH
SAM HOUSTON EC

Mothers turn into grandmothers, and you can send the kids back home.

MARIE MELGOZA | GRANBURY
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Having your kids grow up into adults you're very proud of who bear no resemblance to themselves as teenagers.

ELLEN PATTERSON | FATE
FARMERS EC

Knowing there is no way to be a perfect mom but a million ways to be a great mom.

JO LESTER | WIMBERLEY
PEDERNALES EC

Feeling the love you gave to your children come back to you 10 times greater.

GAIL VERNER | JUSTIN
COSERV

To see more responses, read Currents on our website.

THE ARTS

Culinary Canvas

Palo Duro Love Letters on Page 8 looks at Georgia O'Keeffe's creative legacy—her paintings and writing—from her time in Texas 100 years ago.

When the artist died in 1986, she left behind a collection of some 300 recipes, which Sotheby's auctioned in March, along with artistic works, books, clothes and other personal effects from the estates of O'Keeffe and her husband, noted photographer Alfred Stieglitz. Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library paid \$17.2 million for the whole lot.

The recipes, many handwritten on notecards, slips of paper and hotel stationery, reflect O'Keeffe's culinary passions. She was as exacting in her kitchen as she was on her canvases, growing vegetables at her New Mexico home, obtaining eggs from a local woman and weekly making yogurt from goat's milk.

O'Keeffe and her guests enjoyed a variety of dishes, including pecan butterball cookies, tomato aspic, vegetable soup, applesauce and chicken flautas.



ALMANAC

WAVING OLD GLORY

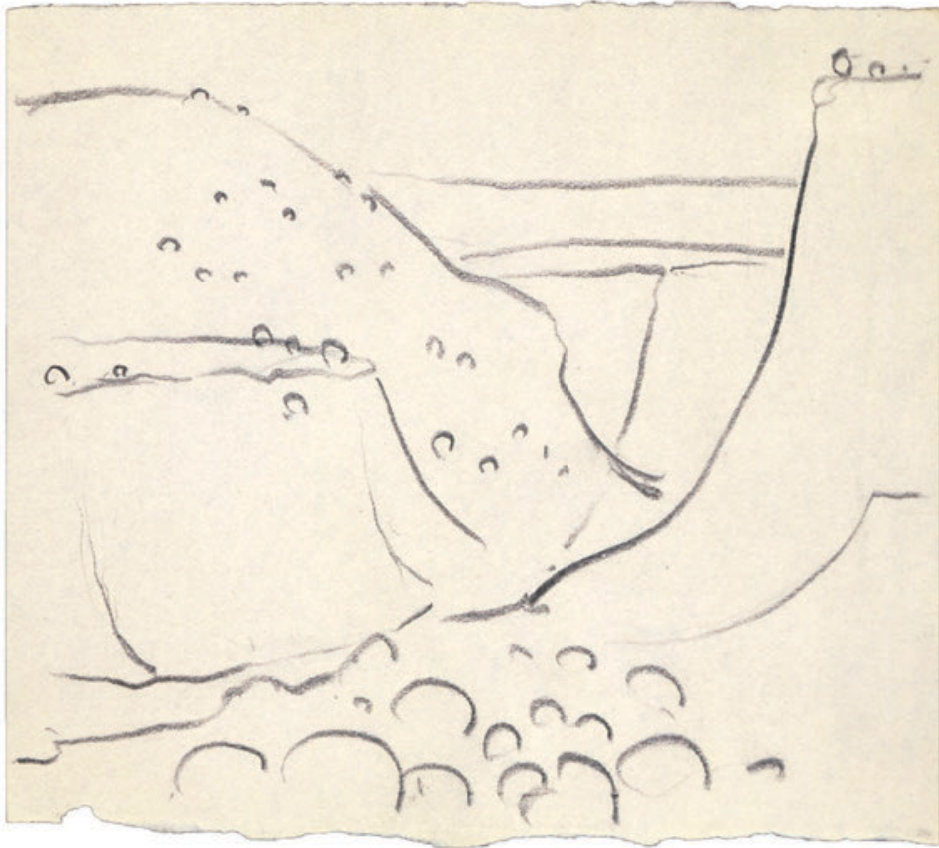
The U.S. flag is said to have been raised on San José Island, a sand barrier between Matagorda Island and Mustang Island in the Gulf, on July 26, 1845—the first time it was flown in Texas.



“There is something wonderful about the bigness and the loneliness and the windiness of it all,” O’Keeffe wrote to a friend.



PALO DURO LOVE LETTERS



Georgia O'Keeffe's
paintings captured
the Panhandle;
her wistful writings
brought it to life

BY CHRIS BURROWS

Ammy Von Lintel's art history students need little guidance when she shows them *Light Coming on the Plains No. III*. The abstract painting consists only of an elliptical shape formed by darkening cool hues and bisected by a horizontal line of paper.

The West Texas A&M University students aren't fine arts majors, but they recognize that image.

"I'm like 'What is this? You guys know what this is,'" Von Lintel says of the 1917 watercolor by Georgia O'Keeffe. "The students know what a sunset and a sunrise look like here, and you put up an O'Keeffe that's totally abstract. They're like, 'Oh yeah, she got it, and I get it.'"

O'Keeffe got it—the stunning way the sun breaks the horizon

on the Staked Plains of the Texas Panhandle—because she lived it.

One hundred years ago, O'Keeffe taught art on the same campus—years before her oil paintings would earn her the title Mother of American Modernism. O'Keeffe's Texas landscapes hang in galleries nationwide, but only recently has her dazzling prose—preserved in dozens of letters and studied by scholars—allowed the artist herself to convey the feelings that colored the paintings and painter. Her words show a stunning well of creativity within a young woman who was figuring out life—and how to stay upright in the craggy paths of Palo Duro Canyon.

O'Keeffe spent only a few years in Texas, but it had a hold on her.

"There is something wonderful about the bigness and the loneliness and the windiness of it all," O'Keeffe wrote to a friend. "I like it so much that I wonder if it's true—The country is almost all sky—and such wonderful sky—and the wind blows—blows hard—and the sun is hot—the glare almost blinding—but I don't care—I like it," she wrote another.

Clockwise from opposite: Georgia O'Keeffe's *Light Coming on the Plains No. III*. O'Keeffe, center, among friends in Texas; she crisscrossed the Panhandle by car, wagon, foot and train. One of her drawings of Palo Duro Canyon.

DRAWING: GEORGIA O'KEEFFE. UNTITLED (PALO DURO CANYON). 1916-1917. GRAPHITE ON PAPER, 3 7/8 X 5 INCHES. GEORGIA O'KEEFFE FOUNDATION. © GEORGIA O'KEEFFE MUSEUM. [2006.5.1]



‘Kick Your Heels in the Air’

Many decades before she would be hailed as “the undisputed doyenne of American painting” by *The New York Times*, O’Keeffe needed a job. That’s what brought her to Texas from Virginia in 1912, when the 24-year-old artist took a job teaching art in the Amarillo public school system. She had never been to Texas, knew no one when she arrived alone and had never taught.

