

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Melissa Miller's Animal Kingdom



PLUS:

Sanctified Sisters of Belton • Great Grilling • Mosquito Fest

COOL SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

Swimming

**Don't be all wet.
Remember these rules
for safe pool-time fun
this summer:**

- Keep electric radios, TVs, clocks, barbecues, lights and other electrical appliances at least 10 feet from a pool and wet surfaces. Use battery-powered appliances whenever possible.
- Electric appliances should not be used outdoors unless they are equipped with a heavy-duty cord and three-prong plug.
- Swimming pools should be well away from electric wires to avoid the risk of hitting the wires with long-handled cleaning equipment.
- All outdoor electrical outlets should be weatherproof and equipped with a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). This is especially important in damp locations where more protection is necessary.
- Check with your electric co-op before you dig to make sure you know the location of buried electrical lines.
- Label power and light switches for pool, hot tub and spa equipment.
- If you think you are being shocked while in the water, move away from the source of the shock. Get out of the water, if possible, without using a metal ladder.

**Stay safe this summer.
Don't swim with shocks!**



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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A MAGAZINE ABOUT TEXAS LIVING

In This Issue

Flatonia and Fine Art

Our cover feature, "Melissa Miller's Animal Kingdom," is something of a departure for *Texas Co-op Power*. We rarely highlight fine art, but Miller's work evokes rural Texas with such a unique vision and imagination that we think she's totally at home in these pages. After all, she's a Flatonia girl at heart. "The Red Pony" on the cover is perhaps one of her most famous paintings.

While doing research for the "Sanctified Sisters" article, we had the opportunity to visit the Bell County Museum. It is a small gem with historic dioramas, period clothing and even a curio cabinet with drawers full of epherma of a bygone era.

In *Texas Living*, the recipe topic is "Great Grilling" Gary Hurse, vice president of member services for Texas Electric Cooperatives, served as grillmeister for this month's testing. Sadly, it will be the last time we will see Gary at our grill wielding his tongs. Gary is departing Austin to become general manager of Lea County Electric Cooperative in Lovington, NM. We'll still see him now and again because Lea County EC serves both Texas and New Mexico. The good news is that Gary has always dreamed of returning to a position of general manager of a rural electric cooperative.

The Focus on Texas topic this month is "Family Fun." And speaking of fun, I second festival columnist Jim Gramon's assertion that holding an event to honor mosquitoes proves Texans will celebrate anything.

Enjoy!



Peg Champion
Vice President, Communications/
Publisher



"Autumn Cows" by Melissa Miller, 1977, oil on canvas, 48" by 56", private collection



Is that water squirting out of the top of 5-year-old Janell's head? The very thought sends Janell and her sister, Joanna, 9, into gales of laughter. The girls are the daughters of Trinity Valley EC members Dennis and Sharon Jarvis. For more "family fun," turn to page 37.

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By Jonathan Smit, Paintings by Melissa Miller
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By Joe Holley
Martha McWhirter of Belton led a remarkable experiment in communal living and female business acumen that would come to be known as the Sanctified Sisters of Belton. In one form or another, the group of women inspired by McWhirter's leadership lasted for more than a century.

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Texas Co-op Power is published by your electric cooperative to enhance the quality of life of its member-customers in an educational and entertaining format.

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#6—Cooperation Among Cooperatives

BY KAYE NORTHCOTT

Two electric co-op officials in Costa Rica gave me an eye opening and, might I say, entertaining tour of a region where the cooperatives are about to electrify six rural villages with some help from U.S. cooperatives. I visited the country in April on vacation and found a great opportunity to write about life before electricity.

As a traveler, I particularly wanted to see a volcano. I stayed at the Arenal Volcano Lodge, which is only about a mile away from one of the most active volcanoes in the world. The problem is that the top of the volcano is usually enveloped in clouds. But on a rare crystalline day, April 27, my birthday, the volcano sounded a stellar boom and emitted a huge cloud of white smoke. The next night it erupted so energetically that it shook the restaurant at the lodge.

The following morning I was eager for another adventure. Carlos Rodriguez Chaves, general manager of Conelectricas, Costa Rica's association of electric cooperatives, and Edward Herrera Barantes, director of rural electrification for Coopelesca cooperative in northeast Costa Rica, picked me up at the lodge in an immaculate white SUV. It was not to stay that way for long as we drove to an electrification project about 30 miles from the Nicaraguan border.

Leaving behind the volcano, the azure Lake Arenal, the howling monkeys and other exotic wildlife, we were in Costa Rica's cow country within minutes. Coopelesca's service area provides 60 percent of Costa Rica's dairy products. Cattle were placidly grazing on lush greenery, even on steep hills. One herd made its way slowly along the highway, moving toward a farmhouse gate.

Rain came and went. The sun appeared. The sun disappeared. The two-lane paved road ended, but Edward was adept at pushing his four-wheel-drive vehicle along the muddy red-dirt tracks. It was so slippery that I wondered how much worse it got during the rainy season. We were tracing the route the new line will take by

map and by tree trunks with bright orange marks on them, but the numbers on the map were simply not the same as the numbers on the trees.

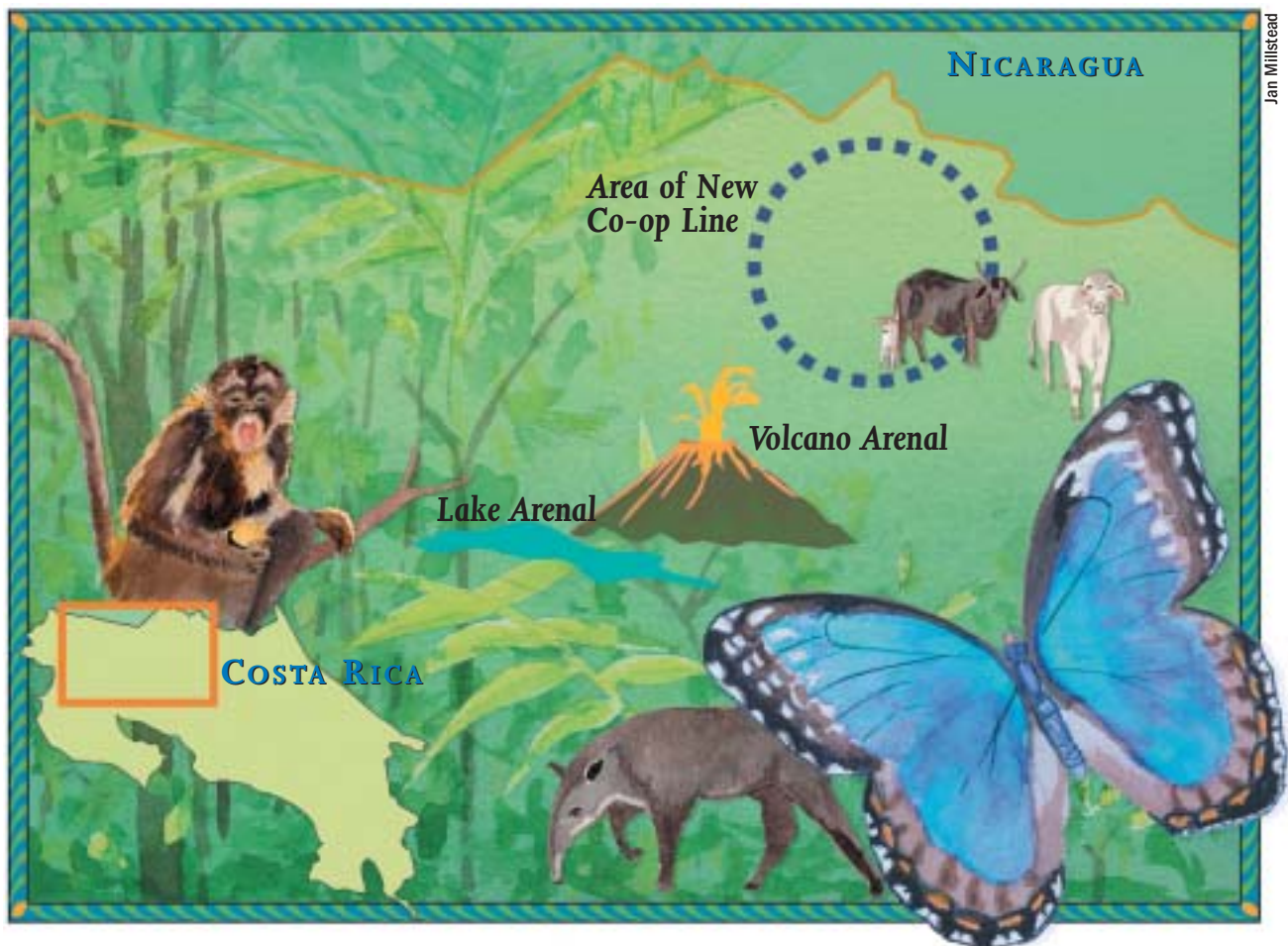
Edward stopped the SUV, rolled down his window, and asked a fellow on horseback holding a machete if we were going the right way. He looked down at his rubber boots and said he thought so. Then we stopped at a rural house with a tin roof and several lounging dogs. Wet laundry was hanging on the fence in the rain.

A laborer there told Carlos with great enthusiasm that we should proceed farther north toward Nicaragua to see the line route. He said he lives along the proposed line and that his family is looking forward to having electricity. "When will it be turned on?" he asked. He was worried that the project wouldn't be finished by the time the rainy season descended. Carlos and Edward didn't make any promises. (The rainy season—also known as winter—lasts from May through mid-December.)

More rain, more sun. Dogs slept in the ruts of the road. Finally, we stopped a man who had just finished harvesting a truckload of watermelons. He knew exactly where the line would end—at his house, said Jose Luis Vargas Alpizar. He obligingly posed for photos while wearing a Texas Co-op Power cap as the young men in the back of the truck looked on with curiosity. In fact, I gave away five caps, and Carlos, Edward and I received perfect, juicy watermelons in return. Then it was back toward the pavement.

