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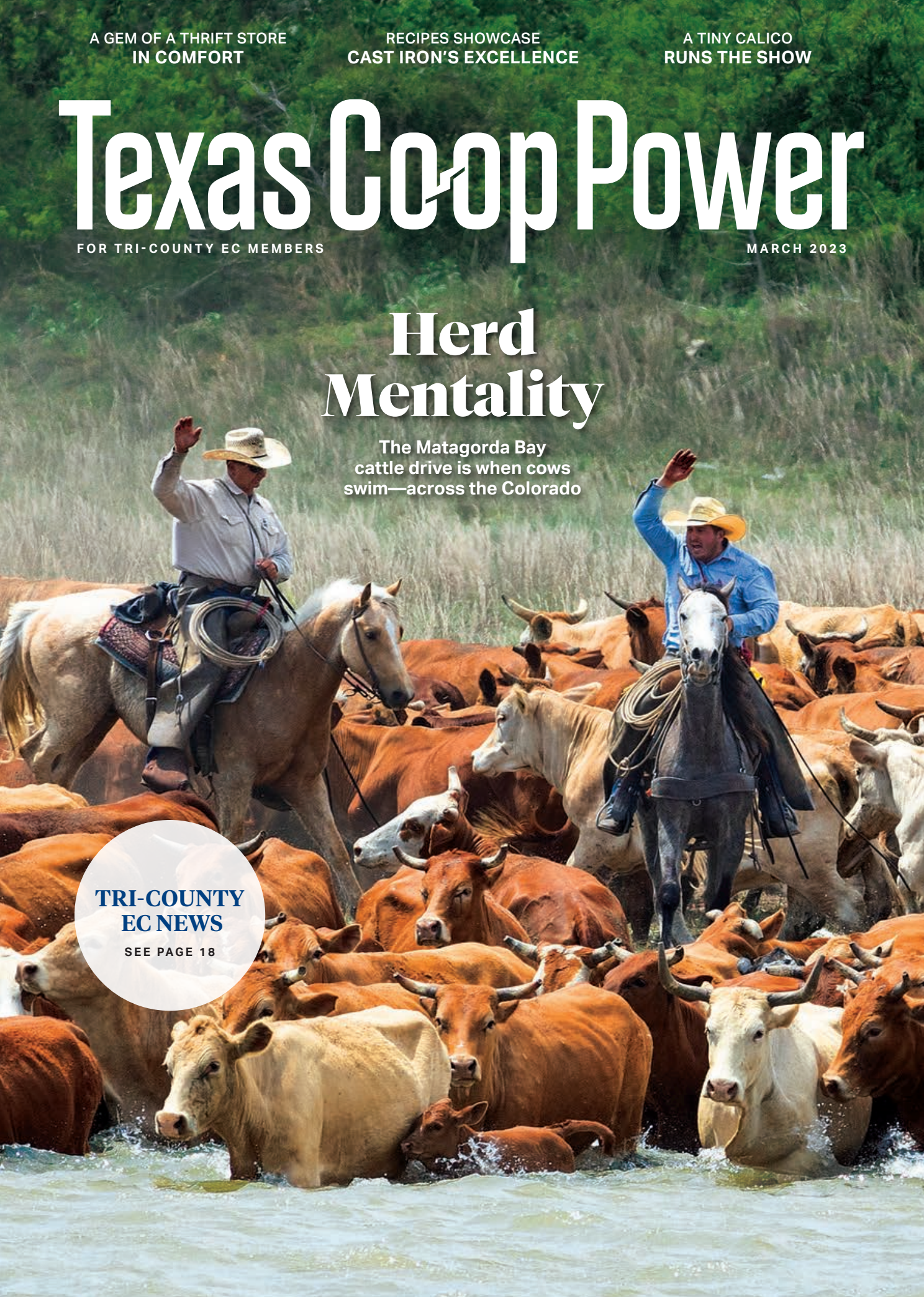
MARCH 2023

## Herd Mentality

The Matagorda Bay  
cattle drive is when cows  
swim—across the Colorado

TRI-COUNTY  
EC NEWS

SEE PAGE 18





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# March 2023



08

## Gently Used, Generously Shared

A small thrift shop in the Hill Country funds scholarships for local students.

*By Kristen Pettineo  
Photos by Scott Van Osdol*

## 10 Until the Cows Swim Home

The Matagorda cattle drive runs right through a river—as it has for 106 years.

*Story and photos by Erich Schlegel*

### ON THE COVER

Randy Duncan, left, and Riley Rodriguez drive cattle into the Colorado River.

*Photo by Erich Schlegel*

### ABOVE

Sally Clogston, left, founder, with April Langston, manager, of Pass It On.

*Photo by Scott Van Osdol*

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# Antsy Onslaught

**SCIENTISTS LAST YEAR** came up with a global ant census, and it's unfathomable: 20 quadrillion. That's 20 followed by 15 zeroes. Think of it this way: Ants outnumber humans at least 2.5 million to 1.

And, no, most of them don't live in Texas, though more than 250 of the 14,000-plus species worldwide are native to our state.

The dreaded fire ant isn't one. They're invasive in Texas.



## Bragging Rights

Sam Bennett of Madisonville became the first Texas A&M University golfer to win the U.S. Amateur Championship, last year. The title earns him a spot at the Masters Tournament; watch for him April 6–9.

The All-American's family are members of MidSouth Electric Cooperative.

## **TCP** Contests and More

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March 6

## National Dentist's Day

Did you know Texas has four dental schools? There's Texas A&M in Dallas, Texas Tech in El Paso, and University of Texas branches in Houston and San Antonio.

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

IF I COULD FLY,  
I WOULD ...

**TCP** Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to [letters@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:letters@TexasCoopPower.com) or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town.

Below are some of the responses to our January prompt: **The greatest Texan ever is ...**

Willie Nelson. Seriously, how is that even a question?

SHELLI CONWAY  
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC  
ANNA

Quanah Parker, who tried to do the best for his people in war and in peace.

MIKE DENEHY  
PEDERNALES EC  
LAGO VISTA

Lyndon B. Johnson, because he brought electricity to the rural Hill Country.

AARON DENMAN  
TRINITY VALLEY EC  
KEMP

George Strait.

JACKSON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
VIA FACEBOOK

U.S. Army Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez, who received a Medal of Honor for a series of daring and extremely valorous actions during the Vietnam War in 1968.

MATTHEW D. KONOPA  
PEDERNALES EC  
SPRING BRANCH

Visit our website to see more responses.

TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM



# Women's History Month

**MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO**, Katherine Anne Porter survived a pandemic. At 28, she was hospitalized for months with influenza, and her hair turned white. Porter's harrowing experience informed the title story in her trilogy, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*.

Known for her precise, lyrical prose, Porter won a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award in 1966 for her *Collected Stories*.

The author's childhood home in Kyle, now the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center, hosts readings by visiting writers and was designated a national literary landmark in 2002 with a benediction from Laura Bush. "This house now stands as a living memorial to one of our most beloved, and best, storytellers," Bush said.





COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Afterlife Sentence

“Does anyone else think that’s carrying a grudge a little far? Really?”

LORENA BOREN  
BAILEY COUNTY EC

## Distant Relative?

According to the late El Paso historian Leon Metz, John Wesley Hardin’s father was a Methodist minister named James Hardin and moved from Virginia to Tennessee to Texas [*Afterlife Sentence*, January 2023].

Perhaps I am related to John. My great-grandfather was a Methodist minister named James Hardin and moved from Virginia to Tennessee to Texas. I wish to make three things clear: I do not own a gun; I am not a lawyer; and I want to believe that I am not a sociopath.

Vincent C. Kemendo  
Pedernales EC  
Canyon Lake

Thoroughbreds can do anything [*Stable Futures*, January 2023]. I’ve had 50 years working with them. I love them.

NANCY KEIM  
VIA FACEBOOK

## Welcoming an Opossum

I have always loved nature and try to read, read, read [*Oh! Possum!*, January 2023]. You gave me a wonder person, Martha Deeringer, who introduced me to an opossum. What a wonder that couple is, taking such care of this animal. She describes it in such fun ways.

Brenna Quebbemann  
CECA  
Comanche

I, too, have an opossum for a pet—one of God’s gentle creatures that unfortunately was given a very short life span. Ours is named Jones, and he travels with us when we visit state parks and other places in Texas. We rescued Jones from a county road where his momma met her fate. Thank you for letting readers know that North America’s only marsupial is actually a pretty cool critter.