She took to the place and the work. “Pretty soon, I got so interested in teaching I wondered why I should be paid for it,” O’Keeffe said in a 1974 interview.

In 1914, she relocated to New York City and expressed jubilation in 1916 when she was offered the job as head of the art department at what was then West Texas State Normal College, in Canyon, south of Amarillo. The Wisconsin native who had studied in Chicago and Virginia and taught in South Carolina was headed back to the Panhandle.

“Kick your heels in the air!” she wrote to a friend. “I’ve elected to go to Texas.”



Above: Friends in New York City supplied O’Keeffe with books and prints of textiles and pottery for her Canyon classroom. Left: Her 1917 yearbook photo.

Texas Panhandle and had never studied O’Keeffe. “I think the thing that also led me to study her is this strange connection of being in the department that is hers,” Von

Lintel says. “It takes some bravery to move into the middle of nowhere and fall in love with it, and I think she did.”

O’Keeffe is still present in the Panhandle. The Amarillo Museum of Art and the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum display her works.

“Canyon is very aware of its history with Georgia O’Keeffe,” says Carol Lovelady, PPHM director. “It’s a tremendous point of pride for the museum and for Canyon.”

The Georgia O’Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico, near where the artist spent her later years, houses many of her works, but her letters are kept at Yale University.

The trove is mostly correspondence between O’Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz, the New York City photographer whom she married in 1924. The letters were unsealed in 2006. In them, “She talks about abstraction, about how her mind works and about how she makes a piece,” Von Lintel says. “We learn about her technique, we learn about her thought process, her frustrations of like, ‘I’m seeing this form, but I can’t get it right.’”

The dozens of letters recorded life among the vestiges of the Old West: Texans coming to terms with a world

Red Landscape is on display at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum.

‘Big Quiet Moonlight’

A decade ago, Von Lintel needed a job. When West Texas A&M University offered her a position in O’Keeffe’s former department, the Kansas City native, who studied in California, moved her family to Amarillo. She had never lived in the

PHOTOS: COURTESY PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM. PAINTING: GEORGIA O’KEEFFE. RED LANDSCAPE, 1916-1917. OIL ON BOARD. COURTESY PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM.

“What she liked here were people that she felt like had a lot of red in their blood,” Von Lintel says.
“Red-blooded, vibrant people who go outside, who stand in the light and live their lives.”



O’Keeffe explored the canyon with fervor, writing of it in many letters.



at war and life as a 20-something who spent her free time not just painting on front porches but also shooting rifles, riding in cars with boys and walking for miles on end.

“It’s a wonderful night—still and warm and moonlight—big quiet moonlight—As I walked home alone in it—I was tired,” she wrote Stieglitz. “... I think the best way I can tell it to you is—that last night I loved the starlight—the dark—the wind and the miles and miles of the thin strip of dark that is land.”

‘So Big and Impossible’

Von Lintel began studying the letters in 2011, using them to assemble a timeline of O’Keeffe’s time in Texas. That work culminated in her book, *Georgia O’Keeffe’s Wartime Texas Letters*, published in March. The professor sought to empower the artist to tell her own story.

“I wanted her to just kind of stand on her own because when she was out here, she was on her own,” Von Lintel says.

The letters trace the feelings that shaped O’Keeffe’s early paintings, some of which feature 800-foot-deep Palo Duro Canyon—what she called “a curious slit in the plains.”

O’Keeffe explored the canyon with fervor, writing of it in many letters: “Yesterday was sunny and fine and I went to the Canyon again—about twenty miles east—climbed and scrambled about till I was ... out of breath many times over—

Hikers in Palo Duro in the 1910s.

and felt very little—such a tiny little part of what I could see had worn me out—Yes—I was very small and very puny and helpless—and all around was so big and impossible.”

Those “big and impossible” feelings are apparent in O’Keeffe’s 32 canyon works—many of which include imposing forms and dark colors, including deep reds. And while the iron-rich walls of the place do bear a reddish tinge, O’Keeffe’s feelings bore the rest.

“What she liked here were people that she felt like had a lot of red in their blood,” Von Lintel says. “Red-blooded, vibrant people who go outside, who stand in the light and live their lives.”

‘Terrifically Alive’

I n April 1917, O’Keeffe opened her first solo show, in New York. She also sold her first piece, a charcoal drawing of a Panhandle train, which she described in a letter: “A train was coming way off—just a light with a trail of smoke—white—I walked toward it—The sun and the train got to me at the same time—It’s great to see that terrifically alive black thing coming at you in the big frosty stillness.”

Von Lintel hopes her students, through O’Keeffe, can see the beauty right in front of them.

“One of the things I always do is connect whatever I’m teaching to the local area because students should learn to look around themselves and see art and beauty here,” she says. “It’s not like we’re in the middle of nowhere.”

Chris Burrows is a TEC senior communications specialist.

WEB EXTRAS

► Read online how a co-op spread Palo Duro Canyon’s beauty.