About 95 percent of Coopelesca territory is electrified, but rural Costa Ricans are very frugal with its use. The average home in Texas uses 1,500 kWh a month, compared to 200 kWh a month in Costa Rica.

Rural women use firewood for cooking, and the mild climate eliminates the need for heating or air conditioning. But it's damp during the long rainy season. I imagined families wearing mildewed clothing that is never quite dry.



Jan Millstead

Washing machines and dryers come with electrification. Carlos ticks off other modern amenities: “They could have more meat because they would be able to refrigerate. That puts more protein in their diets. They will be able to dig deep wells for fresh water and have streetlights in the villages for security.”

There would be light for reading and studying at night, and students’ long hikes home under rain-darkened skies would be safer by streetlight.

The co-op leaders also dream of helping these farmers develop small businesses. “With electricity,” Carlos says, “they could have, for example, a place to repair cars and trucks or manufacture furniture. They could have a little industry.”

This particular line will cost \$60,000. Coopelesca put up 30 percent of the funding and the people along the line, who will become voting owner-members of the cooperatives, raised \$15,000, mainly by selling such valuable possessions as cows. Various cooperatives in the United

States and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association International Foundation are trying to raise \$35,000 cash and \$100,000 in donated equipment to help finish the job.

Eventually more than 300 families in six villages will have electricity—something taken for granted by people in the United States, but a major life enhancement for these Costa Rican families. They will be ushered into the modern age that most rural people in the United States experienced in the late 1930s and early 1940s, thanks to the cooperative movement. In both countries, local residents pulled together to improve their lives.

This is just one of the countries where more established cooperatives are trying to help rural cooperatives around the world. This embodies co-op principle #6, Cooperation Among Cooperatives.

Texas co-ops have donated time, money and equipment to several projects across the globe. (U.S. cooperatives are happy to donate salvaged equipment when they upgrade their

systems.) Among the Texas co-ops that have donated equipment recently are Deep East Texas, Jasper-Newton, Guadalupe Valley, San Patricio, Rusk County and United Cooperative Services. Pedernales Electric Cooperative currently has a trailerload of equipment awaiting shipment to Costa Rica.

“Each co-op’s primary commitment is to its local member-consumers, but we believe in the cooperative movement worldwide,” said Mike Williams, president and CEO of Texas Electric Cooperatives, the statewide association of 75 cooperatives. “Helping to electrify a rural area in Costa Rica or the Philippines or Nepal reminds us that providing reliable electric service is key to creating a vital, safe and economically sound community.”

For information on NRECA’s International Foundation, contact James Willis, director of operations, at (703) 907-5669 or e-mail jim.willis@nreca.com.

Kaye Northcott is editor of Texas Co-op Power.



MELISSA MILLER'S ANIMAL KINGDOM

You Can Take the Artist

BY JONATHAN SMIT



"Farm," 2002, oil on canvas, 35" x 85", collection Sally Chandler and Ron Blankenship

Out of Flatornia, But...

As the Colorado River meanders through Fayette County on its way to the Gulf of Mexico, it passes within a few miles of a parcel of land that was once known as the Miller Farm. It's a piece of paradise covering a little less than 500 acres, filled with Texas oak and cedar and mesquite. A number of years ago, the farm was sold—all but 40 acres of open land. The family member who chose to hang on to her inheritance was painter Melisa Miller, whose grandparents originally purchased the spread.



1979, oil on canvas, 42" x 34", collection Dr. Mary Lovey Wood

CATTLE WITH EGRETS



1986, oil on linen, 2 panels; each 67" x 84", collection Museum of Modern Art, Fort Worth

THE ARK

For Miller, an artist's mission is to look for inspiration at the center of your personal universe.

Having a “piece of the earth,” along with a sense of place, a deep attachment to the landscape and culture you were raised in, have a powerful hold on the American psyche. In the 19th century and into the early 20th, this love for and ability to identify with a specific part of America was a familiar element in the work of many of our most important painters. Winslow Homer, for example, was inspired by the landscape of Maine and the sea-coast of New England; Thomas Hart Benton, the Western plains; Frederick Church, the Hudson River.

However, as the 20th century grew to maturity, and movements like Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism and Pop Art began to dominate the art world, the center of gravity for art became America's greatest cities: New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. Aspiring young artists flocked to these cultural hubs. The downside: As the art world became more obsessed with the dictates of style, young artists would try to generate success by shaping their work to the trend of the moment, often losing touch with their personal source of inspiration.

Remarkably, Miller has never come close to losing her connection. In 1974, when she graduated from the Univer-

sity of New Mexico with a degree in drawing, few ambitious young artists willingly resisted the call of New York, with its exciting and innovative art scene. For Miller, an artist's mission is not to be the guest at someone else's party, but to look for inspiration at the center of your personal universe. She picked up her degree, packed up her things, and headed back to her grandparents' spread in the small Texas town of Flatonia.

Miller is a fifth-generation Texan whose ancestors were Scotch/Irish settlers; some of them fought in the war for Texas independence, their names inscribed on the San Jacinto Monument. Her granddad was a “gentleman farmer”—he lived and worked in the Houston area, but bought the spread in Flatonia to raise some livestock, spend time with family, and enjoy the Texas countryside. When he won a caboose and cattle car in a poker game, he found a unique way to provide his family with a farmhouse. He had the train cars hauled to the farm, added a room, and moved the family in. When Miller was grow-

ing up, the entire clan would gather on the farm on weekends and in the summer. She loved the animals they kept—chickens, goats, sheep, cows and horses, particularly a horse named “Bill”—and thought of them as friends, if not members of the family. She observed their behavior and grew to understand their individual natures—this would later prove to be a fundamental component of her art.

When she left the university and returned to Flatonia, Miller didn't have a clear idea of where she wanted her work to go. She simply wanted to return to a place where she felt at home, to let things settle, to center herself. She started to work. Though not specifically trained as a painter, she bought some paints and brushes and began to paint what she saw around her, the landscape and the animals in it.

Take a look at one of the early paintings like “Autumn Cows” (see p. 3). You don't see the earnest attempt of an apprentice or the tentative effort of someone feeling out her craft. The painting is vibrantly alive, tumultuous in its energy. The brushstrokes are loose but confident. Every part of the painting—the sky, the trees, the grass, the animals—has its own particular



1984, oil on canvas, 84" x 67", private collection

DEER DANCE

She wanted to return to a place where she felt at home, to let things settle, to center herself.

style and energy, but together the components convey a feeling of a particular place and moment. You know that the painter is depicting a firsthand experience. A signature element of this painting (and in most of Miller's work) is the way two of the cows seem to be looking at us looking at them. In the hands of a less-skilled artist, this might be dismissed as a corny trick, but in Miller's hands, it has a powerful effect—forcing us to give up the role of passive observer and enter into a dialog with the painting. "What are you doing here?" the cows seem to be saying, as they gaze at us in their curious way.

Another early painting, "Cattle With Egrets," gives us insight into Miller's approach to her subjects. This is more than someone making paintings of her favorite animals. Sure, cows and egrets are a common sight in Texas, as is the hound dog yawning from the bottom of the canvas. But this is Miller's world, where animals live and commune with each other according to their own rules, and we are the strangers looking in.

As Miller's skill and technical accomplishment as a painter grew, her imaginative daring grew with it. In "Deer Dance," from 1984, we're spying on a secret animal ritual not

meant for human eyes. We know it's an imagined moment, and yet everything feels real. If deer do dance, this must be how they dance. We are enchanted as we share in their moon-struck celebration.

Miller's penchant for painting animals together in diverse and improbable groupings is not simply "artistic liberty," however. A large, more recent painting, "Farm," is a wonderful example of how Miller's technical mastery continues to grow.



1984, oil on linen, 90" x 60", collection Thomas and Shirley Davis



2000, oil on canvas, 24" x 34", private collection

SHEEP

SALMON RUN

An element of Miller's painting is the way animals seem to be looking at us looking at them.

Many of the familiar elements from "Cattle With Egrets" are still present. We see a host of animals inhabiting a landscape that can easily be recognized as Texas. There is another cow staring out at us, and egrets and herons, and yet again, a yawning dog. But what's that in the foreground. A llama? And isn't that an ostrich on the right?

Miller explains that she has observed the changing nature of the Texas landscape, with far fewer preserves owned by big-time commercial ranchers with huge spreads devoted to raising cattle or sheep. The state is now dotted with small ranches and farms, getaways for urban cowboys who have no

scruples about mixing up their animals.

Looking for ways to make a small farm profitable, some folks have taken up raising exotic animals or opening game parks with animals rarely seen outside Africa, except in a circus or a zoo. On a Hill Country drive, Miller now sees ostrich farms and herds of llamas. With an artist's poetry and economy, she reflects this diversity in her work.

Miller's paintings are in major museums across the country and are cherished by collectors around the world. One masterpiece, "The Ark," is on prominent display at the Museum of Modern Art in Fort Worth. As ever,

Miller has kept her roots firmly in Texas. She lives in a beautiful old stone house outside Austin, where she teaches painting at The University of Texas. She continues to take her joy and inspiration from painting the animals and landscape that she sees around her, and from the deep connection to her art that took root on the parcel of land they called the Miller Farm, in a small Texas town called Flatonia.

Fayette Electric Cooperative serves Melissa Miller's farm in Flatonia.

Jonathan Smit is a playwright, actor and writer who divides his time between New York City and Austin.

Sanctified Sisters



Bell County Museum, Belton

Martha
McWhirter

BY JOE HOLLEY

In 1866, on a beastly hot August evening in the Central Texas town of Belton, Martha McWhirter was walking home from a Methodist revival meeting. Wife of a prominent Belton merchant and attorney, the 40-year-old woman was in torment. She had recently lost a brother and two of her children (six of the McWhirters' 12 children died before the age of 4), and her Methodist beliefs were increasingly of little comfort to her.

