

STUDY: CO-OPS HAD A
LEG UP DURING FREEZE

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CHEESES PLEASE

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AT FILLIN' STATIONS

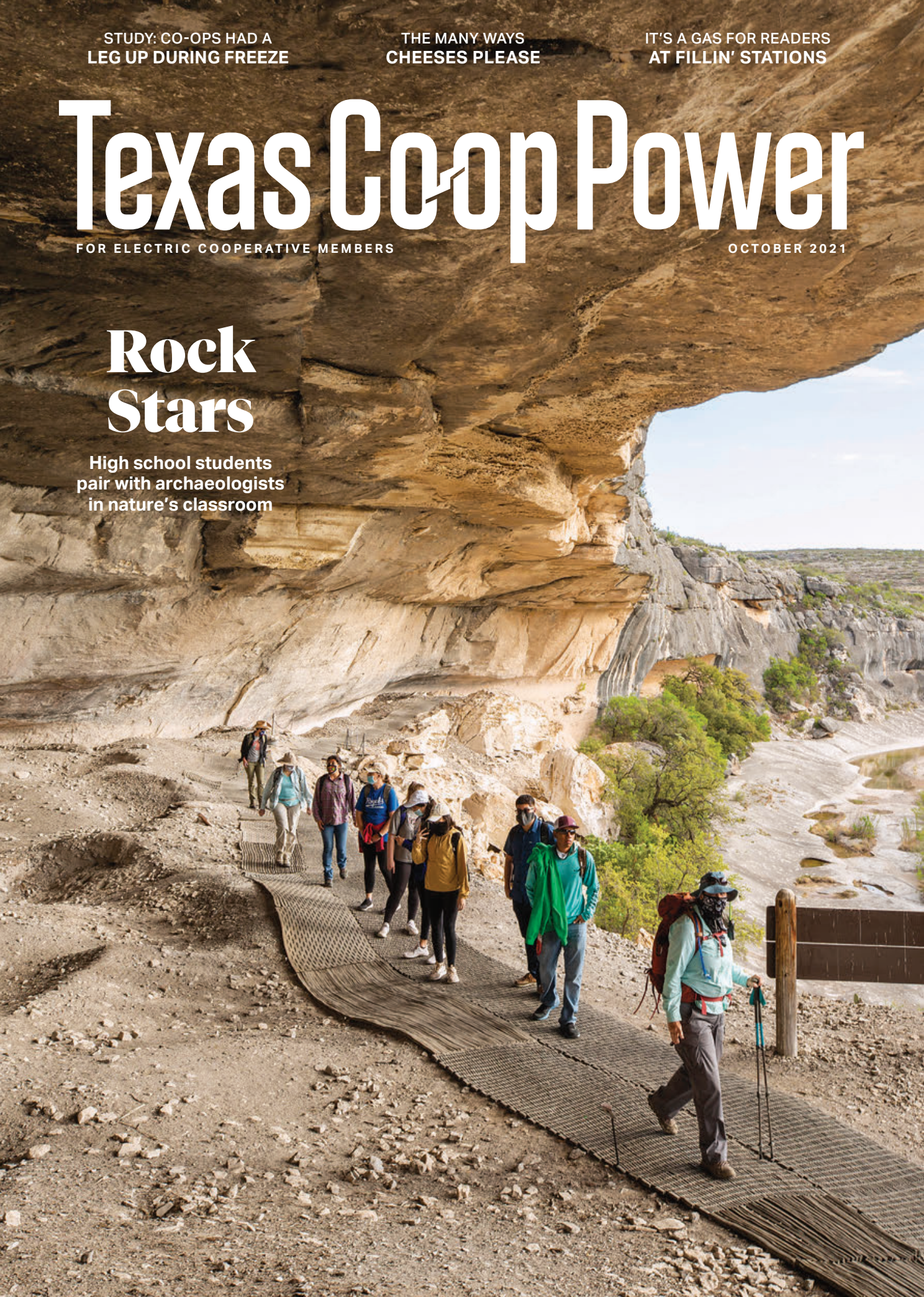
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OCTOBER 2021

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October 2021



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08 Learning Rocks

Comstock high school coursework includes rock art research with Shumla archaeologists.

*By Pam LeBlanc
Photos by Erich Schlegel*

Co-ops Shine

When 4.5 million homes and businesses lost power in February, consumers found the co-op response better than that of other power providers.

By Joe Holley

ON THE COVER

Karen Steelman of the Shumla archaeological research center leads students through the Fate Bell Shelter.
Photo by Erich Schlegel

ABOVE

A drone's view of Pedernales Electric Cooperative infrastructure.
Photo courtesy Pedernales EC

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A Stacked Deck

BRYAN BERG HOLDS THE WORLD RECORD for tallest free-standing house of cards—25 feet, 9 $\frac{7}{16}$ inches—which he built October 16, 2007, at the State Fair of Texas in Dallas. A year earlier at the fair, he built the Dallas skyline as fairgoers waited in line for hours to watch.

Berg, who has an architecture degree, used more than 1,000 decks of cards, which weigh about 140 pounds, just for the tallest spire in his world-record tower.



America's Lifelines

Electric cooperatives, which celebrate National Co-op Month in October, own and maintain 42% of the electric distribution lines that serve American communities. That equates to 2.7 million miles of line, including 340,774 miles in Texas.



October 1

National Homemade Cookie Day

Find the best recipes by searching "cookies" at [TexasCoopPower.com/food](https://www.texascooppower.com/food).

NBA LAUNCHES IN TEXAS

The NBA came to Texas 50 years ago, when the San Diego Rockets migrated to Houston. A vibrant San Diego aerospace industry inspired the team name, and it fit perfectly in Houston, home of the Johnson Space Center.

The Houston Rockets lost their first game, 105-94, to the Philadelphia 76ers on October 14, 1971, at Hofheinz Pavilion.

“If sad, eat
cookie. If still
sad, talk to
doctor. Sounds
serious.”

—COOKIE MONSTER

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I WISH I WAS
THERE WHEN ...

TCP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town. Below are some of the responses to our August prompt: **It's so hot ...**

I saw the squirrels picking up nuts with a potholder.

PATSY CHEEK
VIA FACEBOOK

Lizards are crawling in the fire to get under the shade of the skillet.

GENE OSBORNE
WOOD COUNTY EC
HAINESVILLE

I had to get in my hot tub to cool off.

CHARLES BAUCH
VIA FACEBOOK

Popcorn's poppin' in the field.

LINDA HIGGS
VIA FACEBOOK

My chickens lay boiled eggs.

KAREN ALLISON
NUECES EC
ROBSTOWN

You catch precooked fish.

TERRI HARVEY
VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read
Currents online.



Eggs-pert Students

LEAVE IT TO FIRST GRADERS to hatch solutions to a fun challenge: Can you drop eggs without breaking them?

Students at Dillman Elementary School in Muleshoe, with help from employees and a bucket truck from Bailey County Electric Cooperative, proved it's possible.

The kids protected raw eggs with methods that included exoskeletons of straws, boxes with packing, parachutes and even jars of peanut butter—ideas they concocted with their parents, teachers and fellow students. Then technician Matthew Edwards of Bailey County EC went up about 25 feet in the bucket and dropped dozens of them, one at a time. About half of the eggs landed intact.

“Their creativity was amazing,” says Letti Tovar, Dillman principal. “Some of those things I would have never thought of.”



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ERIC W. POHL

Goin' to the Chapel

I want to thank Chet Garner for his Hit the Road articles. One especially intrigued me: *Where Artistry Congregates* [March 2021].

My husband, Humberto, and I decided to visit the painted churches for our 50th wedding anniversary. Following Chet's lead, we grabbed kolache and started our tour in Dubina.

The shrines were glorious. We were so reminded of our visits to Rome in all that splendor.