Rick Martin  
Coleman County EC  
Santa Anna



KIRSTEN ULVE

**TCP WRITE TO US**  
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power  
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor  
Austin, TX 78701

**Please include** your electric co-op and town. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

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## POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

# Gently Used, Generously Shared

A small thrift shop in Comfort gives local students a boost for schooling

**ASK MERCEDES ELLIS** about her favorite place to shop, and her answer may surprise you.

You might expect the Texas State University student to rattle off well-known fashion brands or influencer-approved Instagram boutiques. Instead, she'll name a teeny, tiny secondhand shop in the small town of Comfort: the aptly named Pass It On.

It's not just that Ellis, 20, enjoys sifting through racks of other people's castoffs—though she does enjoy that. (In fact, she once found a pair of Gucci shoes for under \$10.) It's that more than anything, Ellis loves Pass It On because the store provides for its Hill Country community.

The shop offers a little bit of everything—clothing, furniture, books, appliances and seemingly everything between—at rock bottom prices. There's not much they won't sell. The inventory is unpredictable and priced to move. Recently there was an old leather dentist's chair for sale on the shop floor.

But here's what really makes Pass It On unique and why Ellis says she'll always be a customer: Nearly every cent of the store's proceeds funds college scholarships for students in the Comfort school district. Ellis herself received one of them.

"This shop has made so much possible for me," she says. "Being a college student, every dollar really helps. This scholarship makes a big difference for me and my family. It's a cycle of generosity, and I feel so grateful to be a small part of it."

April Langston is also part of that cycle of generosity.

Langston, a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative, never expected to run the 25-year-old nonprofit thrift shop. She spent her career working in public education, advocating for students with special needs in the Northside and Boerne school districts. But in 2014, not long after retiring, Langston's husband died in a plane crash. They were married 37 years. Her world fell apart.

"That's when all of my plans changed," Langston says. "I was retired and widowed. Suddenly I had all this time. I had to learn a different life. And it led me to Pass It On."

In processing her grief, Langston felt drawn to volunteer work and community outreach. At Pass It On, she does both.

Langston leads a small army of volunteers who do pretty much everything—process donations, organize displays, help customers—whatever it takes to keep the doors open and the lights on.

The store is only open for eight hours each week—Fridays and Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m. Despite the limited hours, Pass It On has raised big money for Comfort students seeking education beyond high school. Langston says the store provided \$65,000 in scholarships last year, up from \$50,000 the year before. In all, 191 students have received \$760,000 in aid.

"I guess it's really not that different from what I've done all my career," Langston says. "I've always worked in education, and I've always helped kids. The opportunity to go to college can change a child's life. I don't want anyone to miss out on that chance because they couldn't afford it."

"And that's why we're all here at Pass It On."

Langston doesn't like to turn anyone down. For the past two years, Pass It On provided scholarships to every student who applied—all powered by people's donations and, according to Langston, "a whole lot of Windex."

But the store isn't just a source of scholarship money. It's a legitimate shopping destination in Comfort, a town of about 3,000. Langston says there's always a line of shoppers waiting outside the door when she opens.

"When I tell you we've got something for everyone, we've *really* got something for everyone here," she says, laughing. "If you come to Pass It On and leave empty-handed, you aren't looking hard enough."

And that's one thing Langston makes clear. She isn't in the business of selling junk. Of course, they get offerings that don't make it to the shop floor, and those get donated elsewhere. But she's seen Prada purses, Coach bags, delicate glassware and fine china all come through her door. Sometimes, even she's a customer. Sure enough, Langston checks the tag on her shirt. She got it from—where else?—Pass It On.

Despite the tens of thousands of dollars in scholarship money provided over the years, Langston will tell you *she's* the one who's grateful. After the tragedy of her husband's death, she found meaning and purpose at the storefront on Front Street. And for her, that's priceless.

"I consider this my responsibility now," Langston says. "I feel God's hand over this work. And as long as I can keep up, I'll be here doing it." ■

**TCP** Visit Pass It On via video on our website.

**YOU CAN HELP** Pass It On accepts gently used items to support its scholarships. Make donations at 716 Front St., Comfort 78013.

OPPOSITE April Langston at Pass It On in Comfort.









# Until the **COWS** Swim Home



STORY AND PHOTOS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

Huebner Bros. Cattle Co. cowhands drive their cattle off Matagorda Peninsula and across the Colorado River for summer grazing near Bay City.

**T'S A SCENE STRAIGHT** out of a campy old Western.

After a long day of driving cattle—from 5 a.m. until dark—that ends with pushing the herd to a cattle trap by an old Army air base, full-time cowboy Stephen Weathers rendezvous with fellow cowboys finally relieved of their saddles.

“Then we’d sit around the campfire, cooking cans of pork and beans and have a great time joking around,” he says. “When we’d finally get to sleep in the bunkhouse, anyone snoring would get a cowboy boot thrown at him.”





## The Matagorda cattle drive runs right through a river—as it has for 106 years

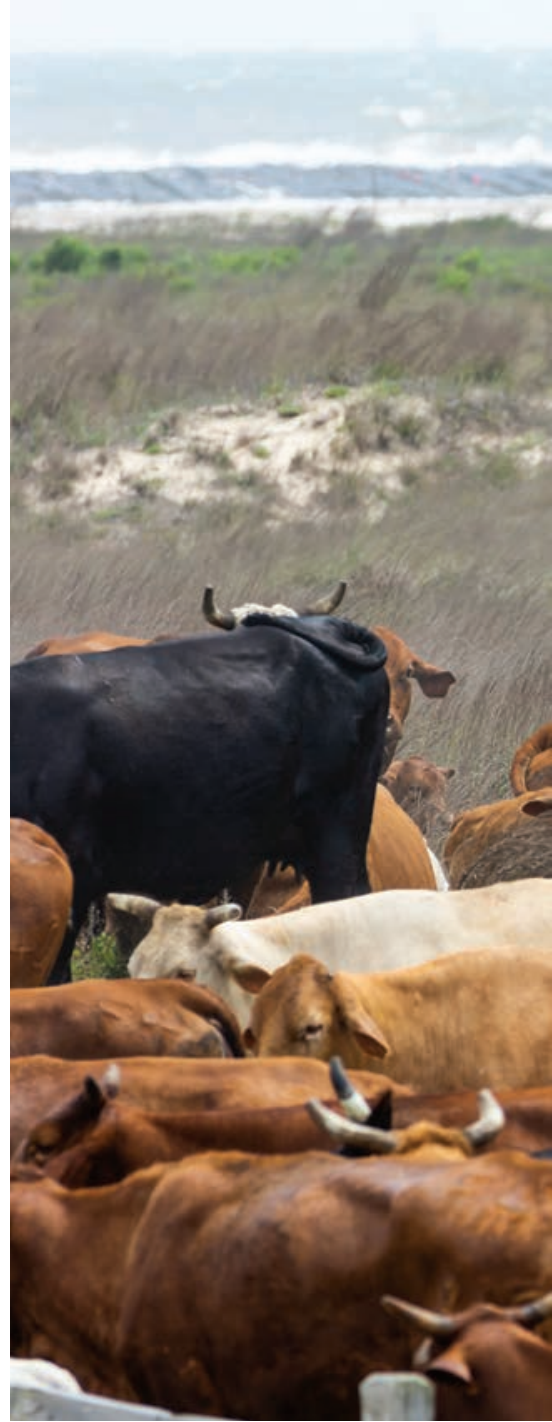
Except this isn't a dusty trail to Abilene, Kansas, but a Gulf beach in Matagorda County. And instead of a marathon drive, it's more of a bovine biathlon.

The biannual Matagorda Bay cattle drive is one of the most historic and unique drives in the U.S. For more than 100 years, the Huebner Bros. Cattle Co. has been moving its herd back and forth between winter grazing pastures on the 30-mile-long Matagorda Peninsula and the summer pastures on the family's ranch south of Bay City. The operation involves

swimming the cattle across the 15-foot-deep Colorado River close to where it empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

Keith Meyer, Huebner Bros. ranch manager, is the fifth generation of cattlemen in his family to organize and run these drives. "Our family has been moving and swimming cattle on and off Matagorda Peninsula consecutively since 1917," says Meyer, who's been involved since he was 6 or 7. "I've grown up working this cattle drive alongside my father and grandfather."