As she trudged home, Martha McWhirter heard a disturbing voice inside her head. "Ask yourself if this is not the devil's work," the voice urged, and urged again. Where was the voice coming from, the distraught woman wondered. What did it mean? She stayed up most of the night, praying and desperately hoping for answers.

The revelation came the next morning as McWhirter washed dishes (or, as she made a batch of her famous biscuits, according to another version of the story). God was telling her to "sanctify" herself, to separate herself, in other words, from the impure of the world—including unsanctified husbands—and live a life of godliness and service.

That divine revelation, or visitation from the Holy Spirit as McWhirter interpreted it, was the beginning of a remarkable experiment in communal living and female-headed entrepreneurial enterprise that would come to be known as the Sanctified Sisters of Belton, "the Sancties," or, officially, the Belton Woman's Commonwealth. In one form or another, the group of women inspired by McWhirter's visions and her leadership existed for more than a century. At first scorned, then grudgingly accepted by their Belton neighbors, the Sanctified Sisters represent an unusual, albeit little-known chapter of 19th century Texas history, not to mention an odd Texas twist on the perennial battle of the sexes.

Martha McWhirter (née White) was born in Tennessee in 1827 and married George McWhirter in 1845. Ten years later the couple moved to Salado, and then, after Major George McWhirter came home from the war, the growing family moved to Belton, the thriving Bell County seat 20 miles north. In Belton, the McWhirters helped establish the interdenominational Union Sunday School, and Martha organized a women's prayer group that met in the homes of members. After she experienced her vision, that prayer group became the focal point for other women who were

unhappy with traditional religious practices, with abusive husbands who were given to unscrupulous business dealings, and with society's treatment of women in general.

One woman told of objecting to her husband's sale of a sick mule to an unsuspecting buyer; when she dared say something about it, he broke her arm. Another said she had been "long brutalized" by a drinking spouse. Others were fed up with back-breaking labor, frequent childbearing and their husbands' selfish, unreasonable demands.

Gradually, as a result of McWhirter's guidance, the women came to believe that they, too, needed to be sanctified. Relying on their leader's dreams and what she believed to be direct revelations from God, they began to separate themselves from their undevout husbands. McWhirter instructed them to stay in their homes and perform their domestic duties, but to remain celibate and to have as little social contact as possible with the unsanctified spouses.

Needless to say, the husbands were not happy, and some already shaky marriages started to crack wide open. Some of the men reacted violently to their wives' new beliefs; several women fled or were driven out of their homes. The McWhirters' large, comfortable house on Pearl Street, on the banks of

the Nolan River, became a refuge for these distraught women, several of whom brought their children.

One enraged husband, trying to get his wife and children back, fired a bullet through the front door of the McWhirters' home. (The house is still a private residence; though beautifully restored, the bullet hole is still there.) B.W. Haymond, the husband of Martha's daughter, Ada, told a judge that his wife's belief was "a destroyer that lodged in the bosom of his family" (from the 1887 divorce trial of B.W. and Ada Haymond, Bell County District Court). He filed for divorce and custody of their three children, even though he had been living away from the family in Nicaragua. The court granted the divorce and gave Haymond custody of the children; he promptly took them to Michigan to live with an aunt they'd never met, while he went back to Central America. Martha and Ada appealed the ruling all the way to the Texas Supreme Court—and won, three years later.

A Bell County jury committed another of the Sisters to the state men-

tal hospital in Austin, where she remained for several years. A fellow Sister had a dream that Martha had written a letter to the governor, begging for the woman's release. Martha wrote the letter, and the governor arranged for the woman to be freed.

George McWhirter was not particularly pleased with his wife's beliefs or with the permanent visitors to his home, but he was a patient man—a saint, his Belton neighbors said—and managed to endure for several years. Martha recalled years later: "One night he said to me—it was in the dead of night, but neither of us could sleep—'Martha, do you have to believe this way? Can't you find it in your heart to have some other religion that won't divide us?' 'I wish I could, husband,' I said; 'I've prayed and prayed, but the revelations keep coming, and I have to follow them'" (from a 1902 interview with the Woman's Commonwealth of Washington conducted by Margarita Spalding Gerry).

Finally, after Martha accused him of flirting with the maid, George moved out permanently. Martha helped him

fix up an apartment above his downtown store. The McWhirters never divorced, and when George died in 1887, he left everything to his strong-willed wife.

Once the women and their children began living together in the McWhirter home, they realized they had to find a way to make a living. To the dismay of their estranged families, they began hiring themselves out as cooks, maids and nurses to families in the Belton-Temple area. These very proper, middle-class women were mopping, scrubbing and cleaning in homes where they had paid social calls before becoming sanctified. They began marketing eggs, butter and milk; several became famous for their cakes and preserves. They chopped wood in the cedar brakes near town, hauled it into Belton, and sold it off a horse-drawn wagon. They did laundry, shod horses, cobbled shoes, and made rugs. One woman taught herself to be a dentist; others worked as midwives. Another served as teacher for the Sisters' children.

Built by the Sisters in the late 1880s, the 35-room Central Hotel, conveniently located near the railroad depot, catered to Belton's most discriminating visitors.



Archives of Center for American History, Austin



FOUR STAR FARE *for the* LONE STAR STATE

★★★★

*Mouthwatering
recipes from
the heart of Texas.*

WAFFLE IRON CORNBREAD

1 egg
1 cup milk
1 cup flour
1 cup cornmeal
3/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder
2 tablespoons melted fat

Beat egg together with milk. Add dry ingredients, mixing well. Stir in melted fat. Cook in pre-heated, lightly greased waffle iron just as you would regular waffles.

Cindy Walton, *Big Country EC*



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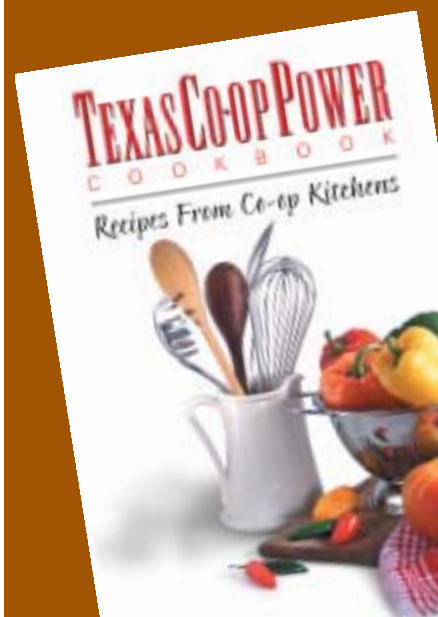
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The group usually numbered about 30, for a time as many as 50. When the women weren't working outside the communal home, they divided themselves into teams to do their own domestic chores; the team approach allowed them time for leisure activities, artistic pursuits and travel. Whatever money they made went into a common treasury.

By 1879, none of the women was accepting money from husbands, except as payment for housework. The group had become financially independent. Four years later, a house inherited by one of them—the same woman whose husband had broken her arm—became a profitable boardinghouse, and the Sisters built more houses. In 1886, they opened a commercial laundry and broke ground on the Central Hotel in downtown Belton. The 35-room hostelry near the railroad depot was soon Belton's most popular place to stay, known across the state for its good food, comfortable rooms and superior service. The Sisters also acquired three farms, and the produce from those farms supplied the hotel dining room. With their Belton hotel thriving, the Sisters leased two more hotels in Waco.

The people of Belton, after years of ostracizing the Sisters as "sexual deviants ... heretics, religious fanatics and home wreckers," began granting a grudging acceptance. They realized that the Sisters' prosperity nurtured their own. McWhirter became the first woman elected to the Belton Board of Trade, forerunner to the Chamber of Commerce. She contributed \$500 to the community fund to help attract the Santa Fe Railroad to Belton, and her name appeared on the cornerstone of the Belton Opera House. In 1903, the Sisters' book collection formally became Belton's public library.

Obviously McWhirter and her Sisters were willing to work with the opposite sex. McWhirter herself always insisted that men also were welcome as members of the group, although she conceded it was a bit unlikely. "Oh yes, we have had men among us," the group told an interviewer. "They are welcome if they are willing to live the life we do. But they never stay very long. You see it is in the nature of men to want to boss, and, well, they find they can't" (reported in "Women in Community: The Belton Woman's Com-



monwealth," *Texas Journal*, Mary Ann Lamanna and Jayme Sokolow).

Two who gave the group a try were brothers from Scotland. Matthew Dow, about 40, and his younger brother, David, had been affiliated with a sect in Scotland called the Sanctificationists, and for some reason decided to make their way to America in 1879 and join up with the sanctificationists they had heard about in Texas. Master carpenters and stone masons, they soon made themselves useful to the Sisters.

The two immigrants also were useful to Belton men who resented the Sisters—useful as scapegoats. In 1880, a mob dragged them out to the Waco road, beat them severely, and warned them to get out of town and never come back.

When the stubborn Scots refused to leave, they were arrested and tried on the grounds of insanity. A jury found them guilty and sentenced them to the state mental asylum in Austin. The British consul in Galveston and the secretary of state's office in Austin helped to spring them, and the two returned to Belton, where they lived and worked for several years before moving on to Seattle. Both the Dow brothers and the men of Belton seemed to let bygones be bygones. The Sisters themselves continued to prosper.

Who was this red-haired woman who presumed to hear the voice of God, who was able to persuade a number of women to shun husbands and homes and build new lives communally? Who was this woman who, in her day, may have been Belton's most capable "businessman"?

Was Martha McWhirter a Victorian-era Jim Jones, a female David Koresh, who got inside people's heads and manipulated their minds and feelings? Was she a religious seer not unlike Mary Baker Eddy or Aimee Semple McPherson?