Nelda Martinez
Medina EC
Hebbronville



Hunter is a world changer [*Easing Life's Baggage*, August 2021].

TANYA RENEE
PANIGUA
VIA FACEBOOK



COURTESY CHET GARNER

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Easing Life's Baggage

“Day 1 Bags needs to be in every state. Such an incredible project that has helped so many. I love the idea of supporting high school foster kids.”

MICHELE JAQUISS
VIA FACEBOOK

Sparkling Review

I enjoyed learning about John S. Chase in *An Unlikely Blueprint* [July 2021]. Gems like this make me appreciate *Texas Co-op Power* and keep me looking forward to the next issue.

Les Meads
Guadalupe Valley EC
Saint Hedwig

Limitless Appreciation

Parent Imperfect [June 2021] spoke to me on a personal level. It reaffirmed the feeling of embarrassment most of us have as adolescents that lovingly grows into a limitless appreciation for that “imperfect parent” as we go through adulthood and realize we also are the imperfect parent.

Nadalynn Jenkins
HILCO EC
Glenn Heights

No Stopping McVea

Opposing teams had no solution for Warren McVea's speed and agility [*Ground-breaking Cougar*, Currents, July 2021]. It was a couple of years later that the old Southwest Conference started recruiting Black athletes. Neither McVea nor the University of Houston got their just due for opening the door for Black athletes in Texas.

Phil Dolezal
Trinity Valley EC
Sugar Land

WRITE TO US

letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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

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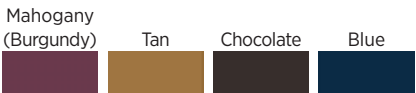
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LEARNING ROCKS

Comstock high school coursework includes rock art research with Shumla archaeologists

BY PAM LEBLANC • PHOTOS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

The Maker of Peace sculpture stands outside the Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site visitors center.



LEFT Comstock student Sammy Isaac reaches into a hole where grains or paint dust were stored some 2,000 years ago inside the Fate Bell Shelter. ABOVE Students found a projectile point while working with Shumla archaeologists at Seminole Canyon.

that line this canyon in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands. “This is one of the best places to study hunter-gatherers. We can see more than stone tools. We can see how they lived.”

The rock shelters—more than 300 have been identified in Val Verde County—also serve as valuable classrooms for students in their final year of high school in Comstock, a tiny, one-school town of fewer than 300 people about 30 miles northwest of Del Rio. Every senior in the Comstock Independent School District—there are seven for the 2020–2021 school year—works alongside archaeologists and chemists as they study the region’s renowned rock art.

In the past few years, students from the school have helped build a plasma oxidation instrument that scientists will use to extract organic material from paint flakes so they can date the rock art. Previous classes have labeled rock art murals, measured painted images, entered data into computers and learned how to use imaging software. In short, the program, introduced in 2013 and structured as an interdisciplinary internship, allows the students from a small school in South Texas to learn sophisticated archaeological analysis and physical sciences from the pros.

The class not only helps Shumla, a nonprofit organization founded more than 20 years ago to study and document rock art in the region, but also gives the students hands-on experience in a working laboratory.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, class looks a little different this year. Steelman and Tims meet with the students two or three times a week via Zoom. Besides studying various styles of rock art and learning how ancient people used animal fat and crushed minerals to make paint, the students study plants that were used for food, clothing and shelter. They learned, for example, that cochineal, a type of scale insect that lives on prickly pear cactus, was used to make red and orange dyes.

ON A BREEZY APRIL MORNING, five Comstock high school seniors clamber around boulders and hop across a stream in Seminole Canyon on their way to inspect some of the finest examples of rock art in the world.

After a 20-minute hike, they reach the foot of Fate Bell Shelter, a curved hollow midway up a cliff wall that’s big enough for a game of baseball. The students, along with science teacher Kayme Tims and chemist Karen Steelman, scramble up to the rocky amphitheater, where they can see faded red, yellow and black images painted there more than 2,000 years ago.

“This place is so special, and it’s not just because of the rock art,” says Steelman, science director of the plasma oxidation lab at Shumla Archaeological Research and Education Center in Comstock, explaining that ancient fiber mats, sandals and rabbit furs have been found in the rock shelters

Science teacher Kayme
Tims leaps across a stream
in Seminole Canyon.

"I have two goals: first, teach some chemistry using the archaeology of the Lower Pecos as a framework. Second, teach students an appreciation for the amazing cultural archaeology that's right in our backyard," Steelman says.

That plan is working. At Fate Bell Shelter, the students use a smartphone app called DStretch to photograph the artwork and then enhance its color so the images are more clearly visible.

"I think it's pretty cool that it's right here in our backyard," says Sammy Isaac, 18, of Comstock as the images jump into focus.

"Can you imagine painting something and it lasting that long?" Steelman says as the students point out features of the Lower Pecos River style artwork—anthropomorphic figures with outstretched arms, holding bundles of what look like darts. "These were master artists; they were good."

SCIENTISTS AT SHUMLA recently helped secure National Historic Landmark status for the rock art in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands, one of the most important archaeological regions in the world, according to French prehistorian Jean Clottes.

And last year they completed comprehensive documentation of 233 rock art sites for the Alexandria Project, their effort to preserve these oldest "books" of painted texts in North America.

Together Steelman and Tims have taught successive groups of Comstock seniors about concepts from pigment analysis to radiocarbon dating. The educators say they hope the basic chemistry knowledge will give students an edge in college and an appreciation of the cultural importance of where they live.

"I hope they realize what we have here, that it's unique; they grew up somewhere with significance," Tims says.

Back in the Fate Bell Shelter, the students gather in front of the faint outline of a figure, one hand holding what looks like a bundle of sticks. They note that some of the figures' hair looks like it's standing on end—a characteristic known as piloerection that has various interpretations.

At one point, the five students line up in front of one section of the mural, laughing a little as they re-create a scene on the wall depicting five figures, one with its arms reaching