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the Storm



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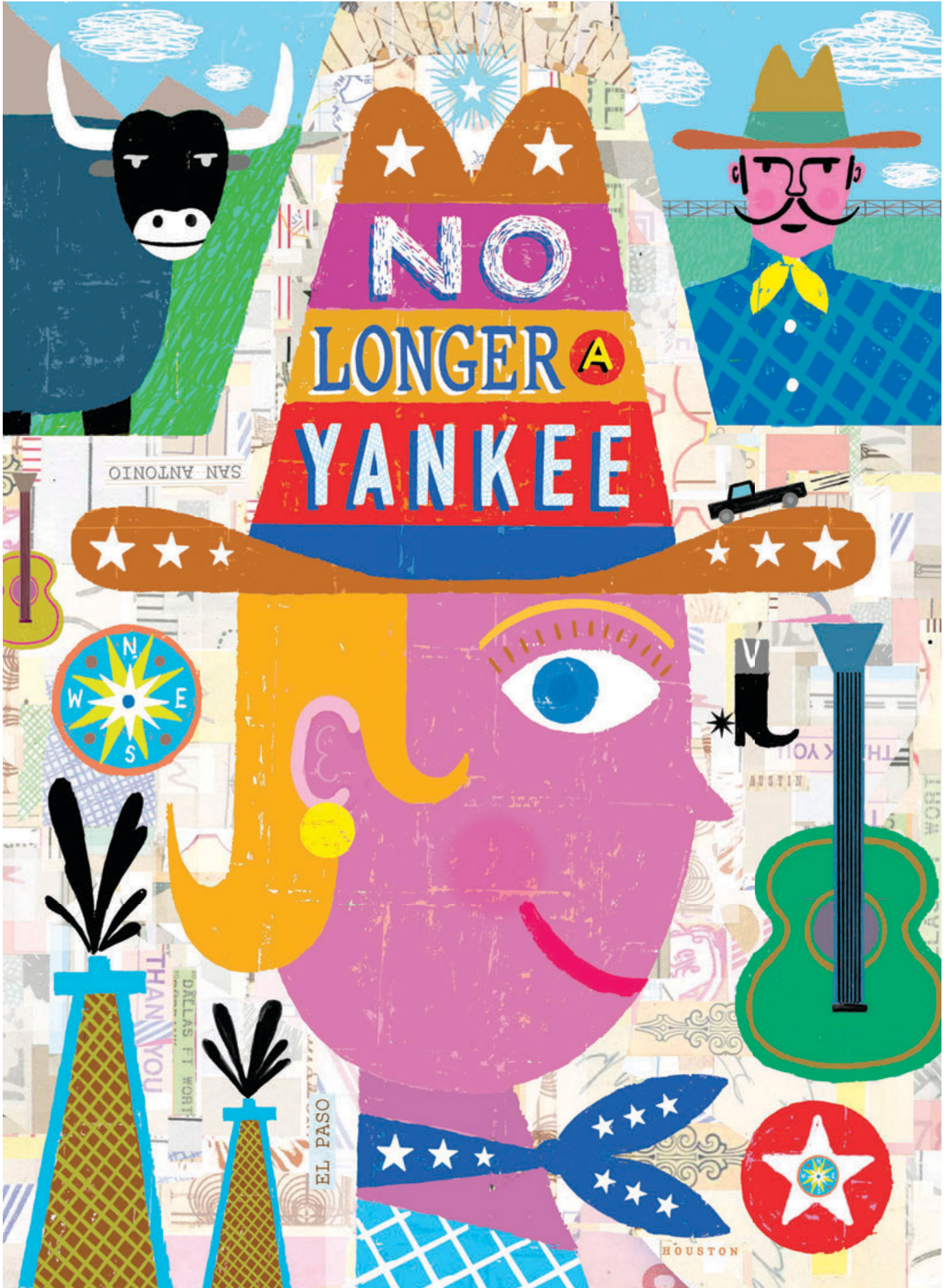
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I WAS BORN IN MICHIGAN but moved to Texas 50 years ago. I'm 56 now, which means I've spent 90% of my life as a resident of the Lone Star State. Until recently, I have not thought of myself as a Texan. I came from "up north."

In Ann Arbor, my family ate dinner, not supper. We sipped pop, not soda. We nibbled PEE-cons instead of pe-CONS—and never baked them into pies. And we never, ever blessed anybody's heart.

We moved to Texas in 1969, when my dad, an aeronautical engineer, transferred to Austin. In my 5-year-old mind's eye, I was moving to the land of tumbleweeds where people rode horses, wore cowboy hats and lived in a forest of prickly cactus. All that sounded exciting, but when I moved into a tract house in an Austin neighborhood, I still had to walk to school, and not once did I see a tumbleweed.

I've spent most of the past five decades thinking of myself as a misplaced Midwesterner. Texans are big, bold and, I used to think, a tad obnoxious when it came to state pride. Now I've changed my mind.

Texans are a proud lot, always noting how many generations of their family have lived on Texas soil. A few years back, a blog from *The New York Times* published a report noting population trends across the United States. The article said 61% of the people who lived in Texas in 2014 were born here, the highest retention rate of any state. That percentage had dropped just six points since 1900, when 67% of the state's residents were born within its borders.

I asked some of my most Texan friends their opinions about my Texanness, noting that I'd been living on Texas soil for half a century. Steven Fulton, a 39-year-old native and ranch manager of Selah Bamberger Ranch Preserve near Johnson City, was skeptical. "I don't know. There's a lot of development that happens in those first five years," he said. "Are you driving a truck yet?"

My personal vehicle is a bicycle, with a Fiat Spyder convertible as backup, but my husband drives a Ford F-150. And while out adventuring in his truck, I've taken a baseball-sized rock through the windshield and collided with a white-tailed deer, which all seem pretty Texan.

Next I phoned West Hansen, a 57-year-old fourth-generation Texan born in Pasadena. One of his great-grandfathers is buried in the Texas State Cemetery; another was the Dutch consul to Texas. Hansen stops for ribs on his weekly commute from Austin to Port Arthur and paddles rivers with a group of guys called the Cowboys.

When I asked him if I had to be born on Texas soil to qualify as Texan, he pointed out that if that was true, Stephen F. Austin, the Father of Texas, couldn't claim Texas heritage. Austin was born in Virginia, spent just 15 years in Texas before dying of pneumonia

in 1836 and still has a city named for him plus a 76-foot statue of himself outside Angleton.

"It's kind of like what it takes to be an Australian," Hansen went on, fleshing out his only-a-true-Texan-would-think-of-it reasoning. "There's a certain attitude that has to do with being the ultimate C student. We're probably not welcome in most polite atmospheres, and we have no qualms about that. We tend to make our own way where it's needed."

So, I'm not native, but I've been here longer than someone half my age who was born over Texas caliche. I'm more Texan than them, aren't I?

Hansen, probably wiping a dollop of cream gravy off a chicken-fried steak from the other end of the phone line, hesitated. "You don't sound like one—you have a distinct accent," he said, in a slow drawl. But Texans are brash, bold, independent and paradoxically,

he said, rely upon one another. They aren't concerned with the opinions of people outside their state but do care about their parents' opinions.

"I'd say you are," he finally conceded.

Another native Texan, Jason Jones, who lives part-time in Terlingua, assured me I qualify.

"I think it's more of a state of mind. If you've been here for a while and you feel Texan, then you're Texan," he said. "It's kind of a mindset of vastness and diversity."

I know that March 2 is Texas Independence Day. I like country music—especially James Hand. I've attended chicken poop bingo night at a local bar and even buy jars of pickled okra. I've petted a longhorn, sat in a field of bluebonnets, held a horned toad, watched the raging power of a flash flood and two-stepped across a creaky, wooden floor in a genuine Hill Country dance hall. I've paddled the Pecos and Devils rivers, gone teal hunting with the former head of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and own not just one but two cowboy hats, which I actually wear with regularity. I know how to ride a horse, can load a powerboat onto a trailer and make a mean margarita.

My best friend lives in the country with 15 horses and three dogs (bless her heart). Her boyfriend, a horse trainer with a handlebar mustache, makes chili (no beans) and frijoles a la charra from a 1949 cookbook called *A Taste of Texas*.

No, I wasn't born in Texas. I'll never be a native Texan. But after half a century in this amazing state, I'm officially claiming it as my own.

Pam LeBlanc is a former staff writer at the *Austin American-Statesman*. She has finally embraced what she calls her "Texanity" and admits a soft spot for chicken-fried steak, cowboy hats and horses.