Answers these days, a century after her death, are hard to come by. Belton native Eleanor James, who grew up hearing whispered tales about "the Sancties," has written that McWhirter was "a woman of force and faith and foresight, and a feminist years ahead of her time" (from "The Sanctificationists of Belton," *America West* magazine). Sally Kitch, author of two books about the Belton women, describes McWhirter as "a formidable and talented woman who

COMING IN THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE of *TEXAS CO-OP POWER*

★★★★

Chicken-Fried Steak
State Park
Texas Movie



Dance Hall
Barbecue
County Courthouse

★★★★

**THE BEST OF TEXAS,
CHOSEN BY OUR READERS**

was completely sincere in her commitment to the commonwealth.” In Kitch’s view, “Martha McWhirter had charisma, a quality that led others to feel connected with a central and meaningful feature of existence” (from *This Strange Society of Women: Reading the Letters and Lives of the Woman’s Commonwealth*, Ohio State University Press).

“Yes, but ...” Debra Lufburrow would say. Lufburrow, who lives in Belton and spent several years doing research for a fact-based novel (*Set Apart: The Sanctified Sisters*, self-published),

acknowledges McWhirter’s leadership skills and shrewd business sense but has trouble accepting her role in breaking up families and bending vulnerable people to her will. In her book, Lufburrow includes the story of Martha’s son, Robert. When he was in his early 20s, his mother dispatched him to New York City to run a boardinghouse as an investment for the Sisters. He begged to come home. She said no. He stayed.

“She was always seeking to further her agenda,” Lufburrow says.

In later years that agenda became less overtly religious and more entrepreneurial. McWhirter came to believe that rituals, codified beliefs, traditions and religious institutions were unimportant. She believed instead in “a sense of personal connectedness with a divine presence and a feeling of comfort and blessing supplied by a higher power” (from *This Strange Society of Women*).

Years before Freud and Jung, McWhirter believed in the power of dreams, although Lufburrow suspects she relied on dreams to rationalize what she already had set her mind to do.

As the women got older and their children began to leave home, a dream prompted McWhirter to relocate the group. The women considered several places, including Mexico City and New York City, but settled on the nation’s capital. In 1898, they incorporated as the Woman’s Commonwealth of Washington, D.C. Using their savings, which may have totaled \$200,000, they bought a large, comfortable home close to downtown Washington and two working farms in Maryland.

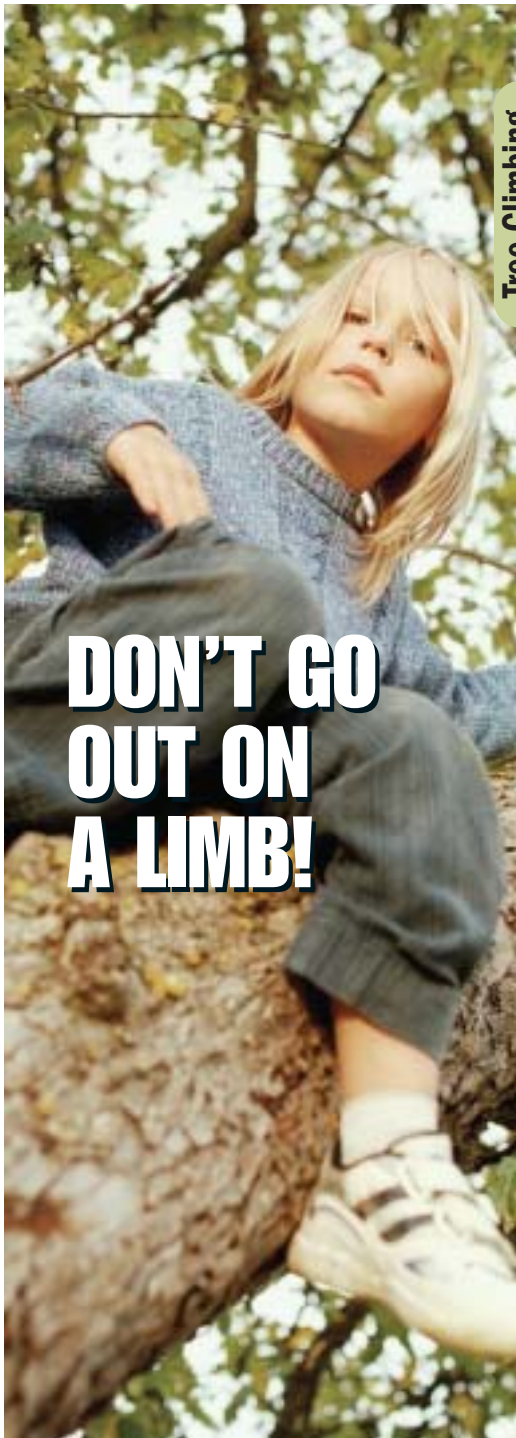
In 1901, an article in a Washington newspaper was headlined, “A Happy Home Without Husbands”: “Twenty-five women dwell together on a purely communistic basis, enjoying complete harmony and possessing the high respect of their neighbors,” the writer noted.

McWhirter died in 1904 at the age of 75. Back in Belton, the group was largely forgotten, “except”—as Eleanor James recalled—“for an occasional quiet reference to a relative who had ‘run off with the Sancties.’”

In Washington, the Commonwealth itself lived on in diminishing numbers. In 1956, Martha Scheble became president of the organization. It remained chartered until 1983, when Scheble, the last surviving member, died at 101.

The Bell County Museum in Belton has a permanent exhibit on The Sanctified Sisters of Belton. Their hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 1-5 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, call (254) 933-5243. Bell County is served by Bartlett, Belfalls and McLennan County ECs.

Joe Holley, former editor of Texas Co-op Power, is a staff writer for the Washington Post in Washington, D.C.



Tree Climbing

Your safety is a top priority at your electric co-op. And it’s even more important when it comes to our kids. It’s up to all of us to watch out for their safety.

Safety Rules for Trees:

- Don’t plant trees or install tall playground equipment under or near power lines.
- Don’t build tree houses in trees near electric lines.
- Don’t allow children to climb trees growing near electric lines.
- Teach your children always to look up to check for power lines before climbing trees or any tall objects.
- Keep children away from ladders, poles or work equipment that may be near power lines.
- Set a good example by following these rules yourself.

And the Number One safety rule for everyone to remember is this: **Don’t touch a power line or anything that’s touching the power line. No one can tell simply by looking at a line whether it is energized or not, and contact with a power line can be deadly. Look up and live!**



Texas Electric Cooperatives

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COOL TIPS FOR HOT WEATHER

It's time for another hot Texas summer. Time to enjoy all the outdoors has to offer. Take a little extra time to take precautions so you and your family can enjoy every day.


Keep cool—you could save a life

- Take frequent cooling-off breaks in the shade or air conditioning.
- Drink plenty of water before starting any outdoor activity, and drink water during the day. Drink less tea, coffee and alcoholic beverages.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored clothes.
- Limit your physical activity during the hottest part of the day.
- Kids, cars and heat make a deadly combination. Never leave a child—or pet—in a vehicle, even for “just a few minutes.” That’s long enough for a closed vehicle to heat up to dangerous levels, even on a 60-degree day.

If someone has heatstroke-related symptoms—nausea, fatigue, muscle cramps, confusion, dizziness—act rapidly: Remove excess clothing and lower the person’s temperature with cold, wet sheets or a cool bath. Call a doctor immediately and transport the person to the nearest hospital—this is an emergency. This summer, don’t sweat it. Keep cool.



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CELEBRATE THE FOURTH WITH SAFE GRILLING

The Fourth of July is a time to celebrate the art of outdoor grilling.

Keep your traditional holiday barbecue fun by making it safe. Here are some tips for safely using your electric barbecue grill:

- Before you haul your electric grill out to the patio, make sure it's designed for outdoor use. Some electric grills are intended for indoor grilling only. Likewise, don't move an outdoor grill indoors when the weather cools.

- Using soap and water, thoroughly clean the grill before using it

for the first cookout of the season. Spider webs and grease residue can burn—and they can keep the grill from performing to its peak.

- Check every cord and plug for damage and wear before you use the grill. Replace any frayed or broken connections.
- Before you plug the grill in, turn the control knob to the "off" position.
- Connect the grill to a grounded outlet. If you don't have one outdoors, call an electrician to install one.
- Keep the grill away from flammable materials.

- Unplug your grill whenever it's not in use.



- Never immerse cords, plugs or the heating element in water. And don't grill in the rain!

SIMPLE TIPS FOR SAVING ENERGY THIS SUMMER

As careful as you are to keep the hot summer air outdoors where it belongs, your home can overheat because of what you're doing inside.

Appliances like stoves, dishwashers and even light bulbs generate heat and can compete with your air conditioner to keep the indoor air from staying cool.

FIGHT BACK!