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Logan Meyer, 14, awaits the cattle as they reach Matagorda Bay Nature Park. Lauren Spanihel-Wahlberg and Randy Duncan keep watch over the spring herd of some 800 cattle.

he drives move the cattle to the peninsula for the winter months, then move them inland in the spring, just before hurricane season begins and storms threaten their safety. The cowboys time the crossings to occur during periods of slack current, when tidal motion is minimal.

Every November, just before Thanksgiving, about 550 head of cattle are moved in two-story 18-wheeler cattle trucks from the Huebner ranch to a holding pen near the beach. This area is part of the Lower Colorado River Authority's 1,333-acre Matagorda Bay Nature Park. After passing the coastal fishing town of Matagorda, the cattle are hauled down FM 2031, past homes on stilts along the Colorado River to the west and past 934 acres of protected Matagorda Bay wetlands to the east.

Once the cattle have been delivered to the holding pen and the road is blocked, Meyer and his team of 10–12 drovers lead





**“Our family has been moving and swimming cattle on and off Matagorda Peninsula consecutively since 1917. I’ve grown up working this cattle drive alongside my father and grandfather.”**

the herd toward the water. Some of them are local youngsters on horseback who are learning from the more seasoned veterans.

At Matagorda Bay Nature Park, the cattle drive takes a right-hand turn at the miniature golf course to the river’s edge, and the 100-yard swim to the peninsula begins. A small flotilla of cowboys on motorboats ensures the cattle don’t stray, and in about 15 minutes, all are across.

By the return trip in spring, the herd of 550 grows to about 800 bulls, cows and calves.

“I used to love the cattle drive,” says Weathers, a member of Jackson Electric Cooperative, which serves this corner of Matagorda County. He worked the drive for about 15 years. “We’d get on the peninsula early the first morning and start riding west down the beach. We’d split up our team. Some riders picking up cattle along the beach, some in the dunes covered in salt grass.”

Even though this Beefmaster breed of cattle is known for hardiness in harsh, humid coastal climates, the mosquitoes and biting flies on Matagorda Peninsula can be too much





## "It's straight out of the Old West but with a 21st-century spin."

for the herd to handle as the weather warms. The seasonal change challenges the cowboys too.

"The warmer temperatures have brought the rattlesnakes out of hibernation," Weathers says. "You'll find rattlesnakes sunning themselves on top of the salt grass, perched about leg high as we ride. The snakes and the biting flies are enough to force some cattle to swim across the river on their own."

Thus begins the trek back to the Huebner ranch.

"Our ranch pastures have had time to rest over the winter, and the cattle and calves are ready to get going inland," Meyer says.

Jeralyn Novak, communications coordinator for Beefmaster Breeders United, calls the Matagorda Bay cattle drive a modern-day *Lonesome Dove*. It's "straight out of the Old West but with a 21st-century spin," she writes.

Jeff Crosby, executive director of the Colorado River Land Trust, a nonprofit that works to protect land and water in the Colorado River watershed, witnessed a spring cattle swim firsthand. "This is an important part of our historical Texas heritage," he says.

The cowboys don't set or share dates for the spring or fall drives, so lucky onlookers have only the weather and tides to go by. After more than a century of trial and error, these efficient workers have the drive down to a science.

"Cattle drives are still done the same way," Crosby says, "because moving cattle from one location to another was perfected long ago." ■



TOP The Matagorda drive includes moving the Beefmaster cattle along sidewalks. ABOVE Jacie Wahlberg, 7, helps with the roundup.



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OFFICER

## MARCHING FORWARD

**MARCH 2023 IS** a historic month for Tri-County Electric Cooperative. Not only do we celebrate 84 years of serving our members, but we also embark on our power supply freedom journey. For the first time in more than 80 years, Tri-County Electric Co-op will not be subsidizing power costs for any other entity. Starting March 1, Tri-County Electric Co-op will buy power from the ERCOT market on our own, meaning you will get competitively priced power without jeopardizing reliability.

Power supply freedom is a direct result of the Brazos bankruptcy. For those of you who have followed my column over the past 24 months, you should be familiar with the events and results of our wholesale power provider, Brazos Electric Power Cooperative, filing for chapter 11 bankruptcy in March 2021. After months and months of court hearings and proceedings, the exit plan approved by the bankruptcy court stated Brazos would get out of the power supply business in two ways: each of Brazos's 16 member-cooperatives would be relieved of their obligations under the all-requirements power contracts; and Brazos will sell its entire generation fleet. 800912146

As president and chief executive officer, power supply freedom is a big deal to me. However, I know you may be asking 'what does this mean to me?' Relief is coming on your April billing statement. Starting March 1, we are purchasing power from the ERCOT grid through our new partnership with Constellation Energy Group.

By now having the ability to negotiate and procure our own power purchases, we expect to save our members millions of dollars per year in power costs in relation to what we were paying Brazos. Those savings will be passed directly on to our membership. I am confident that gaining the ability to buy competitively priced power will help mitigate the rate impact of the new Brazos Financing Utility Plan Rider that was put in place to recover the \$477 million in costs that was determined as Tri-County's share of the winter storm costs passed on to us upon Brazos's exit from the bankruptcy. Beginning in March, the savings realized through our new power supply contract will help neutralize the bankruptcy rate rider impact and benefit the members of Tri-County. Our power supply freedom has come as a result of our fight for our members during the Brazos bankruptcy. The savings over time will far outweigh the costs and we look forward to our new relationship with Constellation.

From the very beginning I have said we will fight for you. The past two years have not been without trial, but thankfully I can say relief is on the way. We are in this together.



### **Q: WHEN WILL I START SEEING RELIEF ON MY ELECTRIC BILL?**

**A:** Members should start to see relief starting on April billing statements. Starting March 1, 2023, Tri-County Electric Co-op is able to procure our own wholesale power from the ERCOT market outside of Brazos. We believe that members will see substantial savings on the kilowatt hour rate.

### **Q: WHAT IS THE BRAZOS FINANCING RIDER LISTED ON MY BILL?**

**A:** The Brazos Financing Utility Plan Rider recovers Brazos Winter Storm Uri costs and the cost of exiting our all-requirements contract with Brazos. The per kilowatt hour tariff appeared on billing statements beginning January 3, 2023. The Brazos Financing Rider is 1.2 cents/kWh and will be re-evaluated every six months.





**MAX  
WADDELL**

BOARD  
CHAIRMAN

# A SEAT AT THE BOARD TABLE

**EACH DIRECTOR ON THE BOARD** is a Tri-County Electric Cooperative member, just like you. It is our responsibility to serve as the governing and regulatory body of the co-op. One of the most important regulatory duties is power supply. As a not-for-profit, member-owned electric provider, it is our responsibility to provide reliable and competitive service and rates.

In 2022, we saw electric prices rise sharply, in part due to volatility and increases in the natural gas market. We too felt the constraints as electric bills increased. Thankfully, we are going to see a change soon.

Your Tri-County Electric Co-op leadership team and board have been working diligently to secure a power contract at a competitive rate. Our exceptional power supply consultant initiated the request for proposal process in August 2022, and over the course of five months, they reviewed, questioned, vetted and compared numerous proposals from potential providers. At the January board meeting, the consultants presented top proposals for the board’s consideration. After deliberation, your board of directors selected to partner with Constellation Energy Group. Constellation submitted a competitive proposal and is top in the nation for carbon-free energy. We believe the partnership with Constellation will be extremely beneficial to members, and you should start to feel relief on your April billing statements.

## GOVERNANCE

Director nominations applications are open for director districts 1, 2 and 4. Members who are eligible and interested may submit nomination applications. The deadline to submit nomination by committee applications is 5 p.m. on Thursday, March 9. Applications for the nomination by petition path are due by 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 13. All information regarding director nominations and applications can be found at [tcectexas.com/director-elections](https://tcectexas.com/director-elections). 800753617

### Q: WHY DO I HAVE TO PAY THE BRAZOS FINANCING RIDER?

A: As Tri-County Electric Co-op members, we are collectively paying for the power Brazos billed during Winter Storm Uri and to exit our all-requirements contract with Brazos as our wholesale power provider.

### Q: HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO PAY THE BRAZOS FINANCING RIDER?

A: Tri-County Electric Co-op financed our portion of the costs with CoBank, a member of the Farm Credit System, for 25 years. We will not be penalized for paying off the loan early and will be able to apply capital credits earned from CoBank to pay off the loan to lower the costs and impact to members. The cost per kWh will be re-evaluated every six months to accommodate for growth on the system.