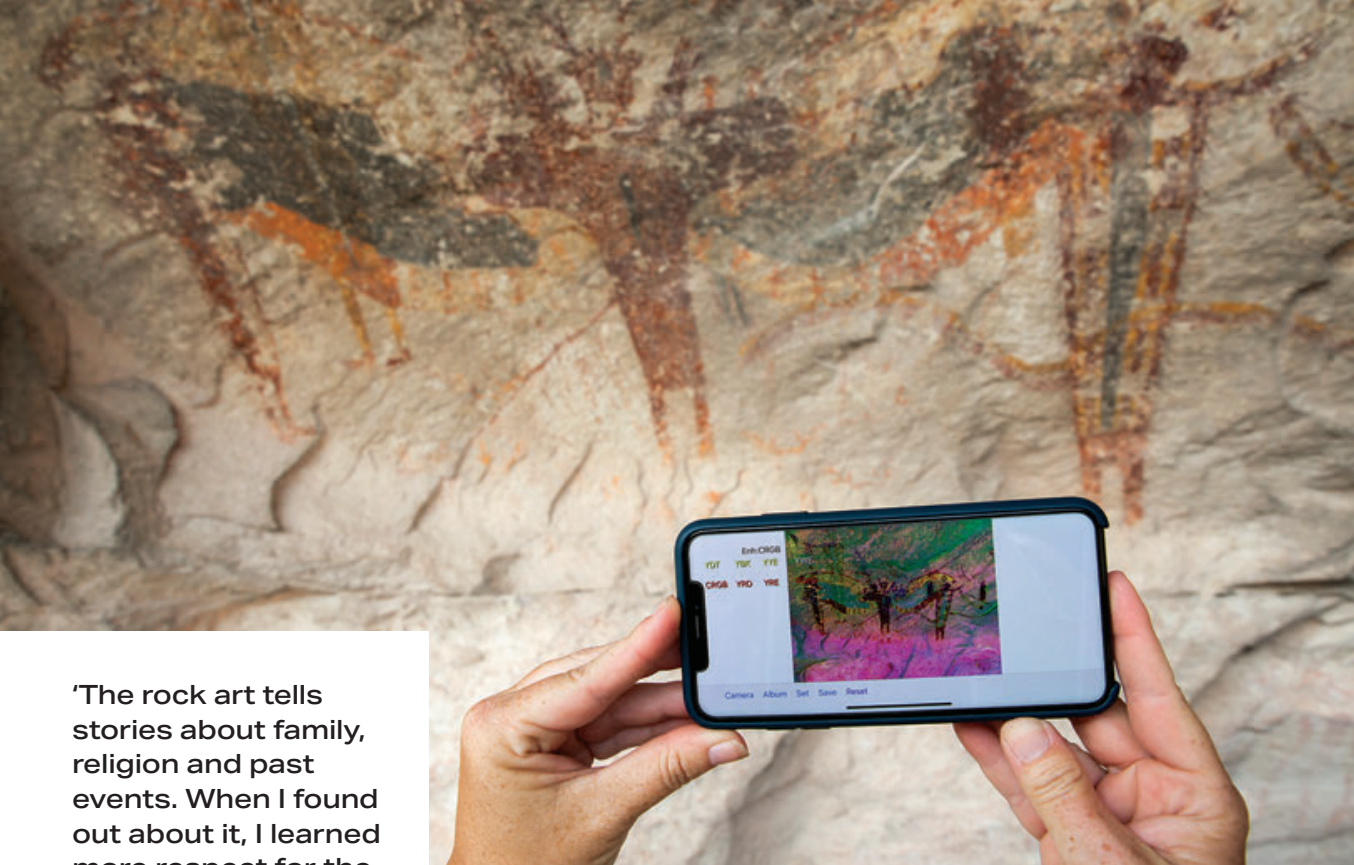


skyward. Experts don't know for sure, but some believe paintings like this represent spiritual or religious beliefs.

"The rock art tells stories about family, religion and past events," says Courtney White, 18, of Del Rio. "When I found out about it, I learned more respect for the people who made it. What they painted was heartfelt. What was important to them should be important to me."

After 45 minutes of exploring the Fate Bell Shelter, the group climbs down and hikes another mile along the rugged creek bed, scrambling through underbrush, hopping over streams and climbing up smooth rock to another shelter, known to scientists as 41VV75. This site, Steelman tells the students, has been used for more than 8,000 years, although the images painted on its walls are half that age, according to radiocarbon testing. The students explore the site, noticing fibers from ancient mats made of plants. A few look down the canyon, talking about what it must have been like to live here.

Only a fraction of the rock art in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands has been radiocarbon-dated. "That's one thing students are helping me with—developing a labora-



‘The rock art tells stories about family, religion and past events. When I found out about it, I learned more respect for the people who made it. What they painted was heartfelt. What was important to them should be important to me.’



TOP A student uses the DStretch app to photograph and enhance rock art. ABOVE Students in the Shumla research lab.

TCP WEB EXTRA Find more photos with this story online and learn more about cochineal in *The Bugs That Make You See Red* from February 2019.

tory at Shumla so we can do more research and study the ages of different styles of art and how [the style] may have changed through time,” Steelman says.

After breaking for lunch next to huge boulders in the canyon, the students load up and head back to Shumla headquarters, housed in what was once a U.S. Border Patrol building in Comstock. There, they file into the lab to check out a plasma oxidation instrument built by the previous year’s students. The instrument spans nearly an entire wall, its row of orangey-red lights reminiscent of the heating lamps used to keep fried chicken or pies warm at a fast-food restaurant.

But this \$83,000 piece of equipment, funded through a grant from the National Science Foundation, won’t be used to warm lunch; Steelman and Lori Barkwill-Love, a college intern, will use it to extract organic material from dime-sized flakes of paint carefully obtained from rock art murals. That material will be sent to another lab for radio-carbon dating.

“The instrument is custom-built with all these parts, basically like Lego blocks,” Steelman says. “It was the perfect opportunity for students to come into the lab and help.”

This year’s class will build on the work of last year’s seniors. Before the school year ends, they will assemble a new electrode array for the plasma oxidation instrument in this world-class lab. The project requires scientific design as well as practical skills such as drilling through PVC pipe, threading copper wire through the piping and measuring twice so you only have to cut once.

And those are lessons that most students never get in high school. ■

Co-ops Shine

When more than 4.5 million homes and businesses lost power in February, consumers found the co-op response better than that of other power providers

Pedernales Electric Cooperative workers endured 165 consecutive hours of subfreezing temperatures.

BY JOE HOLLEY

Members counted on Texas electric co-ops during the deep freeze

WE TEXANS CAN TELL TALES about weather extremes, usually a devastating tornado or a hurricane, a flash flood or a lingering drought. Occasionally we'll recall a bone-chilling West Texas norther or a Panhandle blizzard, but we have less experience with the vicissitudes of winter cold.

Until February 13, 2021. That's when a polar vortex smashed its way into the record books, disrupting lives and livelihoods and laying claim to being one of the worst natural disasters in Texas history. We'll be telling stories about this winter for years to come.

More than 4.5 million homes and businesses lost power during the storm, which was likely the most expensive natural disaster in Texas history, causing more than \$295 billion in damages. The official death toll stands at 210.

So how do Texans feel about their electricity providers' response to the unprecedented crisis? That's the question the Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston asked 1,500 Texans served by the electric grid managed by the Electrical Reliability Council of Texas.

The answer? Consumers rated their electric cooperative's response better than did consumers of other power providers.

Survey results were clear. "Overall, electric cooperatives significantly outperformed their rivals in the eyes of their customers during the winter storm of 2021," the Hobby School concluded.

Some 52% of co-op members who lost power agreed that the power cuts in their area were carried out in an equitable manner. That's more than twice the positive response received by customers of investor-owned utilities operating in the state.

"Co-ops tend to be closer to their customers," said Kirk Watson, dean of the Hobby School when the study took place and a former state senator. "Those relationships matter when it comes to trust and even just giving the benefit of the doubt when times get rough. Also, my experience tells me that co-ops tend to communicate more routinely with folks, and of course that makes a world of difference in a crisis."

That valuable communication was noticed by co-op members.

"As a recent transplant to Fannin County, I just wanted to say how impressed I have been with your updates and communication this week," Joyce Buchanan wrote on Facebook. She's a Fannin County Electric Cooperative member who recently moved to McKinney from Ontario, Canada.

"They have been timely, informative and so helpful in letting us know what to expect from day to day, sometimes hour to hour."

The survey found that co-ops performed their

core functions better than the commercial utilities and consumers believed that co-ops were better able to respond to crises like the February storm than were other electric utilities.

Kathi Calvert is pretty sure she knows why. Calvert, general manager of Crockett-based Houston County EC for the past eight years, points out that the co-op's East Texas members were aware that co-op employees were right there with them, experiencing the same misery and hardships they were. They would not have known that about large, anonymous utilities headquartered who-knows-where.

They saw co-op employees leaving their own dark and powerless homes and making their way to work with several inches of snow and ice covering the ground, temperatures near zero. They saw bucket trucks in the community and linemen clambering up ice-encrusted poles.

She also made sure that when customers called in, they got their questions answered by a person—a member of their own community—even if the answer about such things as rotating outages may not have been what they wanted to hear. She had human resources and accounts payable employees—whoever was available—answering phones and keeping customers informed. She also made sure social media was providing the latest information.

"It was a team effort, a community-based effort," Calvert said. "That's why co-ops are trusted."

EVEN DURING THE STORM, co-op members expressed agreement with that sentiment. Brittany Brewer, a Fannin County EC member, posted this on the co-op's Facebook page February 18: "We are lucky to have such a transparent power provider."