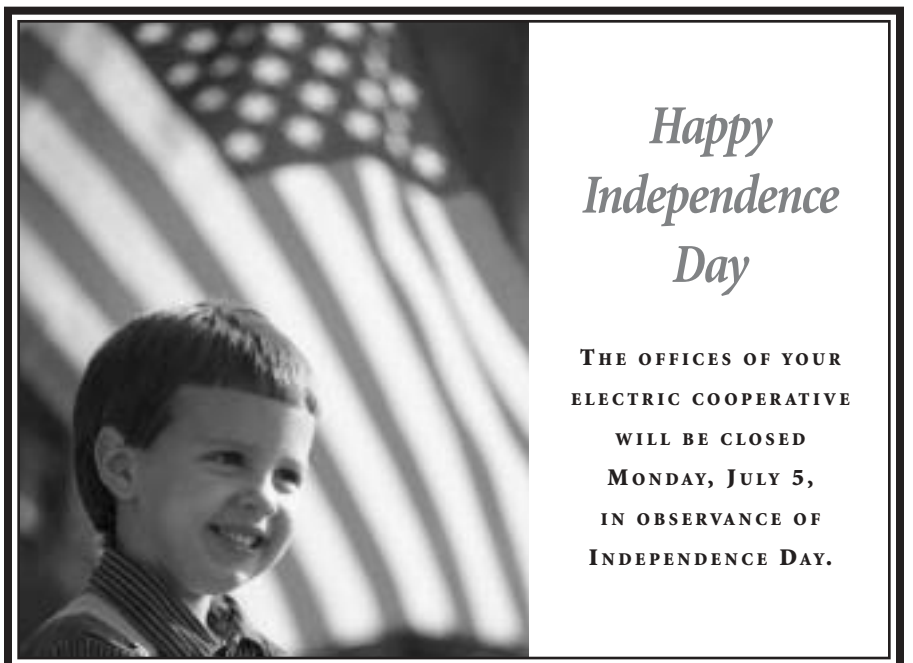
- Avoid baking or broiling on hot days. Use the stovetop to heat food quickly. Keep the lids on the pots to hold heat in.
- Use your microwave oven, which produces little heat, to cook whenever possible. Or fix sandwiches, salads and chilled soups that require no heating.
- Trade your incandescent light bulbs, which burn hot, for energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs, which produce little heat.
- Turn off TV sets and lamps whenever you're not using them. They create heat when in use.
- Keep the temperature of your refrigerator between 38 and 40 degrees, and the freezer at about 5 degrees. Refrigerators that run inefficiently emit more heat.

- Defrost your freezer before ice builds up in it. Ice-laden freezer walls make the unit work less efficiently.

- Wash clothes and run the dishwasher after the sun goes down. Washers, dryers and dishwashers produce humidity, which can make the air inside your home feel

uncomfortable. When you use these washing appliances, use cool water instead of warm.

- Run your kitchen exhaust fan whenever you cook in the summer, and turn on the bathroom fan about 15 minutes before you hop in the shower. This helps rid the house of humid air.



*Happy
Independence
Day*

THE OFFICES OF YOUR
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
WILL BE CLOSED
MONDAY, JULY 5,
IN OBSERVANCE OF
INDEPENDENCE DAY.

STORMS CAN CREATE A CHARGED SITUATION

For Texans, “storm season” seems to be any and every season. Your electric cooperative would like to remind you of the increased electrocution risks that storms and flooding can cause, and offers these safety tips to avoid serious injury or death when dealing with the aftermath of a major storm or disaster.

The danger does not end when the storm does. People can be hurt or killed by hazards left behind, so it’s wise to be cautious in any cleanup effort.

Stay away from downed power lines and be alert to the possibility that tree limbs or debris may hide an electrical hazard. Treat all downed or hanging power lines as if they are energized. Warn others to stay away and contact the electric utility.

If using electric yard tools in cleanup efforts, do not operate them if it’s raining or the ground is wet, or while you are wet or standing in water. Keep all electric tools and equipment at least 10 feet away from wet surfaces.

Before re-entering storm-damaged buildings or rooms, be sure all electric and gas services are turned off.

Never attempt to turn off power at the breaker box if you must stand in water to do so. If you can’t reach your breaker box safely, call your electric cooperative to shut off power at the meter.

Never step into a flooded basement or other area if water is covering electrical outlets, appliances or cords. Be alert to any electrical equipment that could be energized and in contact with water. Never touch electrical appliances, cords or wires while you are wet or standing in water.

Cleaning up and using water-damaged appliances also carry safety risks. Electric motors in appliances that have been drenched or submerged should be thoroughly cleaned and reconditioned before they are put back into service. It may be necessary to repair or replace electrical appliances or tools that have been in contact with water. Do not use any water-damaged appliance until a professional has



checked it out.

If after a storm or disaster, the power to your home is out for a prolonged period, know important safety rules, such as never using a charcoal or gas grill to cook inside. And if you use a standby generator, make sure a transfer safety switch is used or connect the

appliance(s) directly to the generator output through an isolated circuit before you operate it. This prevents electricity from traveling back through the power lines, what’s known as “back feed.” Back feed creates danger for anyone near lines, particularly crews working to restore power.

SAW SAFELY

Warm summer weekends have a way of bringing out our inner handyman.

Chances are, you’ll use a power saw before summer’s end to remodel a basement, fix a porch, build a deck,



or work on another warm-weather project.

Be aware: Contact with saw blades spinning at 5,000 revolutions per minute sends more than 84,000 people to emergency rooms every year.

“Kickback”—which occurs when the material you’re cutting binds or pinches the saw blade during a cut and

jerks the tool out of your hands—is the leading cause of power saw injuries. To avoid it:

- Know how to operate the tool before you power it up. Read your instruction manual.
- Choose the right saw for the job. For example, a circular saw isn’t designed for cutting tree limbs or logs. A chain saw is a better tool for that task.
- Set the “depth” of the cut to no deeper than a quarter-inch below the work piece. Kickback becomes more intense when more blade can be pinched.
- Use the right blade for the task. Clean, sharp blades in good condition reduce the potential for kickback.
- Never remove safety features such as blade guards or electric plug grounding pins.
- Turn the switch off before plugging the saw into the power outlet.
- Wear safety glasses.

Ma Ferguson—Texas' First Female Governor

BY SPIKE GILLESPIE

On January 22, 1925, an old twin-six Packard pulled up to the Governor's Mansion in Austin. The driver triumphantly proclaimed to her passengers—her husband and daughter—“Well, we have returned!”

And then Miriam Amanda “Ma” Ferguson, one-time Bell County belle, moved back into the estate she had called home from 1914 to 1917. Back then she'd been the governor's spouse, but now the tables were turned. Ma Ferguson, the first woman governor of the Lone Star State, was the one returning to the mansion with a first spouse in tow.

Jim “Pa” Ferguson had been impeached during his second term as governor, disqualifying him from holding the position again. But no such rule applied to his wife. So Pa, a perpetual schemer, decided Ma would run in his place.

Her lack of political knowledge worked oddly in her favor. On the campaign trail, she and Jim would both step on a platform only to have Ma announce that her man would be doing the talking for her. Then he would explain, “You’ll get two governors for the price of one. I’ll tell her what to sign and what not to sign.”

Miriam was born in 1875, eight miles outside of Belton, the privileged child of Joseph Wallace and Eliza Garrison Wallace. Spoiled by her parents and her nurse, she grew up with an unwavering air of confidence. She attended Salado College and Baylor Female College.

Jim Ferguson relentlessly pursued her when she moved back home in 1897. They married on December 31, 1899, the last day of the last month of the last year of the century. Jim became a successful banker in Temple.

Ever ambitious, Jim ran for governor and won in 1914. Though the women of Austin regarded Ma with suspicion and thought her unnecessarily standoffish, things went well enough for her husband. He won reelection to a second two-year term. Then it began to unravel for the Fergusons, with accusations flying that

they'd lavishly and illegally spent state funds on such items as personal groceries and even a ukulele.

Jim was impeached, and they departed in shame. Jim's bank, left in the hands of an incompetent manager, had failed, and Miriam's inheritance was gone. Suddenly the family was displaced and near penniless. They moved to Bosque County and started producing butter and eggs to make ends meet.

When she and Jim moved back to the Capitol, Ma placed two desks side by side so that her husband could guide her in her work (or, as many speculated, so he could operate her “puppet strings”).

Although it's true that Jim would write up some papers in pencil so she could later copy over them in ink, Ma grew more confident in her governing skills. She passed an unmasking law to squelch the Ku Klux Klan.

Ma also took a shining to granting pardons—she granted over 2,000 during her first 20 months. There were grumblings that Jim was taking kickbacks for these many pardons. For the purpose of scandal distraction, Ma declared January 1926 “Laugh Month in Texas,” saying “a cheerful happy outlook is the best antidote for gloom.”

Ma lost a bid for reelection in 1930. But phoenixes that they were, the Fergusons again rose from the ashes. In 1932, Ma ran against Ross “Fat Boy” Sterling in the Democratic primary, won her party's nomination, and defeated Republican Orville Bullington to reclaim the governor's office. She kept right on signing pardons, a practice that was less frowned upon the second time around, since doing so lessened the state's budget obligations, a major concern in those Depression days.

In 1940, at age 65, Ma tossed her hat into the ring one more time. She didn't win but she garnered 100,000 votes in the primary. Outliving her husband by 17 years, Miriam died of heart failure in June 1961. She was buried next to Jim in the State Cemetery.

The Bell County Museum in Belton houses the Miriam A. Ferguson collection. Researchers are welcome by appointment. Although Ferguson materials are scattered throughout the museum, at this time no exhibit is devoted entirely to her. (254) 933-5243.

Belton and Temple are in Bell County. Portions of the county are served by Bartlett, Belfalls and McLennan County electric cooperatives.

Spike Gillespie, who lives in Austin, is a frequent contributor to Texas Co-op Power.



All images courtesy of the Bell County Museum
Illustration by Aletha St. Romain

Then, in 1924, came Jim's light-bulb moment when he announced Ma would be running for governor. Initially displeased, she grew to like the idea, hoping a win would vindicate the family's name.

Despite her genteel upbringing and good education, Ma was presented to the public as a good old country gal. She posed for pictures amidst her chickens and up against fence posts. Once she posed wearing a borrowed sunbonnet. The image was so strong that the bonnet became a symbol for her campaign. She even agreed to be called “Ma”—a nickname Pa gave her to add to the folksy image—though it was nothing she would have picked for herself.

Don't Get Toasted Near Water!

Marvin and D-Wayne were lucky they weren't toast after that crazy swimming pool accident! Those guys just never learn, do they?

Everyone knows that water plus electricity are a dangerous, even deadly pair. If you are touching water, never touch electrical devices such as light switches, electric CD players, radios, hair dryers, curling irons or toasters.

Water is an excellent conductor of electricity. Electricity can flow through water almost as easily as it travels through the wires that bring electricity to your house.