# HORSE SENSE

## Hood County's June McGee found her niche in business - insuring performance horses

BY BOB BUCKEL, COMMUNICATIONS CONTENT SPECIALIST

June McGee's journey in the horse arena has come full circle: from saddle to desk and back again.

McGee is the founder of Justin Insurance, which insures cutting, reining and rodeo horses. Since 1991, they've written policies covering mortality, vet bills, fertility - whatever a horse owner needs. Situated for the last 10 years on Temple Hall Road in north Hood County, Justin is one of the leading horse insurers in the United States.

"I started as a one-man show, in a loft over my kitchen," she said. She attended cuttings, futurities and sales, put in long hours and made lots of contacts. 800605173

"I would have horse blankets over me, shivering, but I wasn't going to leave until 30 minutes after the last horse sold," she said. "I just hung tough. I didn't quit."

Before long, veterinarians and trainers knew her name. But when it came time to name her new agency, she shied away from using her own.

"I thought, 'Justin's a nice, solid name... we'll just call it Justin Insurance,'" she said. It wasn't long before she got a call from the office of the legendary bootmaker, whose name graces the main arena at the Will Rogers Center, advising her that she couldn't call it that.

"I said, 'Well, I live in Justin, and I kinda think I can!'" she said.

They didn't pursue it, and she has brought nothing but honor to the name.

### 'A LITTLE HORSE-NUT GIRL'

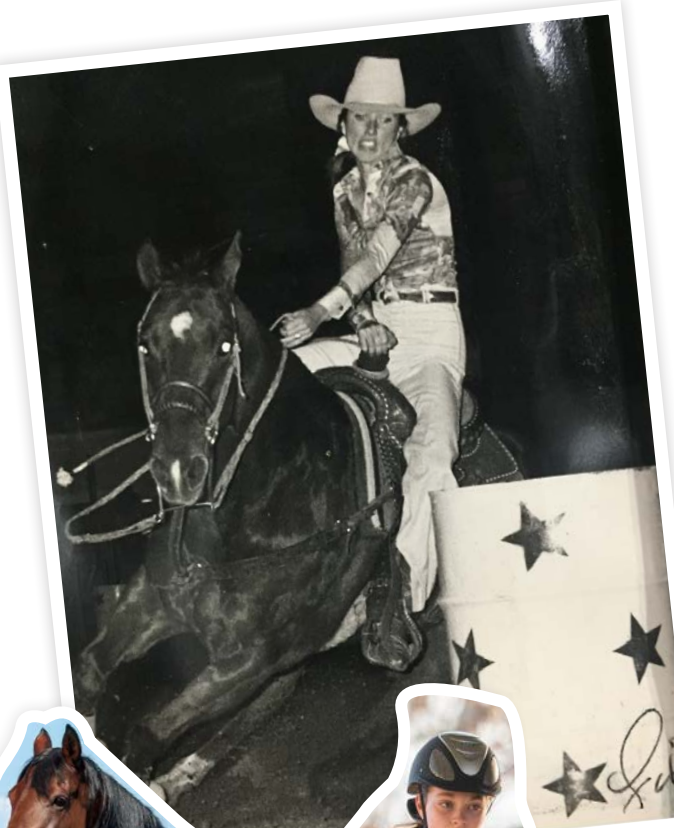
June wasn't born in the saddle, or in Texas, but she got there as fast as she could.

"I was just a little horse-nut girl," she laughed. "I'd cut out every horse picture in every magazine - usually they were in the Marlboro ads."

Growing up in a suburb of Los Angeles, she was 15 when her parents bought her a horse for \$400. They boarded him in nearby Chatsworth - where "movie ranches" provided scenery for TV westerns like "The Lone Ranger" and "Bonanza."

"Every day after school I'd get a ride up there," she said. "That's where I lived."

The stable hosted team events, and June started barrel racing. She moved into junior rodeo, won the barrels at a dozen straight rodeos and earned a college scholarship. A few years later she was ranked in the top 15 nationally. After her horse died from serum hepatitis - uninsured - she got another horse and qualified for the National Finals Rodeo twice.





## THE NEXT GENERATION

She moved to Justin, Texas before development changed the landscape. Some of her new friends were into the sport of cutting – an intricate horse-calf dance using real-life cowboy skills – and she began hosting events at her place. Before long, she was back in the saddle.

“I had a great horse, but I had no clue what I was doing,” she said. “I would cut a cow and then hold on with both hands and he would just do it, and he would win. It didn’t do me any favors because I didn’t learn anything.”

But those events brought her into contact with a London broker who suggested she might be a good fit for the horse insurance business. Soon, she entered a new arena.

## FROM A BUSINESS TO AN INDUSTRY

A visit with the youthful 70-year-old entrepreneur illustrates how much, and how quickly, the “horse business” has changed.

“I grew up when horses were \$1,500 and saddles were \$500,” she said. “Maybe you spent \$3,000 on a really good horse.”

These days, she said, an “okay” horse will go for \$30,000 to \$50,000. At a recent Futurity sale, a yearling sold for \$980,000 – and established champions bring millions.

“We’ve got a lot of new people in the cutting horse industry that have really deep pockets, and they’re very passionate about it,” she said.

With that kind of money involved, insurance has never been more important – and the agency’s experience valuing and underwriting horses gives their clients a leg up.

“Our purpose is to put you back in the same financial position you were in prior to the loss,” she said. “Some will say, ‘Well, this is a \$50,000 horse and I only paid \$10,000!’ And I’m like, ‘That’s awesome! But jump out there and do something a \$50,000 horse would do. If you do that today, I’ll insure it for that, today.’”

The companies that back those policies appreciate that kind of skill.

About 15 years ago, June partnered with Clay Ward Agency, a venerable insurer of racehorses in Kentucky. A few years ago, they took in another partner – now Scott Chartier manages the agency day-to-day and handles most of the farm & ranch insurance.

Even with a man in the mix, Justin Insurance remains a woman-owned business. June’s daughter Maddie, after growing up at the office, is full-time now – though with seven employees, she has more help than her mother had.

“As far as jobs go, it’s pretty darn great,” she said. “You deal with people with horse-sense, more or less. You kind of get each other.”

About five years ago June decided to spend less time in the office and more in the saddle.

“I bought a horse and started showing again and having fun with it,” she said.

Most National Cutting Horse Association events are held nearby, at Will Rogers Arena in Fort Worth, and June loves being in a rural setting again. She also loves being a Tri-County Electric Co-op member.

“[Senior electric designer] Joe Woody was my first contact, and he made the best impression on me,” she said. “When I moved here, I did a lot that required him. Anything I came up with, any idea, he’d just laugh and shake his head, and get it done. He’s always nice, comes out and does it, and doesn’t give me grief.” 8000360003

These days, with the lights on and the computers humming, June has earned a little time off – but she is not out to pasture.

“I’m always accessible,” she said. “The phone’s right there. I’m working remotely. That’s my theory and I’m sticking to it.”

Who’s going to argue? Her theories have worked out pretty well so far.

Left: June McGee’s daughter, Maddie McGee Kuhn, grew up at the insurance office.

Right: June’s granddaughter Kori got into the saddle at an early age. Courtesy of June McGee.

Opposite page: June McGee was a champion barrel racer as a youngster. Courtesy of June McGee.



Additional images via Adobe.

# WOMEN in POWER

Tri-County Electric Co-op has powerful women in leadership positions across the co-op, including the board of directors, senior leadership team, and department heads. Help us celebrate International Women's Day on Wednesday, March 8, by recognizing the influential women in your life. 4763001



**Melissa Watts**

Chief Financial Officer/  
VP of Finance



**Janet Rehberg**

Chief Strategy Officer/  
VP of Engineering



**Andrea McCleese**

Director of Member  
Services



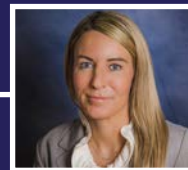
**Melony Block**

Director of Human  
Resources



**Margaret Koprek**

Board of Directors  
District 2



**Sommer Portwood**

Board of Directors  
District 7



## Erika Wells I work for you

Erika Wells is perfectly comfortable in the “man’s world” of electric line operations.

And she loves the “co-op world.”

Wells, a Colorado native, moved to Texas about nine years ago, finished a BBA at Tarleton State University, and went to work for an Aledo-based energy consultant, helping homeowners and small businesses shop for the best deal on electricity.