Cameron Smallwood, CEO of United Cooperative Services, a Burleson-based co-op serving parts of North Texas, told Texas lawmakers a similar story during testimony before legislative committees in February. United not only prepared members in advance for the likelihood of debilitating winter weather, Smallwood explained, but the co-op used every means of communication available to keep its members informed.



They saw co-op employees leaving their own dark and powerless homes and making their way to work with several inches of snow and ice covering the ground, temperatures near zero. They saw bucket trucks in the community and linemen clambering up ice-encrusted poles.

Communications is “part of our DNA,” he said. “Our understanding is that customers from other utilities were watching our social media and information because they were lacking information [from their providers].”

State Rep. Shelby Slawson of Stephenville told Smallwood that she is a UCS member. “We’ve heard a lot about the importance of communication with the public. I want to openly commend you and United Co-op for the way you handled that,” she said.

Julie Parsley, CEO of Pedernales EC, reported to her board of directors a few weeks after life had pretty much returned to normal. She recalled that co-op linemen and other workers “were doing dangerous jobs in difficult conditions” during 165 consecutive hours of subfreezing temperatures. They were working 16-hour shifts in temperatures colder than Anchorage, Alaska. Information technology employees who had lost power at home worked out of their cars; member relations agents stayed in hotels close to PEC offices; and the co-op’s urgent team was on the job 24/7, dealing with snow, ice and mud even after the storm subsided.

Systems and equipment occasionally failed, “but the spirit and the resiliency of our employees surpassed that,” Parsley reported. “Our next step is to bring our systems up to the level of our employees, frankly.”

Less than one-fourth of co-op members rated poor or very poor how their co-op handled the rolling outages ERCOT required to reduce power demand. Well more than half of all other power providers’ customers rated their utility’s performance as poor or very poor.

So why did Texas’ 66 electric distribution cooperatives perform better than the municipal and investor-owned utilities? Those who conducted the survey—Watson, senior director and researcher Renée Cross, and Rice University political scientist Mark Jones—suggest that co-ops have built up a reservoir of trust among their members over decades of community-focused service.

“The customers of electric cooperatives are more likely



LEFT The iced lines of Rio Grande EC.
ABOVE A San Bernard EC crew works to restore power.

to believe their electric utility has their best interests at heart than do the customers of commercial electric utilities,” the report said, “and therefore ... are more likely to rate their electricity utility in a positive manner.” ■

TCP WEB EXTRA Find the complete Hobby School report with this story online.

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It took three years of development and \$26 million in advanced Swiss-built watchmaking machinery to create the *Magnificat II*. When we took the watch to renowned watchmaker and watch historian George Thomas, he disassembled it and studied the escapement, balance wheel and the rotor. He remarked on the detailed guilloché face, gilt winding crown, and the crocodile-embossed leather band. He was intrigued by the three interior dials for day, date, and 24-hour moon phases. He estimated that this fine timepiece would cost over \$2,500. We all smiled and told him that the Stauer price was less than \$100. A truly magnificent watch at a truly magnificent price!

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Add Insulation To Keep Warm

AS THE SEASON CHANGES to cooler weather, your thoughts also might turn to keeping out the coming winter cold. Insulating the attic is an effective way to help keep your house cozy and energy efficient—not just over the cool months but at all times of the year.

The U.S. Department of Energy estimates homeowners could reduce energy costs by 10%–50% with proper attic insulation.

Typically, houses in warm-weather states should have R-38 insulation in the attic, whereas houses in cold climates should have R-49. Check with your local building department for code requirements.

If you discover you need more insulation, you might be worried about the process. Rest assured that in most cases, you can add the new insulation on top of old insulation.

An exception to this is if the existing insulation is or has been wet. Wet insulation can promote the growth of mold or mildew and cause building materials to rot. If it's wet or appears to have water damage, you should look for the cause and repair the problem to prevent it from happening again. Then remove any wet or damaged insulation.

Here are some additional considerations for adding insulation to an attic:

- ▶ Batt or rolled insulation and blown loose-fill insulation (made of fiberglass or cellulose) can be installed on top of old insulation.
- ▶ Do not place “faced” insulation on top of existing insulation. Any new batt or roll of insulation added on top of existing insulation in the attic needs to be without a vapor retardant, or facing, because this paper between layers of insulation can trap

moisture. Any existing batt or roll insulation should place the facing against an attic's drywall floor—or have no facing at all.

- ▶ If you cannot find unfaced rolls of insulation, you can carefully pull the kraft paper off without much loss of insulation.

- ▶ If your new insulation is in rolls, you should roll it out perpendicular to the joists. Be sure to use unfaced rolls or pull off the kraft paper.

- ▶ You should not tack down rolled insulation. Insulation needs to be fluffy to block heat flow. Squashing insulation flat to tack it down will reduce the R-value, or effectiveness.

- ▶ If you discover vermiculite insulation in your attic, be sure to have it tested before doing work there because it might contain asbestos. If the test reveals that asbestos is present, a certified removal expert should remove the vermiculite.

- ▶ You also can hire a contractor to blow loose-fill insulation in your attic.

- ▶ If tackling the project yourself, be sure to take safety precautions, including wearing a long-sleeve shirt, gloves, eye protection and a dust mask. Take care not to cover can lights unless they are rated for contact with insulation. And be careful not to step through the ceiling!

- ▶ Remember, a tightly sealed house is as important as insulation, so fill all cracks in the living area and the attic with caulk or expanding foam. Some areas to pay special attention to are around attic windows, pipes, wires, exhaust fans and ducts, and chimneys and flues. ■

Prepare for Extreme Storms

STORMS HAMMER Co-op Country with increasing frequency and severity, and they can create challenging conditions.

To avoid disaster, be prepared for a sudden storm. **Here are a few tips:**

- ▶ If the power goes out, unplug all major electrical appliances and your expensive electronics right away. This could prevent an electrical surge from damaging the motors of those appliances when power is restored.
- ▶ Unplug basement appliances if you expect flooding.
- ▶ If water gets into the house, turn off the electricity to those areas before stepping into a wet room. Stepping in water—even just a puddle—that is touching plugged-in appliances can electrocute you.
- ▶ Before turning wet appliances back on, have an electrician inspect them.
- ▶ Keep the refrigerator door closed during a power outage. Food stays good for up to four hours in an unopened refrigerator that remains cold.
- ▶ Keep a refrigerator thermometer on hand to check the temperature when power is restored. If food is still below 40 degrees, it's safe to eat.
- ▶ Find out ahead of time where you can get dry ice if the power is off for more than four hours. For situations when food in the refrigerator goes bad, keep ready-to-eat, nonperishable food—and a manual can opener—on hand. It's also a good idea to have several containers of drinking water available in case your well or municipal water source becomes contaminated or unavailable.
- ▶ Keep your vehicle's gas tank full so that you're not running on empty if you need to evacuate or if there's a fuel shortage.
- ▶ If someone in the house is on a life-support system or relies on any electric medical device, make a plan for where to take the person in case of a power outage. Your electric co-op or local hospital can help you formulate a plan. ■



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Stop Pre-rinsing for the Dishwasher

MODERN DISHWASHERS are such efficient cleaners that you typically don't need to rinse dishes before stacking them on the racks. That saves water, energy and time.