Never leave plugged-in appliances where they might fall into water. If a plugged-in appliance falls into water, NEVER reach in to pull it out, even if it's turned off. Instead, immediately ask a grownup or the person in charge to turn off the power source at the control panel (where your fuses or circuit breakers are). Then it will be safe to unplug the appliance. Once an electric appliance has fallen into water or has been left out in the rain, do not use it until it has been inspected by a qualified repair person.

Any appliance that is plugged in should be in a place where water won't be easily splashed on it. If you have an appliance that has gotten even a little wet, don't use it until a responsible adult has checked it out to see if it's okay to use.

Did you know that your body is 70 percent water? So even if you aren't wet and you touch electricity, it will flow through you, and you will be badly hurt. If you are wet, just remember that electricity likes to travel through water, so don't touch any electric appliances until you are completely dry.

Summertime is when we enjoy playing in the water. Make sure you play in the water safely. Don't let a shocking accident spoil your summertime fun. Just remember Marvin and D-Wayne and how they got zapped making toast in their swimming pool. Water and electricity are a deadly combination.

Cartoonist Keith Graves is a popular artist and author of children's books. He lives in Austin with his wife, Nancy, and the twins, Max and Emma.





The star attraction at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center is Splash, the world-record blue catfish caught in Lake Texoma last January. At more than 120 pounds and 4 feet, 10 inches long, Splash is easily the largest fish there.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

TEXAS FRESHWATER FISHERIES CENTER

BY MARY-LOVE BIGONY

When Mark Stevenson caught a 17-pound largemouth bass in Lake Fork on November 26, 1986, he did something no bass fisherman in Texas had ever done before. Instead of taking the lunker bass straight to the taxidermist, Stevenson donated the fish—still alive—to a newly created program designed to improve bass fishing in Texas.

Biologist David Campbell drove to Lake Fork and picked up the big fish. He took it to a hatchery in Tyler and placed it in an 8-foot by 4-foot tank, to be studied and readied for spawning. The veteran fisheries biologist never expected what happened next.

“People started coming to see the fish,” he said. “Pretty soon the news media got hold of the story and people were lining up seven days a week just to get in and look at that fish. It was in a small tank in a small room. There was hardly any room in the parking lot for people to park.” More than 10,000 people came to see the fish—a new state record largemouth bass—in one year.

Almost 18 years later, in January 2004, another Texas fisherman caught another big fish—a 121-pound, 8-ounce blue catfish. Once again, the public clamored to see it. This time, though, visitors got an up-close look at the world-record catfish swimming in a huge aquarium. They also could see replicas of other record fish, learn about aquatic ecosystems, and even learn how to catch a whopper themselves at the state-of-the-art Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center (TFFC) in Athens. In addition to educating and entertaining a steady stream of visitors, the TFFC houses a hatchery that produces 25 percent of all the bass stocked in Texas lakes, as well as channel catfish and rainbow trout. It is the head-

quarters of the Budweiser ShareLunker Program, which started with that first fish in 1986.

Covering 106 acres in the rolling post oak savannah region of East Texas, the TFFC introduces visitors to Texas' aquatic habitats through a series of aquariums. Water lilies dot the surface of the freshwater pond exhibit, and ducks of various species glide on the water. The tantalizing sound of a waterfall introduces the Hill Country stream, where sunfish and Guadalupe bass swim in a natural environment. Across the sidewalk, alligators—still as statues—sun themselves. At the reservoirs exhibit, visitors stand within a concave viewing area, watching the fish swimming around them and ducks paddling on the surface. Illustrations at each exhibit help identify the species.

Inside, a 26,000-gallon aquarium houses bass, buffalofish, gar, crappie and a variety of other fish. But the star attraction is Splash, the world-record blue catfish caught in Lake Texoma last January. At more than 120 pounds and 4 feet, 10 inches long, Splash is easily the largest fish there, and she glides regally among the other residents of the aquarium. At least once a day, a diver descends into the aquarium and feeds the fish while an audience watches and asks questions. Children gasp and giggle as the diver feeds crickets and koi to the constantly moving fish.

Outside is TFFC's newest interpretive project, a wetlands trail that loops through woodlands and marshlands, then past a pitcher plant bog. Visitors may see waterfowl, songbirds or perhaps even a river otter.

TFFC's hatchery complex works hand in hand with

the Budweiser ShareLunker Program. To date, Texas fishermen have donated more than 360 fish from 52 public reservoirs and 11 private lakes to the program. An amazing 215 lunkers have been caught at Lake Fork in Wood County, far surpassing the second-place spot, Sam Rayburn Reservoir, with 20.

How ShareLunker works: Between October 1 and April 30, an angler who catches a largemouth bass weighing 13 pounds or more calls a toll-free number. David Campbell—the same Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist who picked up that first fish—meets the angler and drives the catch to TFFC's "Lunker Bunker." Each fish is placed in one of 20 huge circular tanks, where it is allowed to recover from the stress of being caught and transported, and treated for any disorders.

"Our genetics lab tests each fish to make sure it is the pure Florida strain," says Hatchery Manager Jim Matthews. (Florida bass grow to larger sizes than native Texas largemouths.) "When they're ready to spawn, we put them in raceways with males that are ShareLunker offspring." The resulting fry are placed in ponds at the hatchery, where they grow to fingerling size. Most are stocked in Texas public waters, but some are kept at TFFC for future breeding.

By working with genetically superior fish, biologists hope to increase the size of largemouth bass in Texas reservoirs, but Campbell believes the program's value goes beyond producing big bass. "It's promoted catch-and-release of trophy fish," he said, something he never would have believed possible at the beginning of his career.

"And the anglers themselves feel like they're a part of what we're doing. The average person has a better chance to catch a big fish."

After the fish spawn, each angler has the opportunity to personally release his or her fish back into the reservoir where it was caught. Some anglers choose to leave their fish in the program.

TFFC visitors can see replicas of the top 10 ShareLunker bass. A traveling ShareLunker display has been exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Replicas of Texas' recent state record bass also are on display at the center, along with dozens of other state records, including catfish, gar, walleye, trout, sunfish and crappie.

But what's a fisheries center without fishing? TFFC's 1.5-acre casting pond invites visitors of all ages to fish; no license is required and tackle is provided. In the past, all fishing at the casting pond was catch-and-release only, but new regulations allow visitors to catch and keep rainbow trout in the winter and channel catfish year-round. Check with the center for prices and regulations.

Within a 30-mile radius of TFFC are five good fishing lakes, each of which has contributed trophy bass to the ShareLunker Program. Lake Athens, adjacent to the TFFC, is a picturesque 1,500-acre impoundment with good bass, sunfish and crappie fishing. Richland-Chambers Reservoir, the third largest in Texas, has plentiful white bass and hybrid stripers in addition to largemouths. Cedar Creek Reservoir also has white bass and hybrid stripers, as

well as blue and channel catfish. Fairfield Lake boasts two unusual fish: red drum and tilapia. Purtils Creek Lake is known for its excellent habitat and big bass. Bass fishing is catch-and-release only at Purtils Creek.

For more information about these lakes and their fishing opportunities, go to www.wherethefishare.com. Both Fairfield Lake and Purtils Creek are located in state parks—you can fish without a license within the boundaries of a state park as part of the Family Fishing Celebration, which runs through August 31.

"Fishing combines fresh air, sunshine, togetherness and action—key ingredients for a fun family time outdoors," says Larry D. Hodge of the TFFC, adding that youngsters don't necessarily have to sit for hours with no action, possibly becoming bored with the whole idea of fishing. "Technology permeates everything we do today, and fishing is no exception," says Hodge. "Modern fish finders, which most guides and many individuals have, make it easier to fish where the fish are rather than blindly casting about, wondering why the fish aren't biting. Kids thrive on fast-paced action, and using a fish finder can help hold their interest."

TFFC is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Call (903) 676-2277 or go to www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fish/infish/hatchery/tffc/.

Trinity Valley EC serves much of Henderson County, where the fishery is located.

Mary-Love Bigony is based in Austin. She worked as writer and editor with Texas Parks & Wildlife magazine from 1977 until spring 2004.

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Happy
Independence Day!

ON BOARD WITH BOATING SAFETY

Boating

Did you know that people who hunt or fish from boats have one of the highest boat fatality rates? Or that more people die from falling off small boats (16 feet and under) than larger ones? Here are some tips for accident-free boating:

Safety Rules for Boating:

- Be weather wise. Bring a portable radio to check weather reports.
- Bring extra gear you may need. A flashlight and extra batteries, matches, map, flares, first aid kit, sunglasses and sunscreen should be kept in a watertight container or pouch.
- Tell someone where you're going, who is with you, and how long you'll be gone.
- Ventilate after fueling. Open the hatches, run the blower, and carefully sniff for gasoline fumes in the fuel and engine areas before starting your engine.
- Anchor from the bow, not the stern. Use an anchor line at least five times longer than the water depth.
- Know your boat's capacity. Don't overload it or put an oversized motor on it.

Have fun on the water.
Boat safely!



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Fire Up the Grill for a Summertime Barbecue



©FoodPix

The Fourth of July is the perfect time to have family and friends over for a barbecue. Instead of doing all the work ourselves, we often ask folks to bring a side dish. Our guests are such great cooks that we always end up with a delicious spread and recipes for new dishes. In return for their generosity, we try to treat them right by preparing really good main dishes. The “king” of grilled meat has got to be steak. So when those special people in your life show up for an outdoor gathering, throw some steaks on the grill.

Here are a couple of sure-fire recipes to make steaks extra special. They both come to us from the Texas Beef Council.