That job put her in contact with some of the folks at Tri-County Electric Cooperative, which eventually led to her hearing about a job opening. She got to know some people and heard about a job opening. With her boss’s blessing, she applied, and in June 2021 she joined the team at Tri-County Electric Co-op.

She’s been learning – “drinking at the firehose” – ever since.

As an operations specialist, she does whatever Chief Operations Officer VP of Operations Wesley Scheets needs her to do – tracking data, coordinating contractors’ jobs, shepherding linemen through the in-house development program, helping with inventory, and making sure safety equipment and tools are there when they need them.

“Hopefully my goal is to bring a little organization and stability for them,” she said. “There’s a lot of details, a lot of moving pieces that need to come together to make it all work.”

Despite having no experience with line operations, she has never felt intimidated. 800760104

“Honestly, it’s great working with the guys,” she said. “I’ve never had to struggle to prove myself – the guys have been really accepting of me, really patient, helpful to educate me in areas that I don’t know and understand.

“They’re very much a team – supportive, helping me through those unknowns. It’s been great.”

And the “co-op world?”

“It fits every fiber of my being,” she said. “We’re a family and they all look after me. It’s neat to be a part of that, and to be part of something bigger by being really member-focused.”

Outside of work, Erika’s focus is on fishing, hiking, weightlifting and video games – and her two “kids” – goats Teddy and Moose. She’s also on the worship team at Trinity Bible Church, and partners with Center of Hope in Weatherford.



# THIS IS HOME PHOTO SUBMISSION

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS, BUT WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO YOU? IS IT THE DINER ON THE CORNER, WHERE THE BRICK MIGHT BE CRUMBLING, BUT THEY SELL THE BEST BREAKFAST BURRITOS AROUND? IS IT THE PEOPLE OUT WALKING EVERY MORNING ON YOUR DRIVE TO WORK? MAYBE IT'S JUST COMING HOME TO YOUR PETS EVERY NIGHT.

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FULL CONTEST DETAILS AT [TCECTEXAS.COM/PHOTO](https://tcectexas.com/photo)

PHOTOS DUE BY MAY 26, 2023



Photo via Unsplash



# 4-1-1 ON THE 8-1-1

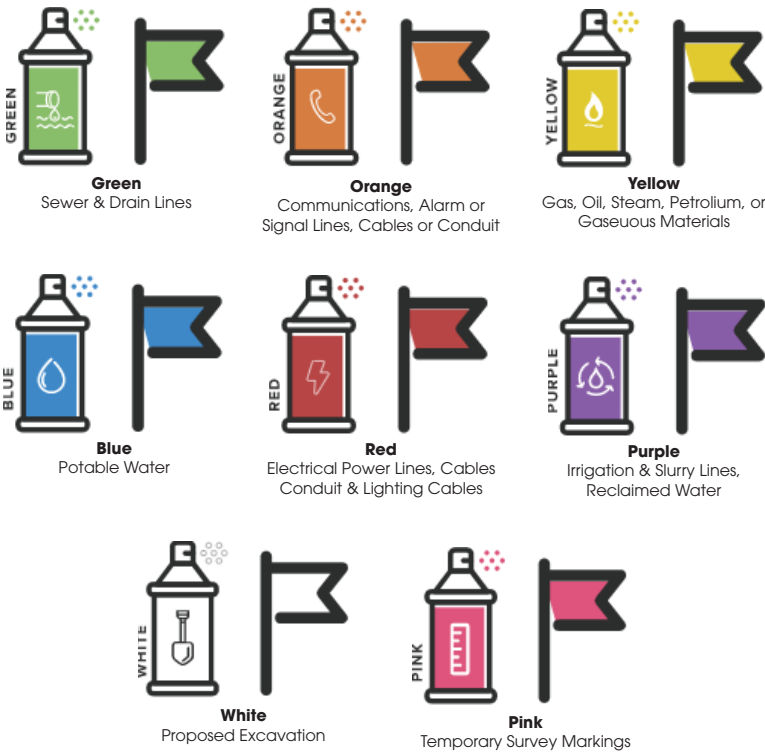
BY KENNEDY L. MOORE, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Spring has finally sprung! With the warmer weather nearing, the urge to spring clean and spruce up the exterior grows fonder. Before we pick up the shovel, there is one crucial action we cannot miss – calling 811.

811 is the national call-before-you-dig number. Anyone who is planning on digging, no matter how big or small the project, should call this number or visit [Texas811.org](https://Texas811.org). 8695900001

After you have provided all necessary information, such as the location(s) where you plan to dig, utilities are informed and will come to mark the areas to be dug.

Utilities in Texas require two working days and not more than 14 working days of notice in advance. There are different colored flags and paint for each type of utility and are valid for up to 14 days.



It is important to know what's below. Cables, gas pipes, sewer lines, water pipes, and electric lines underground are at risk of damage if hit while digging. Most utilities are only two to three feet underground. If you do hit a utility line or bust a pipe you can be fined up to \$3,500, or worse, given a jail sentence. Additionally, hitting a high-pressure gas line could cost you your life. 8004916602

In 2021, the Common Ground Alliance's Damage Information Reporting Tool (DIRT) reported 192,745 instances of damage to underground utilities in the U.S. The cost to repair is \$30 billion annually.

The main cause of the damage – no knowledge of 811. Though most excavators are highly aware of 811, they are responsible for 60-percent of the damage stated above because of failure to properly contact 811.

Plant the thought in your mind to call 811 before you're in the weeds.

## Tri-County Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

### CONTACT US

200 Bailey Ranch Road  
Aledo, TX 76008  
Phone 817-444-3201  
Email [customer\\_service@tcectexas.com](mailto:customer_service@tcectexas.com)  
Web [tcectexas.com](https://tcectexas.com)

### President/CEO

Darryl Schriver

### Board of Directors

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John Killough, District 6 - Vice Chairman  
Margaret Koprek, District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer  
Kevin Ingle, District 1  
Jorden Wood, District 3  
Jerry A. Walden, District 4  
Steve V. Harris, District 5  
Sommer Portwood, District 7  
Michael Sivertsen, District 8

## 24/7 Outage Reporting

For information and to report outages, please contact us.

Online: [oms.tcectexas.com](https://oms.tcectexas.com)  
App: TCEC Connect  
Phone: 817-444-3201  
Text: OUTAGE to 25069

### ABOUT TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP

Tri-County Electric Co-op owns and maintains more than 9,900 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 105,000 members in Archer, Baylor, Denton, Foard, Haskell, Hood, Jack, King, Knox, Palo Pinto, Parker, Stonewall, Tarrant, Throckmorton, Wilbarger, and Wise counties.

### OFFICE LOCATIONS

**Aledo**  
200 Bailey Ranch Road, Aledo 76008

**Azle**  
600 NW Parkway, Azle 76020

**Granbury**  
1623 Weatherford Highway, Granbury 76048

**Keller**  
4900 Keller-Hicks Road, Fort Worth 76244

**Seymour**  
419 N. Main, Seymour 76380

### IT PAYS TO STAY INFORMED

Find your account number in pages 18-25 of *Texas Co-op Power*, and you will receive a \$20 credit on your electric bill. Simply contact one of the offices listed above and make them aware of your discovery!

### VISIT US ONLINE

[tcectexas.com](https://tcectexas.com)  
[Facebook.com/TCECTexas](https://Facebook.com/TCECTexas)



# DIRT

BY LEAH OWENS  
AZLE

- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 16 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1 small box instant French Vanilla pudding
- 2 cups milk
- 8 oz. tub Cool Whip
- 1 - 1¼ bag of Oreo cookies

1. Mix together powdered sugar and softened cream cheese. Set aside
2. Mix French Vanilla pudding with milk. Fold in Cool Whip.
3. Combine pudding mix and cream cheese mixture. Mix until smooth.
4. Crush Oreo's in blender until very fine (and looks like dirt!)
5. In a dish, put a layer of cookies, then a thick layer of pudding.
6. Repeat layers, alternating cookies & pudding and end with a layer of cookies on top.

ENJOY!

## TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP MEMBER RECIPE SUBMISSION FORM

MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL or PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

RECIPE NAME \_\_\_\_\_

### SUBMITTING YOUR RECIPE:

**EMAIL:** Please include the above information with your recipe and send to **communications@tcectexas.com**

**ONLINE:** [tcectexas.com/recipe-submission](https://tcectexas.com/recipe-submission)

**MAIL:** Please detach and submit this form with your recipe and mail to:

Tri-County Electric Cooperative  
Attn: Recipe Submission  
200 Bailey Ranch Road  
Aledo, Texas 76008



Photo via Pexels





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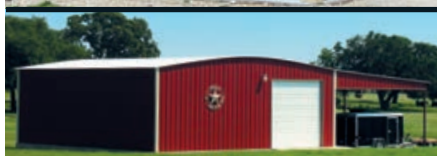
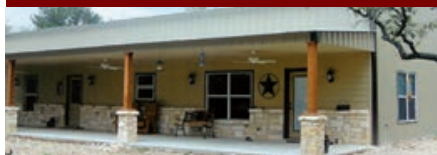
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— Don W., Sherman, TX

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Quinta Mazatlan is an urban sanctuary for pollinators and native plants.

**TCP** Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



hill that overlooked the vast and sunny Rio Grande delta to the south. The 10,000-square-foot mansion was believed to be the largest adobe house in Texas at that time, 1935. It was built in a Spanish Revival style with imported Talavera tile, red clay tiles for the roof, wrought-iron gates and huge carved doors. The couple wanted their home to look like the elegantly appointed homes they had seen in the finer districts of Mexico.

After the Matthews died, the house was sold to a grapefruit millionaire, Frank Schultz, who added features like stone balustrades. Eventually the home was sold again and began to suffer from neglect.

The city of McAllen stepped in and saved it in 1998, and today Quinta Mazatlan and its 20 acres are a crown jewel of the city, described as a “mansion with a mission.” The world-class educational facility located in a Tamaulipan thorn forest is part of the World Birding Center and hosts the annual Monarch Fest to support the struggling monarch butterfly population.

Quinta Mazatlan’s grounds are teeming with native plants and serve as a rejuvenating garden for migrating exotic birds and pollinators. The property’s magical ambiance has made it a sought-after venue for couples wanting to say “I do” in a place they’ll always treasure remembering.

The Matthews were honored to know that the dream they had for their beloved home has been magnificently surpassed. ■

# Of Birds, Butterflies and Brides

Quinta Mazatlan and its massive adobe mansion remain a McAllen jewel

BY W.F. STRONG

**THE ROMAN PHILOSOPHER** Cicero said, “If you have a library and a garden, you have all that you need.” Enter the gates of Quinta Mazatlan, and you’ll understand that wisdom.

This inviting refuge is seemingly a world away from the hustle and bustle of McAllen right outside the gates. Jason Chilton Matthews, who built the mansion in the 1930s, wanted it that way.

In every corner, there are Old World influences. There’s a tiled Roman bathtub, 9 feet long and 3 feet deep, and a tiled mural that has the words “*Labor Omnia Vincit*,” Latin for “work conquers

all,” which is Virgil’s praise for the life of the farmer in his poem *Georgics*.

Matthews was a renaissance man—a publisher, writer, composer, poet, scientist, soldier and pilot. He fought in 11 battles in World War I.

After Matthews traveled the world extensively, involved in various business enterprises with Marcia, his oil heiress wife from Pennsylvania, they settled in McAllen because he said it was the “crossroads of the Western Hemisphere.” He wanted to build a home that would be a showplace to entertain friends, and he found the highest point in McAllen: a

# Cast Iron

Trusted cookware provides timeless value, indoors and out

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

There's no tool more cherished in a home kitchen than a well-seasoned cast-iron pan. Whether your skillet has been passed down for generations or is just starting to see its full potential, it's a go-to for many dishes. This tart lemon pie, from Fredericksburg Cast Iron Co., uses your pan in a somewhat unexpected way.

## Lemon Skillet Pie

### PIE

**½ cup (1 stick) butter, melted,**  
**plus more for the pan**  
**1½ cups crushed graham crackers**  
**½ cup sugar**  
**3 cups sweetened condensed milk**  
**3 egg yolks**  
**¾ cup lemon juice**  
**Pinch salt**

### TOPPING

**1 cup heavy cream**  
**3 tablespoons powdered sugar**  
**½ teaspoon vanilla extract**

### GARNISH

**Sliced lemons**  
**Lemon zest**  
**Fresh mint leaves**

1. **PIE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and lightly coat a 12-inch cast-iron skillet with butter.
2. In a bowl, combine graham crackers and sugar. Stir in melted butter until well blended. Press the crumb mixture into the bottom and sides of the prepared pan. Bake until firm, about 8 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, combine the sweetened condensed milk, egg yolks, lemon juice and salt and beat with a mixer for 4 minutes.
4. Pour mixture into baked pie crust and return the pan to the oven. Bake until the center is set, about 10 minutes.
5. Let the pie cool at room temperature for 30 minutes. Cover and then transfer to the refrigerator to chill until set, at least 1 hour.
6. **TOPPING** When ready to serve, make the topping. In a large bowl or using a stand mixer, beat the cream, powdered sugar and vanilla until fluffy. Spread onto pie and garnish as desired.

**SERVES 8-10**

**TCP** Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at [stetted.com](http://stetted.com), where she features a recipe for Texas Tater Tot Casserole.





## Creamy Salsa Verde Pasta

JAZMIN ROMO  
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

Creamy and herbal with just the right amount of heat, this salsa verde pasta features an easy-to-make sauce. Romo recommends using the extra sauce as a dip or spread on a toasted bagel.

**3 teaspoons salt, divided use**  
**8 ounces linguine**  
**8 ounces cream cheese, softened**  
**1 cup cilantro**  
**½ cup sour cream**  
**½ cup water**  
**3 green tomatoes, quartered**  
**¼ cup basil leaves**  
**2 serrano peppers, deseeded**  
**3 cloves garlic**  
**1 cube chicken bouillon**  
**¼ teaspoon pepper**  
**1 onion, divided use**  
**3 tablespoons butter**  
**1 cup shredded pepper jack cheese**

**1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add 2 teaspoons salt and linguine. Cook pasta to al dente according to package directions.

**2.** Meanwhile, in a blender combine cream cheese, cilantro, sour cream, water, tomatoes, basil, serranos, garlic, bouillon cube, pepper and remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Quarter the onion and add 1 quarter to the blender. Dice the remaining onion to yield ¾ cup and set aside. Blend sauce until smooth, taste, and add more salt or pepper to taste.

**3.** Heat a 9- or 10-inch cast-iron pan over medium. Add butter. Once melted, add reserved diced onions and sauté until soft. Pour in blended sauce (you might

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

## Henry's Heavenly Chili

HELEN SANDERS  
UNITED COOPERATIVE  
SERVICES



Sanders' late husband, Henry, above, created this chili for the annual family reunion, where he would cook it over an open flame in a cast-iron wash kettle. If you prefer, leave out the alcohol.

SERVES 4-6

**2 tablespoons bacon grease or vegetable oil**  
**1 pound ground beef**  
**1 pound ground pork**  
**1 onion, chopped**  
**2 jalapeño peppers, deseeded and chopped**  
**3 cloves garlic, chopped**  
**1 can diced tomatoes (14.5 ounces)**  
**1 can diced Hatch chiles (4 ounces)**  
**2 tablespoons diced chipotle in adobo sauce**  
**¼ cup chili powder**  
**2 teaspoons dried oregano leaves**  
**2 teaspoons cumin**  
**2 teaspoons salt**  
**1-2 teaspoons pepper**  
**2 cups beef stock**  
**2 ounces beer**  
**1 ounce reposado tequila**

**1.** Heat a cast-iron Dutch oven over medium-high and add bacon grease. Once melted, add beef and pork and cook about 10 minutes, until no pink remains.

**2.** Add the onion, jalapeños and garlic and cook until vegetables are soft. Stir in tomatoes, chiles and chipotle. Add chili powder, oregano, cumin, salt and pepper and mix well, then add beef stock, beer and tequila and stir again. Reduce heat to medium. Cook 20 minutes, stirring often.

**3.** Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**SHEET PAN MEALS** DUE MARCH 10

Sheet pans are perfect for preparing meals in a snap. What do you whip up, whether it's for breakfast, lunch or dinner? Submit your recipes on our website by March 10 for a chance to win \$500.



## RECIPES CONTINUED

not use it all) and stir slowly to mix. Bring to a boil for 1 minute, then remove from heat.

**4.** Drain pasta and add to the cast-iron pan, carefully tossing with tongs to coat with sauce. Sprinkle with cheese and bake 15 minutes. Broil 2 minutes to brown the cheese. Garnish with more cilantro and basil, if desired.