Here are five tips for helping your dishwasher clean and sanitize your dishes:

- ▶ Scrape leftover food from plates and bowls before placing them in the dishwasher, but avoid pre-rinsing.
- ▶ Place dishes, glasses and flatware in the appropriate compartments in your dishwasher. This helps the machine clean them properly the first time.
- ▶ Don't pack dishes in. Leave adequate space between plates and bowls to allow the water to circulate freely. And don't let a large bowl or lid block the water spray from reaching other dishes.
- ▶ Use a hot water cycle to remove dried-on food, properly dissolve the dishwashing detergent and sanitize the dishes. Using the heated dry function further sanitizes dishes but comes at a cost to your electric bill.
- ▶ If your house has highly mineralized water, fill both of your dishwasher's detergent cups and use a rinsing agent. ■



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Pack Your Emergency Kit

Have you taken steps to prepare for severe storms before they strike? Here are some important items to include in your emergency kit:

First-aid kit

Cash (banks and ATMs may be unavailable)

Battery-operated radio, flashlight and extra batteries

Important documents and records, photo IDs, proof of residence

Three-day supply of non-perishable food and three gallons of bottled water per person

Fire extinguisher

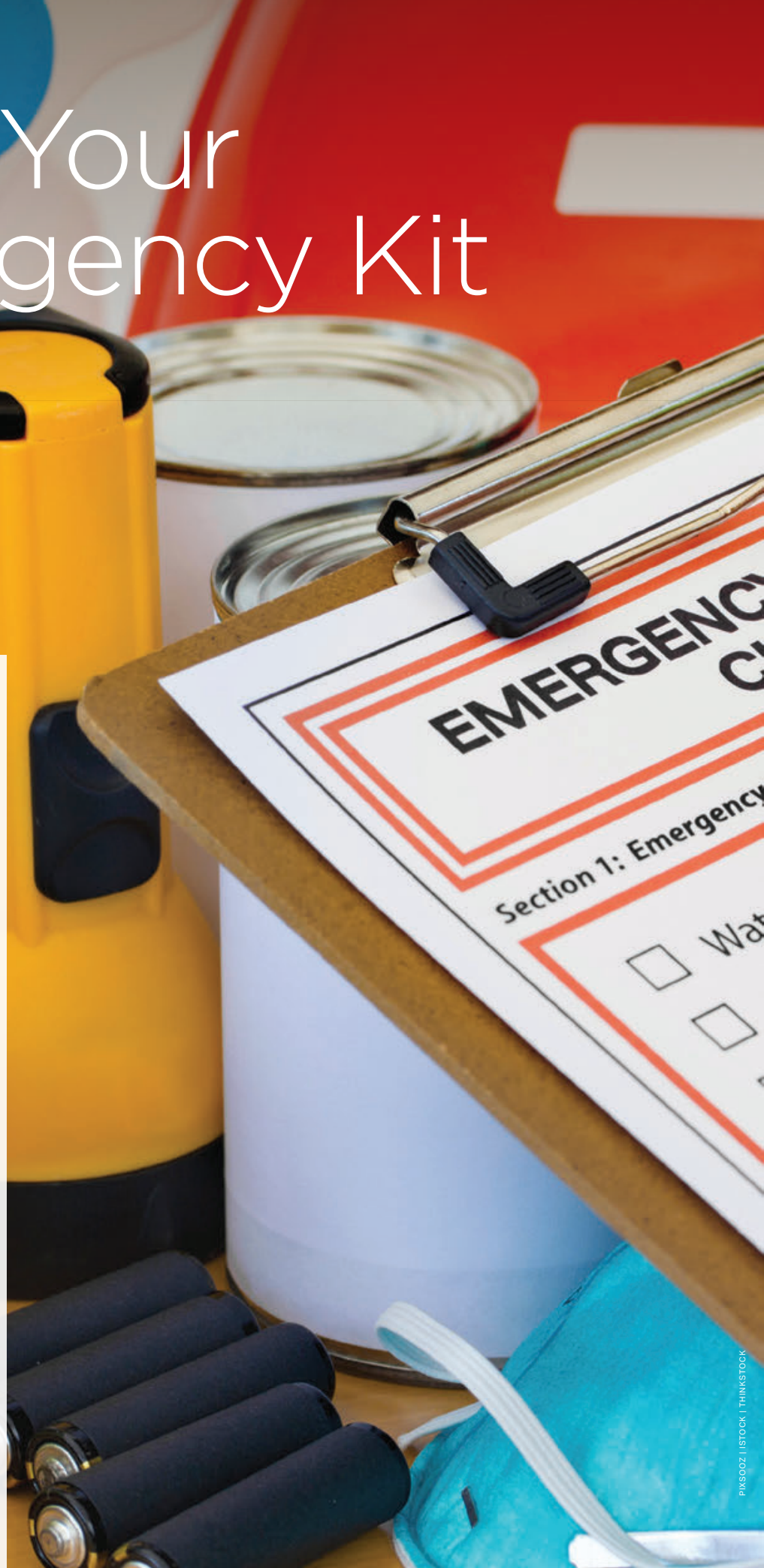
Blankets, sleeping bags and extra clothing

Prescription medications, copies of prescriptions, hearing aids, eyeglasses and other special medical items

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Clearing the Error

The risk of getting names wrong casts an uneasy spell over a newsroom

BY CLAY COPPEDGE • ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES STEINBERG

THE SMALL CENTRAL TEXAS community newspaper where I worked early in my career suffered a series of unfortunate events in the late 1980s. Not events, really. Errors. All of them concerned one of the cardinal sins of journalism: getting a name wrong.

Over the course of a little more than a month, we had misspelled the names of three people. We were embarrassed, to be sure, but also a bit skittish. The paper's owner had suggested that heads would roll if it happened again. So we focused even more than usual on spelling names correctly whenever we crossed paths with someone whose name we would send to print.

The issue was foremost in our minds when the phone rang in the newsroom early one afternoon, and I, the lowly sports editor, was the only one in the office to take the call. A woman on the other end said, "Y'all got my name wrong in the paper today."

My heart stopped. "Oh, no. Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure. I know how to spell my own name!"

I reached across my desk for a copy of the latest edition. "Which story are we talking about?"

"It's not a story. It's a picture. A big one. On the front page."

At the top of the page was a photo of several people marching in front of the county courthouse and carrying signs to protest their property taxes. The caption identified four protesters. "Which one are you?" I asked.

She told me her name, and sure enough, there was a name that is pronounced like hers but with a different spelling from what we had in the paper. I told her I'd check into it and call her back. About that time, the photographer who took the picture and wrote the caption wandered into the office. I told him about the call in the same sympathetic tone I would have used if he'd just been fired. At first he thought I was kidding.

"That's impossible!" he swore, when he realized I was serious. "She's crazy! I triple-checked it."

"What can I tell you? The woman claims she knows how to spell her name."

"Look," he said, "not only did I write her name down, I had her print it on my notepad, and I read it back to her." He fetched the notepad and showed me the page with her name printed at the top and

circled. I suggested he call the woman and clear up the confusion, but he left the office in a hurry—possibly to look for another job.

So I called her back and told her I'd spoken with the man who took her name down, and he swore up one side and down the other that he verified *with her* how to spell her name.

"Why, he never!" she said. "He never checked with me at all."

"Ma'am, I'll turn this over to the editor and see if we can get it straightened out. We'll run a correction if we got it wrong."

Just as I began to relish the simple act of hanging up a telephone, she stopped me cold when she added, "That's not the only thing you got wrong. *I've never even been to one of those protests.*"

It took a little while for that to sink in. "Wait. You weren't at the protest? That's not you in the picture?"

"It most certainly is not. I just told you I've never been to one of those things!"

There was a pause on my end of the phone as I measured my words carefully, hoping to sound calm and helpful and not at all dumbfounded.

"Ma'am, maybe the woman in the picture has the same name as you, only with a different spelling," I suggested. "You think that might be it?"

Now the long silent pause came from *her* end of the line, though I could hear her breathing—and possibly thinking.

"Well," she finally said. "I suppose it *is* possible."