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Co-ops Keep the Lights on in Difficult Times



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER/CEO JEFF LANE

THIS YEAR HAS CERTAINLY provided a unique set of challenges, from a global pandemic and economic crisis touching every person on the planet to social

struggles and a renewed focus on long-standing injustices in our own nation and communities.

Thankfully, electric cooperatives have a long history of weathering adversity and acting as a catalyst for improving the communities they serve. In fact, co-ops were born out of challenging times.

This resilience will help Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative and our members overcome everything that has affected our area and our nation this year.

Electric co-ops formed after 1935 to relieve the hardship rural areas faced while their urban neighbors enjoyed the conveniences of electricity. The Rural Electrification Act made low-cost loans available to farmers and ranchers, who banded together to create nonprofit co-ops to deliver electricity to rural America, including Texas. Lawmakers of the time have been proven right in their foresight that electricity would revolution-

ize the rural way of life.

Soon after, electric co-ops weathered World War II. Construction of rural distribution systems slowed during that period, but the model prevailed. Within four years after the war, the number of co-ops in the U.S. doubled, and the number of connections tripled, according to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

When many of our family members and neighbors were called to serve in other wars, including the Vietnam War, Korean War, and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, co-ops endured. We kept the lights on for them while they were away.

Several major recessions have come and gone since TVEC was established, most recently in 2008. While many long-standing businesses thought to be too great to fail actually failed, electric co-ops persevered. We looked to our values—the Seven Cooperative Principles, which put members’ needs first—as a guiding light during the downturn.

Electric cooperatives have continually weathered storms at home. Forces of nature such as tornadoes, hurricanes and ice storms threaten and sometimes damage our infrastructure, but our brave lineworkers battle the elements to keep the electricity flowing.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, co-ops everywhere have taken extra precautions to keep employees and members safe. We aim not just to survive as an organization but to help our members make it through the hard time and recover, too.

Some ways that electric cooperatives put members’ needs first during the pandemic included providing flexible bill payment options, disbursing Operation Round Up™ funds to food banks and bill assistance organizations, and providing personal protective equipment to area first responders.

Even though the world is grappling with uncertainty and difficulties because of the pandemic and its economic effects, you can rest assured that TVEC will be here for you.





SKODONNELL | ISTOCK.COM

JULY HOLIDAYS

Independence Day

Saturday, July 4

TVEC offices will be closed Friday, July 3, in observance of the holiday. Line crews and dispatchers will be on-call for any outages or emergencies.

Pecan Pie Day

Sunday, July 12

Ice Cream Day

Sunday, July 19



Lineworkers take part in a pre-work safety meeting before a coordinated effort to energize a new transformer at TVEC's Mabank substation.

Substation Upgrades Underway For Growth and Reliability

TRINITY VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CREWS DEDICATE THEMSELVES TO KEEPING the lights on, so planning an outage can seem like strange territory. From time to time however, turning the power off is necessary.

With planned infrastructure upgrades taking place in TVEC's Mabank Substation, two planned outages have been required as old transformers and other gear are replaced. On June 5, crews energized lines with the first of two new transformers that should serve the growing population north of Mabank for decades to come.

"Both power transformers are being upgraded as well as six regulators and two relay panels that protect the transformers," said Gary Sherrard, TVEC manager of substations and transmission. "The retired transformers were getting close to overload in peak conditions. These upgrades are part of our current work plan and are necessary to ensure reliability of the flow of electricity to TVEC members."

TVEC operates 23 substations to energize more than 8,000 miles of line, meaning each one is critical for a large area, and turning off the power is a serious undertaking.

In this case, the linemen each had a role, and the entire operation had members out for only around seven minutes. It should be the last outage required for this area as upgrades progress.

Please follow TVEC on social media and watch tvec.net for any updates or announcements regarding planned outages, important news or upcoming work in your area.



Lineman Jamie Davis works in the Mabank Substation as crews upgrade equipment June 5.



MEHARBI | ISTOCK.COM

Tips for Tiptop Kitchen Efficiency

THE KITCHEN IS ONE OF THE HOME'S BIGGEST ENERGY CONSUMERS, SO KEEPING IT IN tiptop shape can help save money on your electric bill.

When replacing appliances, look for Energy Star-certified products. An Energy Star-rated refrigerator uses half as much electricity as a 15-year-old fridge, and an Energy Star-rated dishwasher is 12% more efficient than noncertified models.

Keep the refrigerator well stocked. A full fridge cools down faster after the door has been opened because of thermal mass.

Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.

Turn off the heated dry function on your dishwasher and opt to air-dry dishes instead. Be sure to run only full loads, as dishwashers take the same amount of energy to wash a partial load as a full one.

Cover pots while cooking to keep the heat in and lessen cooking time by up to 10%.

Use the right size burner for your pot. A burner with a larger circumference than the pot wastes energy. 60156562001

Cook with copper pots or copper-bottomed pots on electric stoves. Copper is an efficient conductor of electricity, which means it takes less time to get hot.

Make sure your pots and pans are flat on the bottom to ensure good contact with heating elements. Warped pots and pans don't heat up as well and waste energy.

When you can, use your microwave instead of the range.

Don't open the oven while baking. Opening the oven door can reduce the temperature by about 25 degrees each time. If you need to take a peek, turn on the oven light instead.

Use glass or ceramic dishes in the oven. They retain heat better than their metal counterparts, allowing lower oven temperatures when baking.

Unplug appliances when they're not in use. Coffeepots, toasters and blenders can consume electricity even when they're off.



BELOVODCHENKO ANTON | ISTOCK.COM

They Know How To Keep Cool. Do You?

IT'S SUMMER, TEMPERATURES ARE rising, and you need to work extra hard to stay cool.

Close the shades on the sunny side of your house. Only use heat-generating appliances, such as ovens, in the evening, when it's cooler. Or better yet, grill outside and have cold side dishes. Use fans to circulate the air, and wear light, loose clothing.

And remember, when plugging in window air conditioners and fans, do not plug too many appliances into one outlet, and use extension cords sparingly.



TRINITY VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Protect Your HVAC System During Home Remodels

IF YOU'RE PLANNING A REMODELING PROJECT THIS SUMMER, take some time to protect your job site from dirt and dust—a step that can extend the life of your heating, ventilating and air conditioning system and help keep the rest of your house cleaner.

The best protection for your HVAC unit while doing dirty remodels is not to run the system, or use it as little as possible. Limited use reduces the amount of dust that enters the ductwork, which is important because dirt and dust can damage HVAC equipment.

As an added precaution, close or block off all supply and return ducts in work zones. Adding extra filters to returns further limits dust contamination: You can simply tape the extra filter over return grilles. Taking the time to vacuum the filters periodically during the remodel will help the filters last longer.