**SERVES 2-3**

## Dutch Apple Pancakes

GWEN JONES  
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

Oven-baked pancakes are impressive with their highly puffed sides. This Dutch apple version is wonderfully spiced and makes for a great breakfast or dessert.

**4 eggs**

**½ cup flour**

**½ cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar, divided use**



**½ teaspoon baking powder**

**Pinch salt**

**1 cup milk**

**2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, melted**

**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

**1 teaspoon ground nutmeg, divided use**

**4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter**

**½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**

**1 large tart apple, peeled, cored and thinly sliced**

**1.** In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, flour, 1 tablespoon sugar, baking powder

and salt. Gradually whisk in milk until smooth, then whisk in melted butter, vanilla and ½ teaspoon nutmeg. Let batter rest at least 30 minutes and up to overnight.

**2.** When ready to bake, preheat oven to 425 degrees.

**3.** Heat a 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium and add 4 tablespoons butter. Once melted, brush butter up sides of pan and remove from heat.

**4.** In a small bowl, combine ¼ cup sugar, cinnamon and remaining ½ teaspoon nutmeg, then sprinkle evenly over the melted butter. Arrange the apple slices over the sugar mixture, then sprinkle the remaining ¼ cup sugar over the apples.

**5.** Place the pan over medium-high heat and cook just until the liquid starts to bubble. Remove from heat and evenly pour the batter over the apples.

**6.** Bake 15 minutes, then reduce heat to 375 and bake 10 minutes more. Serve immediately.

**SERVES 4**



## Cast-Iron Skillet

### Giveaway Contest

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C.



B.



A.



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— Tom J.

*"Stunning pieces"*

— Marilyn W.

*"So pleased!"*

— Linda K.

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Arizona turquoise  
starting at \$59**



## GAMBLING DEBT REVEALS STUNNING TURQUOISE JEWELRY

*Own the diamond of the desert!*

Old Pete was a retired stuntman bursting with stories. There was the time he stared down a grizzly bear. There was the time he won a competition and got to kiss a Hollywood starlet as the prize. And there was the time he got into a fistfight with the Duke. Many stories. Some were probably even true. I know two things for sure: that he had an excellent collection of turquoise and that he owed me for a poker game he lost. The last time I saw him, he opened a drawer and pulled out a collection of beautiful Navajo turquoise jewelry to repay his debt. Pete's jewelry inspired our Tucson Sun Turquoise Collection.

This jewelry set features turquoise that's been gently enhanced to bring out its finest shades in a Southwestern motif. Finished with oxidized silver, this jewelry set captures the beauty and mystery of the Arizona desert. The rarest and most valuable turquoise is found right here in the American Southwest, but the future of the blue beauty is unclear. I recently spoke with turquoise traders who explained that less than 5% of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry. Once thriving, many Southwest mines have closed.

But Stauer saw this coming and is now one of the largest owners of gem-grade turquoise in the U.S. Don't miss your chance to own the diamond of the desert. Act now. This is one of our fastest sellers, and we only have a limited supply of Arizona turquoise available for this ad. See why Stauer remains the best bang for your buck!

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C. Cuff (11 ctw)	<del>\$499</del>	\$149* + S&P	Save \$350
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## 'Lonesome' in a Library

Texas State University houses memorabilia from the TV miniseries

BY CHET GARNER

**WHEN I THINK OF** the Wild West and the grit it took to be a cowboy, I don't think of yodeling Roy Rogers or Hollywood-perfect John Wayne. I think of Woodrow Call and Gus McCrae, covered in sweat and driving cattle in *Lonesome Dove*. I remember watching the 1989 miniseries with my parents and thinking, "Now these are real cowboys."

Every year thousands of faithful fans like me make a pilgrimage to San Marcos to visit a permanent exhibit dedicated to the classic production.

I rolled onto the campus of Texas State University and wandered past students to the seventh floor of the Alkek Library, which houses the Wittliff Collections. Screenwriter Bill Wittliff and his wife, Sally, collected writers' papers for years and decided to open them to the public. There are priceless papers from writers like Cormac McCarthy and Sam Shepard, but most come to see the work of Wittliff himself. He was the screenwriter who adapted Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* novel into the award-winning miniseries.

Inside the exhibit, you'll find the cowboy outfits worn by Robert Duvall (McCrae) and Tommy Lee Jones (Call). There are arrows shot by Comanches as well as hats, guns and the wooden sign for the Hat Creek Cattle Co. that hung outside the fictional headquarters. They even have the deceased body of Gus that Call dragged back to Texas as a final act of friendship. Most amazing to me was the script used by Wittliff on set, with his tweaks and changes to lines to tell the best story possible.

I left inspired to tell more stories about the West—but only after I had properly binge-watched all six-plus hours of *Lonesome Dove* one more time. ■

ABOVE Chet alongside the cowboy garb worn by Tommy Lee Jones as the character Woodrow Call.

**TCP** Chet visits the mementos of real TV cowboys. Check out the video on our website and see all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



## Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details.

## MARCH

08

**Elgin S.H.E.: Women in Business**, (512) 285-4515, [elgintxchamber.com](http://elgintxchamber.com)

09

**Abilene All That Jazz**, (325) 676-9620, [paramountabilene.com](http://paramountabilene.com)

**Denton [9-12] Texas Storytelling Festival**, (940) 380-9320, [tejasstorytelling.com](http://tejasstorytelling.com)

**Irving [9-12] Texas Steel Guitar Association Jam-boree**, (817) 558-3481, [texassteelguitar.org](http://texassteelguitar.org)

10

**Lindale Keeton Coffman**, (430) 235-2100, [outhousetickets.com](http://outhousetickets.com)

**Round Rock Destination: Hope**, (512) 868-2822, [casawilco.org](http://casawilco.org)

**Amarillo [10-12] Western Antiques and Collectibles Show**, (806) 378-3096, [amarillociviccenter.com](http://amarillociviccenter.com)

**Mansfield [10-13] Arts Week**, (817) 728-3383, [visitmansfieldtexas.com](http://visitmansfieldtexas.com)

**Bastrop [10-12, 17-19, 24-26] The Addams Family: A New Musical Comedy**, (512) 200-3826, [bastropoperahouse.org](http://bastropoperahouse.org)

11

**Beaumont Bee Gees Gold: The Tribute**, (409) 838-3435, [beaumonteventstx.com](http://beaumonteventstx.com)

**Burton Texas Ranger Day**, (979) 803-0393, [burtonheritagesociety.org](http://burtonheritagesociety.org)

**Corpus Christi Wine Festival**, (361) 779-7326, [corpuschristiwinefestival.com](http://corpuschristiwinefestival.com)



**Livingston Pioneer and Settler Day**, (936) 365-2201, [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

**Lufkin Gene Watson**, (936) 633-5454, [angelinaarts.org](http://angelinaarts.org)

13

**Fredericksburg [13-18] Spring Break at the Pioneer Museum**, (830) 990-8441, [pioneermuseum.org](http://pioneermuseum.org)

16

**Canton [16-18] Van Zandt County Bluegrass Festival**, (214) 802-5999, [krlivemusic.com](http://krlivemusic.com)

17

**Bryan [17-18] Watercolor Batik Workshop**, (979) 704-3090, [degallery.us](http://degallery.us)

**Denton [17-18] The Muse Invitational Motorcycle Show**, (512) 522-5445, [ridetexas.com](http://ridetexas.com)

**Tolar [17-18] Ceramic Expo and Handcrafted Items**, (254) 716-5227, [westceramicshow.com](http://westceramicshow.com)

**Fredericksburg [17-19] Trade Days**, (210) 846-4094, [fbgtradedays.com](http://fbgtradedays.com)

**Tyler [17-19] Vintage Market Days of East Texas**, [vintagemarketdays.com](http://vintagemarketdays.com)

18

**Brenham The Celtic Angels**, (979) 337-7240, [thebarnhillcenter.com](http://thebarnhillcenter.com)

**Del Rio Texas State Parks Centennial Dark Skies Celebration**, (830) 395-2133, [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

**Fredericksburg Hill Country Indian Artifact Show**, (830) 329-2636, [hillcountryindianartifacts.com](http://hillcountryindianartifacts.com)

MORE EVENTS >

## **Submit Your Event**

We pick events for the magazine directly from [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com). Submit your June event by April 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.