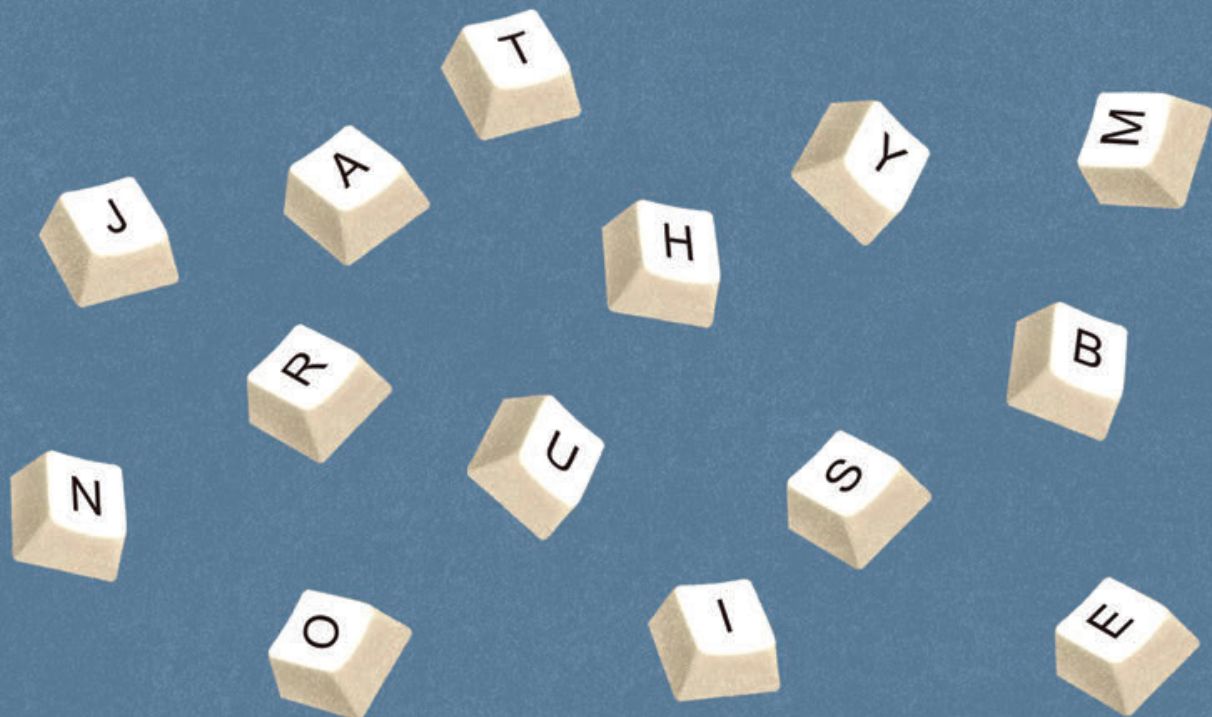
The editor later verified the identity and spelling of the woman whose picture was actually in the paper. The woman was a little annoyed. Said she couldn't believe we were still asking her how to spell her name. We couldn't believe it either.

The days and weeks went by without another case of mistaken identity until a woman called me to say I had spelled her daughter's name wrong. The first name, Sue, was so common I assumed she was talking about the last name, which featured a lot of consonants and not many vowels. But the first name was the one in question.

"It's not Sue—S-u-e?"

"No, it's not," she said. "It's S-i-o-u-x."

We ran a correction. No heads rolled. ■



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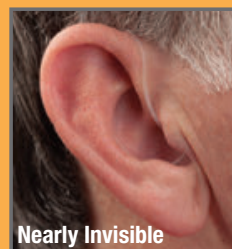
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TCP WEB EXTRA

Listen to W.F. Strong read this story.

Proving Ground

Future presidents crossed the Wild Horse Desert together on a military mission

BY W.F. STRONG

HE WAS 23 YEARS OLD, riding his horse south of Corpus Christi in the region that would later be called the King Ranch. But that now-legendary, sprawling ranch would not be founded for another eight years.

This vast stretch of sandy prairie was then known as the Wild Horse Desert. In some ways it was a spooky place—ghostly. Visitors could see horse tracks everywhere—but no people. There were plenty of well-worn trails, but the population was only four-legged in August 1845.

Folks reckoned that these horses were the descendants of those that arrived with Hernán Cortés more than three centuries earlier, when he came to conquer the Aztecs. Some of his horses escaped,

migrated north and bred like rabbits (if you can say that about horses).

Our young man—a graduate of West Point and a newly minted second lieutenant—rode with a regiment of soldiers under the command of Gen. Zachary Taylor. They were under orders to establish Fort Texas on the Rio Grande and enforce that river as the southern border of the United States. Fort Texas would shortly become Fort Brown, the fort from which Brownsville would take its name.

The young lieutenant, who had excelled as a horseman at West Point, was so impressed with the seemingly infinite herds of wild horses in South Texas that he made a note in his journal. He wrote:

“A few days out from Corpus Christi, the

immense herd of wild horses that ranged at that time between the Nueces and the Rio Grande was directly in front of us. I rode out a ways to see the extent of the herd. The country was a rolling prairie, and from the higher ground, the vision was obstructed only by the curvature of the Earth. As far as the eye could reach to the right, the herd extended. To the left, it extended equally. There was no estimating the number of animals in it; I doubt that they could all have been corralled in the state of Rhode Island or Delaware at one time. If they had been, they would have been so thick that the pasture would have given out the first day.”

Both Taylor and his second lieutenant would distinguish themselves on that journey through South Texas.

Taylor had no idea that his visit to the Wild Horse Desert would lead him on to victories in the Mexican-American War that started the next year with an attack on his troops near the Rio Grande—and to political victory back home. He would become the 12th president of the United States.

Taylor’s dashing second lieutenant would also ascend to the presidency, 20 years after him. The young man on high ground, surveying the astounding scene of wild mustangs grazing by the thousands, would become the hero of many battles.

He would ultimately lead Union forces to victory in the Civil War and become the youngest president of the U.S. His presidential memoirs would become a runaway bestseller published by Mark Twain, who would describe the book as “the most remarkable work of its kind since *Caesar’s Commentaries*.”

It was written by Hiram U. Grant. Well, that was his birth name. But when he entered West Point, a clerical error deleted the name Hiram and his middle name became his first name, and that is the name you know him by: Ulysses. He was Ulysses S. Grant. ■



Cheese

Four dishes, four ways to present the charm of cheese

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Savory recipes are always a go-to with cheeses, but around here we love sweet too. In her new cookbook, *Southern Sugar*, Belinda Smith-Sullivan features a variety of delectable cheesecakes, including this recipe using sweet cushaw squash. If you can't find this crookneck squash, then butternut squash, pumpkin or white sweet potatoes are suitable substitutes.



BELINDA
SMITH-SULLIVAN

Sweet Cushaw and Pecan Cheesecake

CRUST

- 1¾ cups gingersnap crumbs**
- 2 tablespoons sugar**
- ¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted**
- ¼ cup finely chopped pecans**

FILLING

- 3 packages cream cheese (8 ounces each), room temperature**
- 2 cups cooked and puréed cushaw squash**
- 1 cup light brown sugar**
- 3 eggs, room temperature**
- ¼ cup sour cream, room temperature**
- ¼ cup heavy cream, room temperature**

- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger or allspice**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- ½ cup chopped pecans**

TOPPING

- ¾ cup packed brown sugar**
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, room temperature**
- ¼ cup heavy cream, room temperature**
- 1 cup coarsely chopped pecans**

1. CRUST Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a medium bowl, blend crumbs, sugar, butter and pecans and press into the bottom of a 9-inch springform pan. Wrap the bottom and outside of the pan with foil.

2. FILLING Using a stand mixer, beat cream cheese and squash until fluffy. Gradually add brown sugar, then add eggs one at a time. Add sour cream and heavy cream and continue to beat. Add cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and vanilla and beat until smooth. Fold in pecans and pour filling into prepared pan.