Grilled Ribeyes With Mango Salsa

- 4 beef ribeye or chuck top blade steaks, cut 3/4-inch thick
- 1/4 cup Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup lime juice
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 tablespoon chili powder

- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 cups diced tomatoes
- 1 fresh mango, peeled and diced
- 1 bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 6 green onions with tops, diced
- 1 large fresh jalapeño, seeded and diced
- 1/4 cup lime juice
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1/4 cup pecan pieces, toasted

Mix Worcestershire, soy sauce, lime juice, vegetable oil, garlic, chili powder and brown sugar. Place steaks in a sealable plastic bag. Pour mixture over steaks. Seal bag and turn to coat steaks. Refrigerate and marinate 15-30 minutes. Combine tomatoes, mango, bell pepper, onions, jalapeño, lime juice, cilantro and pecans. Mix to combine and set aside.

Place steaks on grill over medium ash-covered coals. Grill steaks uncovered 8-10 minutes for medium-rare to medium doneness, turning once. Remove steaks from grill and serve with mango salsa. Serves 4.

Serving size: 1 steak. Per serving: 489 calories, 21 grams protein, 34 grams fat, 29 grams carbohydrates, 1,259 milligrams sodium, 68 milligrams cholesterol

Maple Mustard Glazed Steaks

- 4 ribeye steaks or top loin strip steaks, cut 1-inch thick
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon cracked pepper
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 3 tablespoons coarse-grain Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

Mix salt and pepper and press into both sides of steaks. Place steaks on grill over medium coals. Cook, covered, 5-7 minutes per side. Turn with tongs to retain juiciness. Meanwhile, combine maple syrup, mustard, vinegar and pepper in a 1-cup glass measuring cup.

Microwave on high for 3 1/2 to 5 minutes until thickened, stirring occasionally. During last 5 minutes of grilling, brush glaze over top and sides of steak. Remove steak when internal temperature has reached 140 degrees for medium-rare or 145 degrees for medium doneness. Serves 4.

Serving size: 1 steak. Per serving: 330 calories, 18 grams protein, 22 grams fat, 15 grams carbohydrates, 724 milligrams sodium, 68 milligrams cholesterol

October's recipe contest subject is Onions. That's the time when those sweet, wonderful Texas 1015s hit the grocery store. What do you do with them when they're fresh and plentiful? Please send your onion recipes by July 10. The winner will receive a copy of the *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook*. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number, as well as your co-op affiliation. Send recipes to Home Cooking, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. You can also fax recipes to (512) 486-6254 or e-mail them to recipes@texas-ec.org.

This month we received a lot of recipes for grilled chicken. Our favorite was Chicken With Spicy Chipotle Basting Sauce, sent in by Sharon Sandidge, a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative. She will receive a copy of the *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook*. These spicy, juicy chicken breasts stand alone as a main dish, but you could also cut them up and serve them with tortillas fajita-style.

Chicken With Spicy Chipotle Basting Sauce

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
 1/2 cup real mayonnaise
 2 tablespoons honey
 1 teaspoon brown or Dijon mustard
 1 tablespoon (or more to taste) Tabasco
 Chipotle hot sauce
 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 Freshly cracked black pepper

In a bowl, whisk together all ingredients except chicken. Grill chicken breasts over low heat, generously basting with sauce on each side.

Serves 4.

Serving size: 1 chicken breast. Per serving: 491 calories, 55 grams protein, 26 grams fat, 9 grams carbohydrates, 342 milligrams sodium, 147 milligrams cholesterol

The Last Baked Potato Recipe You'll Ever Need

1 large potato per person (russet is best)
 1/3 stick of butter per potato
 1/2 medium onion per potato
 Salt and pepper to taste
 Sour cream
 Bacon bits
 Shredded Cheddar cheese

Peel and wash potatoes. Cut each potato into round slices about two inches thick. Slice onion in thick slices, allowing for one onion slice between each potato slice. Cut butter into 1/2 tablespoon slices and put in between slices of potato. Arrange all of this on a piece of aluminum foil about 12 inches long. Sprinkle salt and pepper over all. Place on grill close to coals 45-60 minutes (till tender). Serve with sour cream, bacon bits and shredded Cheddar cheese.

Serving size: 1 potato without garnish. Per serving: 388 calories, 3 grams protein, 31 grams fat, 27 grams carbohydrates, 580 milligrams sodium, 83 milligrams cholesterol

Linda Lamb, Wood County EC



Should Old Wiring Be Replaced?

Electrical systems age and deteriorate just like any man-made product, so as they get older they should be monitored more frequently. If you own an older home, your electrical system is probably designed to handle lower demands. As you acquire more electric appliances, tools, and entertainment and computer equipment, the electrical system could become overburdened—that's when problems could develop.

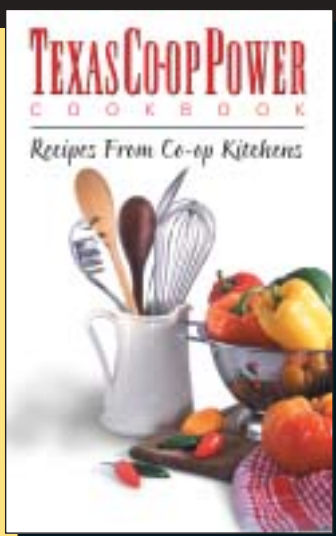
The Electrical Safety Foundation International recommends electrical inspections for the following:

- Any house more than 40 years old;
- Any house 10 years old and older that has had any major renovation or major appliance added; and
- Any home at the time of resale, so the new owner can get a clear understanding of the electrical system's capacity, limitations, potential hazards and opportunities.

A licensed electrician can determine if repairs or upgrades are necessary and can estimate the cost.

The New Texas Co-op Power Cookbook: Recipes From Co-op Kitchens Is A Hit!

We're already into our second printing to meet demand. The cookbook features 250 recipes from Texas co-op members and makes an affordable gift. The cookbook is available at most local cooperatives. Or, send name, address and phone number, along with a check or money order for \$18.75 (\$15 plus tax/S&H), to: *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook*, Attn: Tracy Paccone, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.



AROUND TEXAS

July

- 1-3. Heritage Classic Horse Show, **Athens**, (316) 755-1707
- 2-3. 125th Anniversary Celebration, **Italy**, (972) 483-7329 or www.italytexas.org
- 2-4. 59th Annual Rodeo, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-6441 or www.rodeoproductions.com
- 2-4. Old Mill Trade Days, **Post**, 1-866-433-6683 or (806) 495-3529
- 3. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013
- 3. Arts & Crafts Day, **Kyle**, (512) 396-2054
- 3. Star Spangled Celebration, **Rusk**, (903) 683-5433
- 3. Watermelon Festival and 5K Run, **Chriesman**, (979) 567-0573 or www.chriesmancc.org
- 3. Red, White & You, **Graham**, 1-800-256-4844
- 3. Fourth of July Parade, **Castroville**, (830) 931-4070
- 3. Tomato Festival, **Avery**, (903) 684-3825
- 3. Fourth of July Parade, **Chappell Hill**, 1-888-273-6426
- 3. 125-Year Celebration, **Westphalia**, (254) 584-4701
- 3. Market Day, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-2201

- 3. Crape Myrtle Festival, **Waxahachie**, (972) 938-9617
- 3. Cove Country Opry, **Copperas Cove**, (254) 547-5966 or www.covecountryopry.com
- 3. Corsicana Opry, **Corsicana**, (904) 872-8226
- 3. Market Days, **Kingsland**, (325) 388-6159 or www.kingslandcrafts.com
- 3. Hometown Fourth of July, **Hughes Springs**, (903) 639-2351
- 3. Ex-Students Reunion, **Abernathy**, (806) 298-2546 or www.cityofabernathy.org
- 3-4. Rock'n Riverfest, **Llano**, (325) 247-4158 or www.llanotx.com
- 3-4. Lions Club Carnival, **Palacios**, (361) 972-2949
- 3-4. Granbury on the Square, concert, **Granbury**, (817) 233-2869
- 3-6. Independence Day Celebration, **Kyle**, www.cityofkyle.com
- 4. Old Fashioned Fourth of July, **Huntsville**, (936) 295-8113 or www.huntsvillemain-street.org
- 4. Summerfest, **San Marcos**, (512) 393-8400
- 4. Fireworks Extravaganza, **Grapevine**, 1-800-457-3185 or www.grapevinetexasusa.com
- 4. Floating July Fourth Parade of Caddo Lake, **Uncertain**, (903) 789-3268

- 4-5. Fiestas Juan Seguin, **Seguin**, (830) 372-3151
- 5-11. Spring Ho Festival, **Lampasas**, (512) 556-5301 or www.ci.lampasas.tx.us
- 6. Brush Country Music Jamboree, **Three Rivers**, (361) 786-3334
- 6, 20. Abendkonzertes, German music, **Boerne**, (830) 249-3543
- 7-11. Summer Jubilee, **Athens**, (903) 677-6354
- 8-10. Jubilee Days, **Rockdale**, (512) 446-2030
- 9. Aley Picnic, **Kemp**, (903) 498-6482 or 432-2566
- 9-10. Watermelon Festival, **McDade**, (512) 273-0018
- 9-10. What-A-Melon Festival, **Center**, (936) 598-3377
- 9-11, 23-25. Chicken House Flea Market, **Stephenville**, (254) 968-0888
- 10. Market Trail Days, **Castroville**, (830) 741-5887
- 10. Miss Ima's Birthday, Varner-Hogg Plantation, **West Columbia**, (979) 345-4656
- 10. Horseshoe Pitching Tournament, **Buffalo**, (903) 322-3558
- 10. Market Days, **Georgetown**, (512) 868-8675
- 11. Centennial Celebration, **Knippa**, (830) 934-2132

FESTIVAL OF THE MONTH BY JIM GRAMON

Great Texas Mosquito Festival: Clute, July 29-31

Things are buzzin' down at the Great Texas Mosquito Festival in Clute, reports the organizing committee, better known as the "SWAT" Team. This eclectic festival has created a lot of hum during its 24-year history, with press credits ranging from

People and Newsweek magazines to Late Night With David Letterman.