While you have the vacuum out, clean the filter on the HVAC unit itself. Doing this daily during the project will help the system run more efficiently.

When the remodel is completed, inspect the HVAC system and do a thorough cleaning. Check that the coils are clean, perhaps change the filter and consider cleaning out all the ductwork.

Other precautions include larger-scale control measures. You can create a dust barrier by taping plastic to ceilings and walls for short-term projects or constructing false walls for long-term projects. This isolates the work area from the rest of the house.



ALESSANDRO MASCHERONI | ISTOCK.COM

Another technique is to create negative air pressure by blowing air out of the work area with an exhaust fan. A standard box fan can do the job in small spaces.

Using a small amount of water to tamp down dust also can be effective. Before you start, mist the work area with a spray bottle or hose attachment and repeat before sweeping. Beware of slipping hazards, however, when using water on the floor.

While you're prepping your job site, consider protecting other surfaces, too. Cover floors and stairs with plastic or cloth, and consider attaching cardboard or other materials to walls for an added layer of protection.

SAVE THE DATE

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TVEC

TRINITY VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

**ANNUAL
MEMBERSHIP
MEETING**

WATCH FOR THE OFFICIAL NOTICE AND BALLOT FOR DIRECTOR ELECTIONS IN THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF *TEXAS CO-OP POWER*. DETAILS OF THE MEETING MAY CHANGE. REFER TO TVEC.NET AND THE MAGAZINE FOR UPDATES.

OCTOBER 8

TEXAS DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Hurricane Preparedness Guidelines

Preparing for Hurricane Season: June 1–November 30

EVACUATION PLANNING: When a hurricane threatens, listen for instructions from local officials. If they call for an evacuation in your area, get going without delay.

- ▶ **Discuss evacuation plans** with your family **before** hurricane season, June 1–November 30. Make a checklist of what you need to do before you leave town and review it.
- ▶ **Monitor NOAA Weather Radio**, local TV and radio broadcasts during storm season.
- ▶ **Prepare an emergency supply kit** that includes a radio, flashlight, extra batteries, extra eyeglasses, bottled water, nonperishable food, dry clothes, bedding, insurance information, important documents, medications, copies of prescriptions and special products for babies, seniors, medically fragile family members and pets.
- ▶ **Learn evacuation routes** before storm season. When there's a hurricane in the Gulf, keep your gas tank as full as possible. Expect traffic delays in an evacuation.
- ▶ **Register with the State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry online at stear.dps.texas.gov or dial 211 to register if you have a disability or medical needs, or if you simply do not have transportation.** Gulf Coast residents in evacuation zones who have a disability or medical needs who do not have friends or family to help or do not have transportation should register with STEAR in advance.

DIVISIÓN DE ADMINISTRACIÓN DE EMERGENCIAS DE TEXAS

Directrices para Huracanes

Preparando para la temporada de huracanes desde el 1 de junio hasta el 30 de noviembre

EVACUACIÓN EN CASO DE HURACÁN: Cuando exista una amenaza de huracán, escuche las instrucciones de funcionarios locales. Cuando llamen para una evacuación en su área, evacue del área lo más pronto posible.

- ▶ **Discuta los planes de evacuación** con su familia **antes** de la temporada de huracán, que empieza el 1 de junio y termina el 30 de noviembre. Haga una lista de lo que usted debe hacer antes de salir de la ciudad y revisela.
- ▶ **Escuche la radio** y televisión durante la temporada de huracanes.
- ▶ **Prepare un equipo de emergencia** que incluya un radio, linterna, repuesto de baterías, anteojos extras, agua embotellada, alimentos no perecederos, ropa extra, ropa de cama, información de seguro, documentos importantes, medicinas, copias de recetas medicas y productos especiales para bebés, las personas mayores, miembros de la familia médicamente frágiles y mascotas.
- ▶ **Aprenda sus rutas** de evacuación antes de la temporada de huracanes. Cuando haya un huracán en el Golfo, mantenga el tanque de gasolina lleno. Esté consiente de que habrá demoras de tráfico.
- ▶ **Puede regístrase con el State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry en la página web, stear.dps.texas.gov, o llamando al 211 para registrarse si usted tiene una discapacidad o necesidades médicas o si simplemente no tiene transporte.** Los residentes que viven en la Costa del Golfo de evacuación con una discapacidad o necesidades médicas quienes no tienen amigos o familiares para ayudarles o no tienen transporte deben registrarse con STEAR por adelantado.



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Win \$25 Just for Reading

Somewhere, hidden on pages 18-23, is a TVEC account number. Read closely. If the account number is yours, contact the Member Services Department by July 31 to receive a \$25 credit on your electric bill. Don't miss out—you could be a winner!





Your Generosity In Action

THE TVEC CHARITABLE FOUNDATION recently awarded five grants totaling \$17,000. Recipients of the grants include:

COVID-19 Assistance

In an effort to support members affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, TVEC stopped disconnecting for non-payment on March 16. Since that time, the TVEC Charitable Foundation Board of Directors has authorized \$20,000 in funding to organizations supporting TVEC members for bill payment assistance.

We are here to help members who may need assistance during this time, and we want everyone to be prepared before normal disconnection activity resumes. Please contact TVEC member services to discuss payment arrangements or other ways we can help.



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Luke 10:25-37

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East Texas Crisis Center Inc.
Athens, \$3,000

Founded in 2013, the TVEC Charitable Foundation is an independent, nonprofit organization. The foundation was created to serve the community and help improve the quality of life for residents in our service area. **The foundation is funded entirely by donations from TVEC members who participate in Operation Round Up.** For more information, please call 1-800-766-9576 or visit tvec.net.

Sweet Adversity

Remembering backstage trials and rewards as Shakespeare at Winedale turns 50

BY CLAYTON MAXWELL

THERE ARE SOME INVITATIONS SO ENTICING that to say no would be a snub to life itself. That’s the kind of invitation James Ayres, then a Shakespeare professor at the University of Texas, received from Miss Ima Hogg at a luncheon in October 1970 at the Winedale Historical Center near Round Top.

Hogg, the daughter of 19th-century Texas Gov. Jim Hogg and the benefactor who donated the Winedale property to the University of Texas, asked Ayres an innocent question: “What do you do?”

“I told her I taught Shakespeare,” says Ayres, now 86. Ayres sat next to Hogg at the luncheon and explained how many of the barn’s features reminded him of Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London. “She asked me to go into the theater barn and have a look around.”

“Well, I want you to do Shakespeare here,” she said. Ayres said he would, and that was the beginning. “I was back with my fall class in November, and we did *Much Ado About Nothing*,” he says.

Because Ayres answered yes to Hogg’s request, we have the celebrated program—which this year marks its 50th anniversary—in which two dozen college students take up residence in Winedale for six weeks, live their way into three Shakespeare plays and then perform them in the barn. We also have the program’s many offshoots, such as Camp Shake-

speare, a summer program for kids ages 11–16, and a loyal community of Winedale alums who have been affected—often in the most powerful of ways—by their time in the barn.