3. Place cheesecake pan in another larger

pan and place in preheated oven. Fill the larger pan halfway with hot water. Bake 60–70 minutes or until slightly firm in the center. Turn off oven, leaving door ajar about 8 inches, and allow cheesecake to cool in oven 1 hour. Remove pans from oven, remove cheesecake pan from water bath and cool completely in pan.

4. TOPPING In a small, heavy saucepan, combine brown sugar and butter over low heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Increase heat and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and stir in cream and pecans. Let cool slightly. Pour warm topping over cooled cheesecake in pan and refrigerate. When ready to serve, remove the sides of springform pan and place cheesecake on a serving dish.

SERVES 12

Reprinted with permission from *Southern Sugar* by Belinda Smith-Sullivan (Gibbs Smith, 2021).

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Goat Cheese Crackers With Herbs.



Cheese Grits

ANNA LOUISE EVANS
PEDERNALES EC

Evans has been making this dish since 1970, when as a teenager she won a blue ribbon with the recipe at a county fair. It's easy to see why, as these grits are fluffy, creamy and cheesy all at once.

¾ cup hominy grits
3 cups water
½ teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons (¾ stick) butter
8 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, grated
½ teaspoon hot sauce
Dash of seasoned salt
2 eggs, beaten
Dash of paprika

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease a 2-quart baking dish.
2. Cook grits in water and salt as directed on package. Add butter, cheese, hot sauce and seasoned salt, stirring to melt. Slowly pour in eggs, stirring the entire time to prevent scrambling.
3. Pour into prepared baking dish and sprinkle paprika over the top. Bake 1 hour, until puffed and golden brown.

SERVES 6

\$500 WINNER

Grilled Ham and Cheese Panini With Collard Greens and Tomato

RICKY PATTERSON
COSERV



Garlicky greens turn this grilled cheese sandwich into a filling, crave-worthy meal. Don't neglect pressing the sandwich, which helps meld the flavors together. If you happen to have an electric panini press at home, the process is a cinch.

SERVES 1-2



3 leaves collard greens or kale
2 tablespoons olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
3 tablespoons water
⅓ cup (¼ stick) butter, softened
2 large slices sourdough bread
4 slices provolone cheese
2 slices ham
2 slices (¼ inch each) ripe tomato
Salt and pepper

1. Wash greens and pat dry. Remove stems, then stack leaves and slice into thin ribbons. Set aside.
2. In a large skillet, heat olive oil on medium. Add garlic and sauté until sizzling. Add greens and stir to wilt. Add water, then cover skillet and cook about 5 minutes, until water evaporates. Remove greens from pan, press out excess liquid and set aside. Wipe pan.
3. Butter one side of each bread slice. Place one slice, buttered side down, in skillet. Top with 2 slices provolone, 2 slices ham, cooked greens and tomato slices. Season with salt and pepper. Top with remaining 2 slices provolone and bread, buttered side up.
4. Lay a piece of foil over the sandwich and place a cast iron or other heavy skillet on top of foil to press sandwich down. Cook on medium heat 5-7 minutes, until bottom is golden brown. Remove and reserve foil and flip sandwich. Place foil, buttery side down, over flipped sandwich. Weigh down and continue cooking 5-7 minutes, until other side is golden brown and cheese is melty. Let sit 2-5 minutes before cutting in half.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

TEXAS' BEST DUE OCTOBER 10

What stands out in your kitchen as classic Texan cuisine? Enter at TexasCoopPower.com/contests by October 10 for a chance to win \$500.

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



Pumpkin, Pepper Jack and Poblano Enchilada Casserole

LINDA STEINHARDT
PEDERNALES EC

Perfect for a large family, this enchilada casserole features a pumpkin-based sauce and plenty of vegetables for a comforting, hearty dish. You can use flour or corn tortillas, and keep in mind you might need extra tortillas to fit across the casserole dish.

CASSEROLE

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 red bell peppers, diced
- 8 ounces sliced mushrooms
- 2 chicken breasts, cooked, cooled and shredded
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 poblano peppers, roasted, peeled and diced
- 6 tortillas, plus more as needed
- 8 ounces shredded pepper jack cheese

SAUCE

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup pumpkin purée
- 1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk
- 2–3 chipotle peppers in adobo, plus a spoonful of the adobo sauce
- 2–3 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon cumin

1. CASSEROLE Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. In a large skillet, heat olive oil on medium-high. Sauté onion, bell peppers

and mushrooms until softened and slightly browned. Add chicken, black beans and poblanos and stir to combine. Remove filling from heat and set aside.

3. SAUCE In a food processor or large blender, purée sauce ingredients until smooth.

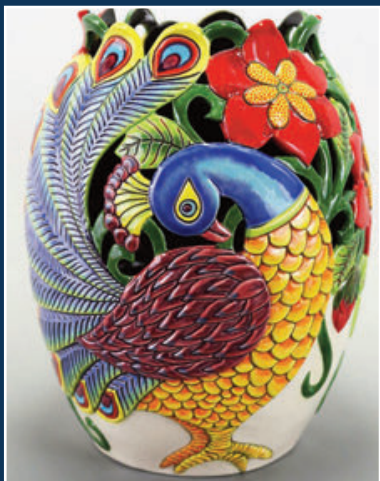
4. In a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, add a thin layer of sauce to coat the bottom. Layer dish with enough tortillas to cover the sauce (breaking if needed), half of the filling, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the sauce and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the cheese, then repeat. Finish with another layer of tortillas, remaining sauce and remaining cheese.

5. Bake 30–35 minutes, broiling for the last 2–3 minutes if you like the cheese a bit browned and crispy.

SERVES 8

TCP WEB EXTRA Cheese has long been a staple in Co-op Country kitchens. Visit the Food page at TexasCoopPower.com and search "cheese" to find hundreds of recipes featuring the yummy stuff.

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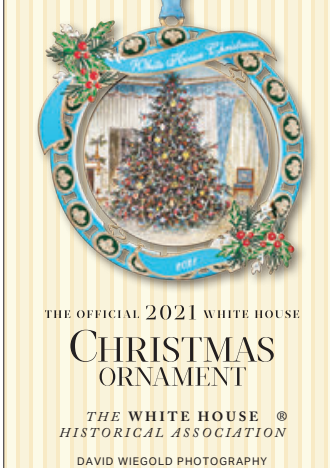
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

The Grove's Groove

Normal is a matter of perspective at a haunted Jefferson home

BY CHET GARNER

THE STORY ABOUT the lady in white was spooky. The tale of a barber who visits regularly was strange. Anecdotes of disembodied noises and unexpected presences left me unsettled. But the scariest part of my visit to the Grove—Jefferson's most haunted home—was my guide: Mitchel Whittington seemed totally normal.

He wasn't wearing a dark robe or making alarming pronouncements. He simply recounted his ghostly encounters as if describing his morning coffee routine. His matter-of-fact presentation left me with the unnerving conclusion that he was telling the truth. I was terrified and intrigued.

Jefferson sits in the northeast corner of Texas and was once a bustling port city from which barges laden with cotton steamed to New Orleans. The downtown retains its historical architecture and charm. Even so, every building seems haunted and underscores Jefferson's reputation as our state's most haunted town.

When I arrived for my tour of the Grove, I expected an ominous Victorian structure covered in spiderwebs. Instead, I found a well-kept, one-story home with Whittington on the front porch to welcome me with a smile. He led me room by room, describing mysterious events he has witnessed.

I asked if it's scary to live in a haunted house. Whittington laughed and said, "No, it isn't. It's a peek into the other side. And when I'm gone, I'm gonna come back and check on it."

I enjoyed the tour but was happy to leave safely on this side of reality. ■

ABOVE Chet found Mitchel Whittington, owner of the Grove, to be totally normal. Chet, not so much.