Spring break starts  
*here.*

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## Pick of the Month

**Herb Festival at the Wynne Home**  
Huntsville, March 25  
(936) 891-5024  
[texasthymeunit.org](http://texasthymeunit.org)

Jump-start your spring by celebrating fragrant herbs and healthy veggies. Expect vendors, speakers, music, children's activities and plenty of plants at this free festival.

## MARCH EVENTS CONTINUED

18

**Lewisville St. Paddy's Texas Style**, (972) 219-3401, [cityoflewisville.com](http://cityoflewisville.com)

**Angleton [18-19] Market Days**, (979) 849-4364, [angleton.tx.us](http://angleton.tx.us)

19

**The Colony Luck of the Irish Triathlon**, (214) 370-9010, [playtri.com](http://playtri.com)

24

**Georgetown [24-25] Quilt Show**, (512) 869-1812, [handcraftsunlimited.com](http://handcraftsunlimited.com)

**Hallettsville [24-26] South Texas Polka and Sausage Fest**, (361) 798-2311, [hallettsville.com](http://hallettsville.com)

**Burton [24-April 1] LaBahia Antiques Show**, (979) 289-2684, [labahiaantiques.com](http://labahiaantiques.com)

25

**Bandera Ranching Heritage Day**, (830) 796-4413, [banderatex.com](http://banderatex.com)

28

**The Colony Mother and Son Adventure Day**, (972) 625-1106, [visitthecolonytx.com](http://visitthecolonytx.com)

**Sabinal [25-26] Wild Hog Festival and Craft Fair**, [sabinalwildhogfestival.com](http://sabinalwildhogfestival.com)

**College Station [28-29] Anastasia**, (979) 845-1234, [opastickets.org](http://opastickets.org)

31

**Kerrville Napoleon Dynamite: A Conversation With Jon Heder, Efrén Ramirez and Jon Gries**; (830) 315-5483; [thearcadialive.org](http://thearcadialive.org)

**Abilene [31-April 1] Outlaws and Legends Music Festival**, [outlawsandlegends.com](http://outlawsandlegends.com)

**Victoria [31-April 1] Friends of Flint Rifle Invitational Scholarship Shoot and State Cookoff**, (210) 439-4191, [friendsofflint.com](http://friendsofflint.com)

APRIL

01

**Brenham Southern Raised**, (979) 337-7240, [thebarnhillcenter.com](http://thebarnhillcenter.com)

**Bryan Starlight Affair**, (979) 485-5473, [rmhc-ctx.org](http://rmhc-ctx.org)

**Mason Spring Art & Wine Fest**, (325) 347-5758, [masontxcoc.com](http://masontxcoc.com)

**Port Arthur Cajun Heritage Fest**, (409) 985-7822, [cajunheritagefest.com](http://cajunheritagefest.com)

**Bellville [1-2] Texas Select Custom Cutlery Event**, (713) 724-6813, [texassselectevent.com](http://texassselectevent.com)

**San Antonio [1-2] Fiesta of Gems**, (830) 387-1766, [swgms.org](http://swgms.org)



# Land, Sea or Sky

By land, by sea and by air, these Texans take the world by storm. Come along as we visit the scenic parts of Texas. When it comes to natural beauty, the sky's the limit.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

**1 MARK HOLLY**  
BANDERA EC

"Little did we know that a major hurricane was about to impact Port Aransas. It was so sad to see the city devastated shortly after we left."

**2 CASEY BRUNO**  
PEDERNALES EC

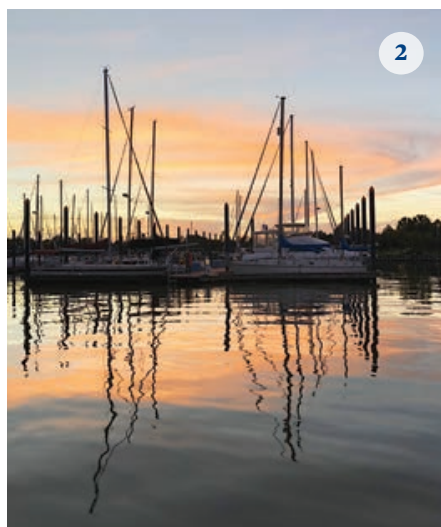
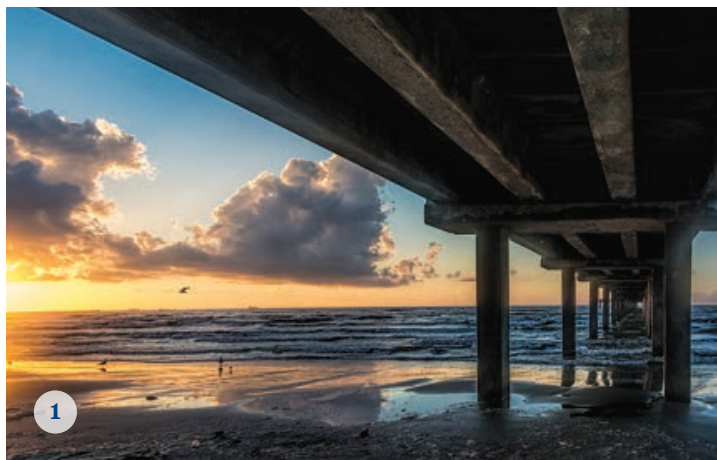
Sunset over Waterford Harbor Marina in Kemah.

**3 PAIGE KILLIAN**  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

"Please don't touch me!"

**4 LARRY SELMAN**  
TRI-COUNTY EC

"This was taken by my wife, Gigi Selman. While driving down the road, she saw this hidden scene."



## Upcoming Contests

- DUE MAR 10** Waterfalls
- DUE APR 10** Hoof and Horn
- DUE MAY 10** Night Sky



Enter online at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/contests).

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for more Land, Sea or Sky photos from readers.



## A Pet Project

An ailing feline finds her place at the head of the table

BY JESSICA RIDGE  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
STEPHANIE SINGLETON

I SET THE DELICATE china saucer before her, a tiny calico queen curled up on a quilt. On the dish is a dainty portion of cat food, heated to make it more enticing. The plate was a wedding gift a decade ago, shortly before my husband and I brought our little feline gourmand home.

Only the best for miss priss. She gives this morning's delicacy, whitefish and tuna, an imperious sniff, then looks up at me. *Is that the best you can do, lady?* Next up, canned salmon.

Isobel is 12 now, and she is dying.

Her green eyes gaze with the same peaceful focus, and she still flops over for belly rubs and purrs contentedly, but her decline, which had been happening in fits and starts, has gained momentum. And my husband, Jon, and I find ourselves vested with the worst, most

painful power—deciding when to let her go. It's a desperate sort of daily divination. *How much has she eaten today? Three bites earlier? Fantastic.* As she grows thinner.

And yet as best we can tell, she isn't suffering. So with our vet's blessing, we persist. I imagine Isobel as a discerning diner at a Michelin-starred restaurant for which I'm the hapless chef, subject to the mercy of her palate's whims. No thank you to tuna in oil today; yes please to catnip-laced crunchy treats.

Her haughtiness has hung on in other ways, too. She still emits an irritated squeak when our dog, Brienne, gets too close for her liking. She's never been a big fan of our coltish pup. Too friendly, too in her face.

But Isobel warmed up to us quickly. The day we brought her home, a volunteer at the animal shelter had asked if we'd like to meet the sweetest kitty in the whole place. Sure, we said. Almost as soon as Isobel emerged from her little metal crate, she settled into my arms. More like a puppy than a 2-year-old cat, really. The sad din of the shelter faded into the background as she stared up at me. Sold.

That night, she hid under the sofa in our apartment until I got home from work, when she finally ventured out from beneath her chenille hideout, to our soft-spoken jubilation.

We go back to the vet tomorrow, where I know the news won't be good. I've begun the steps to volunteer at the shelter where we found Isobel; I hope to guide another family to a cat as sweet as ours.

Until then, I've got plenty to keep me busy—a finicky, affectionate Isobel, as likely to snuggle up close as she is to turn up her nose. ■





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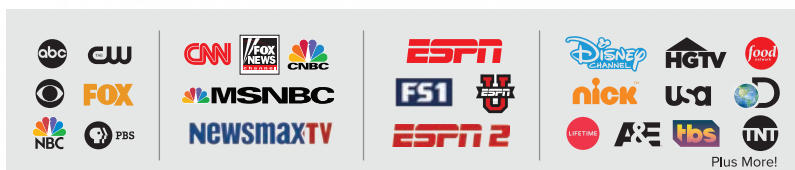


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