I know because I was a student at Winedale in the summer of 1990.

Doc, as we call Ayres, follows his uncanny intuition for matching each student with the Shakespeare character who he believes has the most to teach us. The part of Rosalind from *As You Like It* went to the brilliant overachiever, who, from the challenge of the role, would have to swallow the taste of imperfection. Falstaff from *Henry IV, Part 1* went to the rebel student who needed to learn the risks of a life of Falstaffian self-indulgence.

And I was given the role of Duke Senior, an aristocrat exiled from the court in *As You Like It*, who claims that camping out in the forest of Arden beats a life of “painted pomp” in courtly society. When I was 20, his pithy monologue to his “co-mates and brothers in exile” who follow him out to the woods became my innermost manifesto on how to approach life. That summer, I shouted it to the cows I passed while on bike rides along Round Top’s country roads. I belted it out in the woods near the barn with my Winedale co-mates as we garlanded our torsos and arms in pretty vines, only to find out that it was poison ivy and we would all need cortisone shots.

Duke Senior’s speech became a defining theme for us that summer—particularly the lines, “Sweet are the uses of adversity, / Which, like the toad, ugly and

WEB EXTRAS

► Hear author Clayton Maxwell recite her Duke Senior monologue.



venomous, / Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.”

How my fellow exiles and I struggled to embrace those words as we itched our poison ivy welts, or when another co-mate wasn't pulling his weight in the sewing room where we made our costumes, or when a lead character couldn't get her lines right because she'd been goofing off. Adversity sunk like a stone in our guts when Doc lectured us, exhausted after a late practice, that we weren't working as a team.

But in the end, the adversity built into the Winedale experience was exactly what we needed. Most of us found our own jewels in the toad, learning that the sweetness comes when you take risks and play and throw yourself into it—not just for yourself, but with a collective of co-mates, exiled or not. When the “icy fang” of winter makes you “shrink with cold,” the Duke told us, “This is no flattery: These are counsellors / That feelingly persuade me what I am.”

Shakespeare at Winedale, for so many of us, persuaded us to become what we are, what we are capable of. And many, like me, have lived richer lives because of it.

My Duke Senior speech is now as much a part of me as my kidneys and liver. I've been reciting it for 30 years—by campfires with college friends, at my wedding and my 50th birthday, and to my children, who don't quite get it yet. It will likely be a part of my last rites. Perhaps there is not sweetness in all forms of adversity, but I admire Duke Senior for seeking it out. Virtue, honorable leadership and a positive yet grounded worldview are all qualities he possessed and is still offering us 400 years after Shakespeare created him.

This world needs Duke Senior. I certainly do.

Clayton Maxwell is an Austin-based writer whose friends still humor her by listening to her Duke Senior speech.

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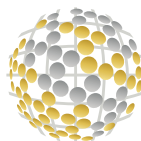
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A Town Tormented

The 1927 Rocksprings tornado ranks among the state's deadliest

BY MELISSA GASKILL

ON APRIL 12, 1927, A TORNADO TORE through the Edwards County town of Rocksprings, killing 74 people and injuring more than 200. Among Texas tornadoes, it ranks as the third deadliest, behind one that struck Waco on May 11, 1953, killing 114 and injuring 597, and one that hit Goliad on May 18, 1902, also killing 114 and injuring 250.

The damage scale for twisters goes from EF0 to EF5, with EF5s inflicting the most damage. Since 1950, when official record keeping began, the National Weather Service has determined that 59 tornadoes qualify as EF5, six of them in Texas: Jarrell, May 27, 1997; Brownwood, April 19, 1976; Valley Mills, May 6, 1973; Lubbock, May 11, 1970; Wichita Falls, April 3, 1964; and the 1953 Waco twister.

Rocksprings, 100 miles west of San Antonio, became the seat of Edwards County in 1891, complete with a courthouse. Townspeople built a public school in 1893, and by 1914, the town had 500 residents, a hotel, saloons, a general store and bank. A high school opened in 1916.

On that afternoon in 1927, enormous black clouds gathered, producing large hail and winds that took out the power. The tornado touched down 3 miles to the northwest and moved southeast, growing to almost a mile wide as it crossed Rocksprings. It continued southeastward for at least 35 miles and may have traveled as far as 65 miles.

The second floor of the high school, where a music recital had been planned



Only eight buildings remained after the milewide tornado ripped through Rocksprings.

for that evening, was gone. “If it had happened an hour earlier, the whole town would have been in the school auditorium,” says Andrew Barnebey, president of the Devil’s Sinkhole Society in Rocksprings. Its visitor center has a small display on the tornado. “Only eight buildings in town were not damaged.” The twister destroyed all the town’s churches, damaged the courthouse (but not the jail) and toppled the water tower. The town of Junction, 47 miles northeast, gave Rocksprings a new one, Barnebey adds.

“The telephone operator had to go out of town to find a live telephone line to tell the rest of the world about it,” he says. “People came from throughout the surrounding countryside and even Mexico to help. The first rescuers were soldiers on horseback from Fort Clark.”

The town held a commemorative ceremony on the event’s 90th anniversary, in 2017. Edwards County Historical Commission chair Kari Cloudt says research for the event turned up many heartbreaking stories, including entire families lost. Others show the goodness in people, she

adds, such as the 1,000 doses of tetanus vaccine sent by what is now Bristol-Myers Squibb to San Antonio’s Kelly Field, whose pilots airdropped them into town.

The twister damaged the original, wooden circa-1916 Rocksprings Hotel, but a concrete wing added in 1926 served as a temporary hospital for those not seriously injured, says Debra Wolcott, current owner. Those with serious injuries were taken to hospitals in San Antonio via train.

The town quickly replaced the school with a larger one and rebuilt churches and the hotel. The 2010 census counted 1,182 residents. Visitors know Rocksprings as the Angora goat capital of the world and for the nearby Devil’s Sinkhole State Natural Area, famous for a seasonal population of 3 million Mexican free-tailed bats.

But locals can’t escape memories of 1927.

“A 14-year-old girl taking a bath when the tornado hit flew about 2 miles in the bathtub and landed in a debris field. There is still debris there,” Cloudt says. “A lot of people who are still here lost family members. It must have been just a hideous storm.”

Read more about **Melissa Gaskill’s** work at melissagaskill.blogspot.com.