Come on down to Clute and join Willie-Man-Chew, the 26-foot mosquito, for some one-of-a-kind Texas fun. Special events include the annual Mosquito Calling Contest (wonder why

you'd want to call them?) and the classic Mr. and Mrs. Mosquito Legs Contest, to determine whose legs look the most like a mosquito's. Other events during the three-day festival include the Ms. Quito Beauty Pageant, the Skeeter Beaters Baby Crawling Contest and the Senior Citizen Mosquito Swatter Decorating Contest.

Like a little friendly competition with your mosquitoes? Try your skill at pitching horseshoes, tossing washers, volleyball, a fun run, a bike race and an in-line skating tour. For rodeo fans, there's mutton busting and goat roping, and every evening, music from top country acts like Robert Earl Keen and Kevin Fowler. If great food is your idea of fun, the festival has barbecue, fajita, chicken and rib cook-offs, as well as over 40 other food vendors.

Clute is 55 miles southwest of Galveston, between Lake Jackson and Freeport. For information, contact festival organizers at (979) 265-8392,



Tova Heimeyer, PH Photography

Children search through a haystack for hidden treasures.

- 12. Trade Days, **Conroe**, (936) 788-5652
- 13-17. Swisher County Celebration, **Tulia**, (806) 995-2296
- 15-17. Ole Time Mello-drama, **Leakey**, (830) 232-6929
- 16. Bluegrass Show & Jam Session, **Cleburne**, (817) 373-2541
- 16. Country Opry, **Victoria**, (361) 552-9347
- 16-17. Night in Old Fredericksburg, **Fredericksburg**, 1-866-TEX-FEST or www.tex-fest.com
- 16-18. Trade Days, **McKinney**, (972) 562-5466 or www.tmttd.com
- 16-18. Trade Days, **Livingston**, (936) 327-3656
- 17. Trades Day, **Marlin**, (254) 803-2518
- 17. Celebrate Seagraves, **Seagraves**, 1-866-800-3111 or www.celebrateseagraves.org
- 17. Naturally Yours Dance Platform & Gallery, **Lipscomb**, (806) 862-2900
- 17-18. Animal Shelter Arts & Crafts Collectibles Show, **Uvalde**, (830) 278-2846
- 17-18. Antiques & Folk Art Festival, **Bellville**, (979) 865-5618
- 18. Buzzie's Hill Country Open Car Show, **Comfort**, (830) 634-2698
- 23-25. Music Festival, **Mobeetie**, (806) 845-2028
- 23-25. Hill Country Swap Meet, **Fredericksburg**,

- (325) 388-2223
- 24. Annual Tractor Pull, **Ballinger**, (325) 365-2333 or www.ballingertx.org
- 24. Trade Day, **Coldspring**, (936) 653-2009
- 24. Saddle & Buckle Play Day, **Wills Point**, (903) 848-7777 or 873-4270
- 24-25. Running of the Bulls Festival, **Eldorado**, (325) 853-2434
- 28-31. Old Settlers Reunion, **Hico**, 1-800-361-HICO or www.hico-tx.com

Event information can be mailed to Around Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, faxed to (512) 486-6254, or e-mailed to aroundtx@texas-ec.org. It must be submitted by the 10th of the month two months prior to publication. E.g., September submissions must be received prior to July 10. Events are listed according to space available. We appreciate photos with credits but regret that they cannot be returned.

1-800-371-2971 or www.mosquito-festival.com.

Jim Gramon is the author of FUN Texas Festivals and Events. Jim@JimGramon.com, www.JimGramon.com.



Tova Heimeyer, PH Photography

Willie-Man-Chew, the 26-foot festival mascot.

SMOOTH SAILING

Sailing

Safety Rules for Sailing:

- Before you put your boat in the water, take time to visually survey your marina or favorite launching area. Note any overhead wires and share the information with others.
- Stepping your mast or sailing anywhere near an overhead power line is dangerous! Masts, fishing poles or tall radio antennae could contact overhead wires.
- Make a habit of looking up to check for lines before moving or rigging your vessel.
- Check navigation charts for the location of any underwater cables, and don't take the chance of disturbing these cables by anchoring your boat near them.

And always stay out of the water—whether boating or swimming—during a storm. If you're already in the water when a storm threatens, get out as quickly, and safely, as possible.

Follow these rules when boating and you'll always have more fun.



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Families Have More Fun

What better way to build strong family ties and create cherished memories than by having fun with your family? Laughter and love were evident in the photos we received. We couldn't print them all, but we think you'll enjoy the selections shown here.

The topic for September is "Animal Friends." Send your photos (with animals and humans, or just animals) with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description to Animal Friends, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704 before July 10. For digital photo requirements and e-mail instructions, go to www.texas-ec.org/tcp/faq.html. We regret that we cannot return photos unless they are accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope, so if you'd like your photo back, please enclose one.



Meet "Dr. Caitlyn" and her patient. She's practicing medicine on her grandfather, Cecil Richardson. Grandmother Pat Richardson snapped this great family shot. The Richardsons are members of Concho Valley EC.



Medina Electric Cooperative member Melissa Deleon snapped this shot of her son, husband and daughter (Diego, Mario and Sarita), while visiting family friends. We decided that the kids have their dad's eyes.



"While trying to get a family picture, we put all the kids on this big vine," says Yolanda Sturrock. "When they all sat down, it fell and we ended up with this. It just proves that as long as families are together in love, anything can be fun." Yolanda and James Sturrock belong to Sam Houston EC.



Six-year-old Raven Nicole Turner likes to hitch her wagon to her pink jeep and take her "Granny B.B." for long rides down the driveway. Grandpa Flenel and Granny Callie Turner and parents Paul and Gwen Turner are all members of Bryan Texas Utilities.



Pedernales EC member Cindy Vaughn says, "This is my crazy family playing musical chairs at my grandmother's 96th birthday party. Mamaw Pate left this Earth last spring, but she taught us all how to have a good time while she was with us." Three generations are represented in this photo.

UPCOMING in Focus on Texas

Subject	Issue	Deadline
Animal Friends	September	July 10
Chow Time	October	August 10
On the Farm	November	September 10
School Plays	December	October 10
First Car	January	November 10
Romance, Texas-Style	February	December 10



Died and Gone to Lichtenstein's, Corpus Christi

Three times a year, back in the 1950s and early '60s, I participated in a series of ceremonial "hunt and gather" expeditions that originated at dawn with me riding shotgun in my Grandmother Martin's gargantuan Buick Roadmaster. With my hair plastered down, shirt ironed to armadillo-shell stiffness, and ears scrubbed till they shone like taillights, I'd sit waiting impatiently for her to give the order to "roll out." Our destination? Lichtenstein's Department Store in downtown Corpus Christi. Reason? Back-to-school clothes in August, Easter outfits in spring, and toy "wishing" at Christmastime. Objective? To peruse, gawk, try-on, try-out, sample, test, ponder, taste and basically shop till poverty or prostration (or both) ensued.

Founded by German immigrant Morris Lichtenstein, then successively managed by his two sons, Julius and Albert, the department store was eventually taken over by Albert's two sons, Morris and Albert Jr. After a series of moves around downtown Corpus Christi, Lichtenstein's eventually settled in 1941 (one week before the attack on Pearl Harbor) at its final location at the corner of Lawrence and Chaparral streets.

In the days before shopping malls, galleries, mail-order shopping and the boundless profusion of the Internet, a person basically had "downtown." And shopping downtown nearly always meant the ritual of putting on one's "better" clothes just to make an appearance. My grandmother would go all out with stockings, gloves, brooch, hat—the works. You never knew whom you might run into—a teacher, an elderly relative or maybe even the mayor.

It was easy to spend an entire day at Lichtenstein's. Get your hair done, have lunch, plan a trip at the travel agency, peruse the book section. You could buy a fur coat, cowboy boots

or a toaster—it was all there. Lichtenstein's was also a prime spot for just standing and looking. I distinctly remember sitting on the second floor stairs outside the Beauty Salon and being mesmerized by the sight of all those beautiful women and their intoxicating aromas, a strange mixture of Joy perfume and hair perm



Lichtenstein Building, Christmas 1941.

chemicals. The second floor mezzanine circled the entire first floor—you could lose large chunks of time peering down at all the people coming and going below. I spent long stretches in the travel agency pilfering brochures and trying to decide if I preferred the McCormick Steamship Line over the P&O Orient, or whether Carnival in Trinidad versus Rio might be the better winter vacation for me.

Lichtenstein's had the first elevators in Corpus, complete with nifty uniformed operators who wore white

gloves and had their own special fold-down seats.

On the top floor of Lichtenstein's stood a young shopper's Valhalla. I'm speaking of course about the toy department. Every conceivable kind of game, doll, ball, kit, trick, puzzle, costume, trinket and otherworldly gee-gaws, all on tantalizing display. Erector sets to Lincoln Logs, Easy-Bake Ovens to Chatty Cathy dolls, doctor's kits to train sets—treasures to transport young minds to rapturous flights of imagination.

After the heady euphoria of the toy department, there was the nearby tea room to restore those overtaxed imaginations. The best and biggest fried Gulf shrimp I've ever had in my life were served in the Lichtenstein's Tea Room. Bar none. It was a dark, cool place where they offered up fancy fare like Waldorf salads and tiny sandwiches with the crusts removed. I was even impressed with the way the water tasted at Lichtenstein's. I decided that they pumped it right out of the ocean down the street and then did something magical to it back in the kitchen.

Lichtenstein's was sold in 1972, two years before its 100th anniversary. Today the empty shell of the art deco building still stands in downtown Corpus, now vacant for almost 20 years (it was a Frost Brothers from 1977-87). Plans for its use come and go. But one thing remains unchanged—the legacy of a beloved South Texas institution that clothed, educated, entertained, indulged, styled and fed generations of thankful and highly satisfied customers.

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