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On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

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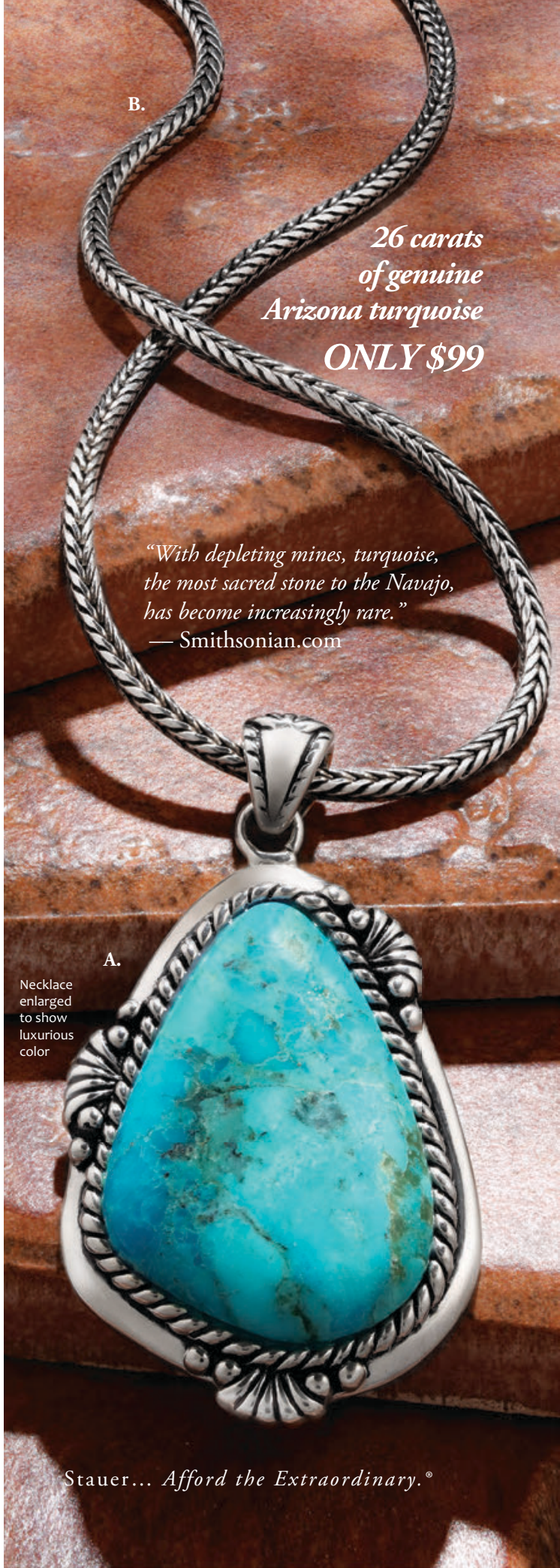
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Hot Off the Grill

WE'RE LUCKY IN TEXAS THAT GRILLING season often lasts all year long. I take advantage by branching out from hamburgers and hot dogs to experiment with other flavors on the grill, which resulted in this recipe.

For a moist burger, you'll need chicken breast and fattier chicken thigh meat. Take care not to press the patties onto the grill, which will make the juices run out.

Make the optional slaw in advance to let the flavors meld while you prepare the burgers. Brown rice vinegar and sesame oil can be found in the Asian section of your grocery store. If you can't find Thai basil, regular basil will do.

MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Thai Peanut Chicken Burgers

SLAW

- ½ cup shredded red cabbage
- ½ cup shredded carrots
- ¼ cup radish matchsticks
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
- 1–2 teaspoons chopped fresh mint
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 2 teaspoons brown rice vinegar

BURGERS

- ½ pound ground chicken breast
- ½ pound ground chicken thigh
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh Thai basil
- 2 whole wheat hamburger buns

SAUCE

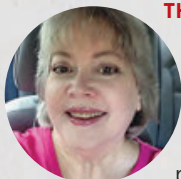
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1½ teaspoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon brown rice vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- Crushed red chile flakes, to taste
- Chopped peanuts

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32



Recipes

Hot Off the Grill



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

STEPHANIE BALDOCK | WOOD COUNTY EC

Moist and flavorful, this dish is a hit for those who love jalapeño poppers. The marinade ensures the chicken stays juicy on the grill, and its sweet tang provides a nice contrast to the bacon and heat of the pepper. When grilling, make sure to start with the side that has the loose bacon ends, as it will help adhere the bacon to the chicken.

Devil Chicken

- ¾ cup teriyaki sauce
- ¾ cup Italian salad dressing
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- 12-14 boneless, skinless chicken tenders
- 12-14 slices jalapeño pepper
- 12-14 slices bacon

1. Whisk together teriyaki sauce, salad dressing and brown sugar until sugar is dissolved.
2. Place chicken tenders in a bowl or 1-quart baking dish. Pour marinade over the chicken and turn chicken to coat

thoroughly. Cover and let marinate in a refrigerator at least 2 hours or overnight.

3. When ready to cook, prepare grill for cooking over a medium flame. Place one slice of jalapeño on top of each tender, then wrap a slice of bacon around the length of the tender.
4. Grill bacon-wrapped chicken tenders 6-7 minutes on each side, until they reach a temperature of 160 degrees and juices run clear when cut into. ▶ Serves 4.



\$500 Recipe Contest

Does your family favor turkey, ham, beef or another main dish for the holiday table? Tell us what you serve for **The Main Event**. Enter our December contest by **July 10**. Featured recipes will receive a special *Texas Co-op Power* apron.

ENTER ONLINE at TexasCoopPower.com/contests; MAIL to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; FAX to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

1. **SLAW:** In a bowl, mix together all ingredients. Set aside.
2. **BURGERS:** In a large bowl, mix together all ingredients. Form mixture into two patties and set aside.
3. Prepare a grill or stovetop grill pan.
4. Cook patties 5-6 minutes on each side over medium heat, until completely cooked through.
5. **SAUCE:** In another bowl, whisk together peanut butter, soy sauce, honey, rice vinegar, garlic, sesame oil and crushed red chile flakes.
6. Assemble chicken patties, slaw and peanut sauce on buns. Sprinkle on chopped peanuts, add top bun and serve. ▶ Serves 2.

Follow along with **Megan Myers** and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Lemony Grilled Potato Salad.

Butter Lover's Steak

JESSICA DEEMER | PEDERNALES EC

This rib-eye recipe gets a boost from a butter rub and a simple finishing sauce. "This is the creation of my 8-year-old son, Mason, who is a huge butter lover," Deemer says. The sauce will thicken as it stands, so make it just before serving. Whisk in additional milk for a thinner sauce.

- 4 rib-eye steaks
- 1 stick (½ cup) butter, softened, divided use
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 4 ounces cream cheese, cut into small pieces
- ⅓ cup whole milk
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon olive oil

1. Preheat grill to high heat.
2. Using a sharp grilling fork, poke 4-8 holes in each steak to allow butter to be absorbed. Rub both sides of the steaks generously with about half of the butter. Season steaks with salt and pepper on both sides.
3. Slice remaining butter into 4 pieces and set aside.
4. Sear steaks 1 minute on each side, then move to indirect heat and place a piece of butter on each steak. Grill 3-4 minutes per side, then remove from heat and tent steaks with foil to keep warm.

5. To make the sauce, place the cream cheese and milk in a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir until cream cheese is almost completely melted, then remove from heat and continue to stir until the sauce is smooth and lump-free. Stir in garlic powder, olive oil and salt to taste.
 6. Transfer steaks to a plate and pour the sauce on top, or serve it on the side.
- Serves 4.

Kielbasa Kebabs

PEGGI TEBBEN | TRI-COUNTY EC

If using wooden skewers, be sure to soak them in water before assembling kebabs to prevent them from catching fire while grilling.

- 4 packages (12 ounces each) kielbasa, cut into bite-size chunks
- 2 cans (20 ounces each) pineapple chunks, ½ cup juice reserved
- 16 ounces whole button mushrooms, cut in half from top through stem
- 3 bell peppers, cut into bite-size chunks
- 2 onions, cut into bite-size chunks

- 1 cup soy sauce
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon California-style garlic seasoning with parsley
- 1 teaspoon Montreal steak seasoning

1. Assemble the kebabs by layering sausage, pineapple, mushroom, bell pepper and onion onto barbecue skewers. Repeat, pushing layers tightly together, until skewers are completely full, beginning and ending with sausage.
2. Place kebabs into a large casserole or other dish that allows them to lie flat.
3. Whisk together reserved pineapple juice, soy sauce and brown sugar until sugar is dissolved. Pour over the kebabs and then turn kebabs to coat.
4. Cover and place in the refrigerator overnight, turning kebabs every so often.
5. When ready to cook, prepare grill for cooking over a medium flame. Brush kebabs with excess marinade from the pan, then sprinkle seasonings on both sides.
6. Grill kebabs over indirect heat 10 minutes per side. ► Makes 30 kebabs.



Marinade Tips

Marinades are one of the easiest ways to liven up your grilled foods. A few tips:

INGREDIENTS CAN VARY, but don't forget salt, which helps the meat absorb even more of the marinade's flavor.

POKING SMALL HOLES into your meat before marinating will help it absorb the sauce.

COMPLETELY COVER MEAT with the marinade, and let it rest in the refrigerator to prevent food-borne illnesses.

MEGAN MYERS

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Exploration

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—T.S. Eliot, poet and literary critic

GRACE FULTZ

WEB EXTRAS ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



▲ **LORY VON STADEN**, Heart of Texas EC: “Exploring murals and downtown Brenham.”

▼ **J. REAGAN FERGUSON**, Central Texas EC: “Exploring the Longhorn Caverns State Park in the summertime is a great way to cool off.”



▲ **DENISA MCBEE**, Southwest Texas EC: “While on a visit to our farm, our grandson, Max Dawson, was exploring his granddad’s tractor. He found the perfect spot for a rest.”



▲ **STEVE COYLE**, Pedernales EC: “I captured this image of my friend Paul midway through our five-day kayak trip down the Devils River in West Texas. It was definitely one of the more adventure-filled journeys of my life.”

AROUND TEXAS ▶ TCP's monthly list of local events has been suspended due to COVID-19 cancellations. Always call or check an event's website for scheduling details.



◀ **LENORA ISENHOUR**, Pedernales EC: "Cousins Ava Isenhour and Nora Lynn frolic on the beach at Port Aransas."



▲ **JOHNATHAN KANA**, Bluebonnet EC: "The kids were fascinated with the flourishing ecosystem in a pool of water atop Enchanted Rock."



UPCOMING CONTESTS

NOVEMBER EXTREMES	DUE JULY 10
DECEMBER ON WHEELS	DUE AUGUST 10
JANUARY DINERS	DUE SEPTEMBER 10

Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests.

▲ **KIM LEATHERWOOD**, United Cooperative Services: Santa Elena Canyon, Big Bend National Park.



▲ **MARVIN MILLER**, Pedernales EC: "Christin Miller has helped her dad explore and survey Texas caves for years."



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Something's Fishy Here

Catfish Plantation in Waxahachie takes you deep-fried to the other side

FOR GENERATIONS, FRIED CATFISH, WITH its faithful sidekicks french fries and hush puppies, has served family reunions and Southern potlucks. Waxahachie's Catfish Plantation provides this country classic but requires visitors to go beyond the normal.

Waxahachie, the Crape Myrtle Capital of Texas, is also known for its dozens of ornate historic homes. I discovered that one of these 19th-century gingerbread houses delivers some of the best catfish in Texas from one of the state's strangest dining rooms.

I knew something was different about the Catfish Plantation when I noticed two cartoon ghosts dancing on the restaurant's logo. Once I stepped inside, I realized the ghost theme continues throughout the building, appearing in framed pictures, salt and pepper shakers, and even the peppermint dish. This would have made sense at Halloween, but my visit was in April. The hostess confirmed my suspicions that by all accounts, the house is haunted. I asked if she believed in ghosts, and she said, "After working here, absolutely."

I took a seat in the parlor to wait for my table and noticed two binders filled with handwritten customer stories about experiences of the paranormal kind. I couldn't resist reading spooky stories ranging from disappearing silverware to unexpected taps on the shoulder. There were even a number of customer photos that, if tilted just right, captured a face in the window.

The house was built in 1895, and since



Chet was expecting a frying catfish, not a flying catfish.

it was converted to a restaurant in 1984, otherworldly occurrences have become as common as the catfish. The Landis family purchased this institution more than a decade ago. Shawn Landis, the executive chef and family matriarch, provides background to support customer and staff ghost stories. She recounts tales of the antique crank-style doorbell ringing on its own and the light switches that sit inside a glass case flipping off without warning. Even so, she was quick to assure me that nothing sinister ever happens. "Customers may come for the ghosts, but they come back for the catfish," Landis said.

Before I could dine, I felt obligated to brave the most haunted room in the house: the men's restroom. That room is notorious for shadowy figures appearing in the mirror and for the latch unlocking without help from human hands. I took a deep breath and tried not to look in the mirror as I washed my hands.

The hostess seated me in the front room, where I looked over a menu filled with options including steak and grilled quail. I couldn't pass up the house special Cajun catfish, which features a layer of spice beneath the golden cornmeal crust. It was some of the best catfish I've eaten on the road, which made me wonder why they needed to embrace a gimmick like ghosts in order to fill seats. The food could speak for itself.

These thoughts left me with the uneasy conclusion that the ghost stories were not a marketing ploy but actually were true. I was not going to believe the stories until I had a ghostly experience for myself. With that in mind, I had no choice but to order a piece of homemade bread pudding topped with white chocolate sauce, just to give the ghosts a little longer to haunt me.

Chet Garner shares his Texplorations as the host of *The Daytripper* on PBS.

 **WEB EXTRAS** ▶ Read this story on our website to see Chet's video of the ghostly Catfish Plantation in Waxahachie.

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