TCP WEB EXTRA See if Chet's video includes anybody from the other side greeting him. Watch all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

Know Before You Go

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

OCTOBER

07

Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: River of Stars, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

08

New Braunfels [8-9] Willie Nelson & Family With Special Guest Pat Green, (830) 964-3800, whitewaterrocks.com

Fredericksburg [8-10] Texas Mesquite Arts Festival, (830) 997-8515, texasmesquiteartfestivals.com

Ingram [8-9, 15-16, 22-23, 29-30] The Bad Seed, (830) 367-5121, ctxlivetheatre.com

09

Brenham Johnny Cash Tribute by Bennie Wheels, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Fort McKavett Fall Star Party, (325) 396-2358, facebook.com/visitfortmckavett

Ingram Kerr County Celtic Festival, (830) 367-5121, kerrcountyceltic.com

Kyle Founders' Parade, (512) 262-3939, cityofkyle.com

Lago Vista St. Mary, Our Lady of the Lake Oktoberfest, (512) 267-2644, stmaryoktoberfest.org

Stonewall VFD Fall Fish Fry Drive-Thru, (830) 644-5571, visitfredericksburgtx.com

Chappell Hill [9-10] Scarecrow Festival, (979) 836-6033, chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com

14

Edom [9-10] Art Festival,
(903) 258-5192,
visitedom.com

15

**South Padre Island [14-16]
Hispanic Genealogical
Conference,** (956) 497-6680,
rgvhgs.org

**Victoria Project Tickled
Pink,** (361) 649-6190,
crossroadsguardiansofhope.com

**Canton [15-16] Texas Star
Quilters Guild Show,**
(214) 289-3936, texasstarquilters.wixsite.com/tsqq

**La Grange [15-16] Heritage
Fest & Muziky,** (979) 968-9399,
czechtexas.org

16

**Canton Van Zandt County
Veterans Memorial Military
Show,** (972) 896-0776,
vzcm.org

Creedmoor Oktoberfest,
(512) 243-6700,
cityofcreedmoortx.gov

**George West Michael Twitty:
Memories of Conway Show,**
(361) 436-1098,
dobie-westtheatre.com

**Lakehills Medina Lake
Fire Department BBQ,**
(830) 751-2525,
facebook.com/medinalakevfd

**McKinney Halloween at
the Heard,** (972) 562-5566,
heardmuseum.org

**Palestine Dogwood Double
5K/10K,** (903) 723-5100,
visitpalestine.com

**Ponder Denton County
Cowboy Church Family Fall
Festival,** (940) 479-2043,
dentoncountycowboychurch.org

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your December event by October 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

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Fredericksburg

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Pick of the Month

Texas Fleece & Fiber Festival

Kerrville, October 28–31

(361) 537-0503

texasfleeceandfiber.com

A small group of hand spinners and weavers organized this festival in 1989. It continues to promote natural Texas fibers by educating the public and marketing products of the animals the organizers raise. Read *Serendipity Spinners* from May 2021 on our website to learn more about the craft of spinning wool.

OCTOBER EVENTS CONTINUED

16

Waco Oakwood Cemetery's Walking Tales,

(254) 717-1763,

facebook.com/

heartoftexasstorytellingguild

Waxahachie St. Joseph Oktoberfest,

(972) 938-1953,

stjosephwaxahachie.com

17

Palacios First Baptist Church of Palacios Homecoming Sunday,

(361) 972-5486,

fbcpalacios.org

20

Lufkin Steep Canyon

Rangers, (936) 633-5454,

angelinaarts.org

21

Fredericksburg [21–23]

Food & Wine Fest,

(830) 997-8515,

fbgfoodandwinefest.com

Warrenton [21–30] Renck

Hall Antique Show,

(979) 966-7083,

renckhallandfield.com

22

Burton [22–30] La Bahia

Antique Show,

(979) 289-2684,

labahiaantiques.com

23

Brenham Quebe Sisters,

(979) 337-7240,

thebarnhillcenter.com

Hearne Sesquicentennial Celebration,

(979) 595-8150,

cityofhearne.org

Point Venture Holiday

Bazaar, (281) 799-0114,

facebook.com/

pvholidaybazaar

25

Jacksonville Trunk or

Treat, (903) 586-2217,

jacksonvilletexas.com

30

Sanger Sellabration,

(940) 458-7702,

sangertexas.com/

sellabration

Seguin Pecan Fest,

(830) 379-0933,

seguingonuts.com

NOVEMBER

04

Sulphur Springs [4–7]

The Wall That Heals,

(903) 243-2206,

thewallthatheals-sstx.org

06

George West A Day of

Stories, (361) 436-1098,

dobie-westtheatre.com

McKinney St. Gabriel

Holiday Boutique, (972)

542-7170, stgabriel.org

Granbury [6–7] Sesquicen-

tennial Celebration,

(817) 573-5548,

visitgranbury.com

Huntsville [6–7] Holiday

Market, (936) 661-2545,

huntsvilleantiqueshow.com

Fillin' Stations

Some are tourist attractions. Others are a bit more off the beaten path. Fillin' stations can transport us to another time and serve as a place to fill up our vehicles and our bellies. Load up the station wagon and drive down for some full-service fun and adventure.

BY GRACE FULTZ

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT

KIMBERLY FURNISH
KARNES EC

"An old pump in historic downtown Llano."

JANICE REAVES
JACKSON EC

"Thomas Reaves waiting to serve the next customer at an Humble station in Livingston, circa 1930s."

BILLY LAUDERDALE
PEDERNALES EC

Vintage Gulf full-service fillin' station in Waco, at North 15th Street and Washington Avenue.

THERESA LAGUNA
PEDERNALES EC

"Old-time gas station in Schulenburg."



Upcoming Contests

DUE OCT 10 Public Art

DUE NOV 10 The Texas Experience

DUE DEC 10 All Wet

Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Focus on Texas on our website for more Fillin' Stations photos.



Not About To Fixate

We love our old home, even without the wonders a makeover could bring

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS
ILLUSTRATION BY
CHANELLE NIBBELINK

MY HUSBAND can watch fixer-upper programs for hours. Not me. I disappear while show hosts transform one outdated house after another into spectacular showcases. Thank you, but I'll keep our home's mostly original look and layout.

Still, sometimes a fixer-upper segment reels me in. I sneak glances at the TV while hosts work their magic on a house that will soon have a fresh design and sophisticated decor. As the reveal unfolds and the homeowners react with unbridled joy, I can't help but wonder ...

What if?

What if we remodeled our 1950s kitchen? What if we replaced the laminate countertops with glossy granite? Put in snazzy backsplashes and dramatic lighting? Maybe knock out some pine cabinets and add an island? Take down a dining

room wall for a more open feel? Pull up the vinyl tiles and put in plank flooring?

Years ago we splurged on upgrades to our bathrooms. We bought new sinks and light fixtures. A contractor did some tile work, but the same old vinyl floor tiles stayed. So did a white porcelain gas wall heater.

Guests love that heater. Our built-in ironing board, too. "My grandparents had those in their house," they recall fondly.

They also love our oak flooring in the bedrooms and living room. They don't see the water splotches, ugly scratches and other stains. I rarely do either. Likewise, I neglect to see claw marks on a pocket door. A back doorbell that's never worked. A walk-in closet without a door (so I hung a long curtain).

Oh, but if the kitchen's wooden drawers had rollers. Our utensil drawer sticks the worst. And the cabinets could really use fresh paint. As needed, I touch up worn spots. A few nicks reveal mustard yellow and fire engine red, bygone colors chosen by the couple who built the house in 1956.

She taught first grade in our town and hosted Easter egg hunts for her students in the backyard. He was the ag teacher at the high school. Together they raised their three children and later, both in their 70s, drew their last breaths in the house we've now called home for nearly two decades.

What if?

Yes, I wonder. I confess that sometimes fixer-upper shows sway me to think our house isn't good enough. That a remodel and updates would make me happier.

But would they?

Deep down I know the truth. We may not live in a showcase. But, scars and all, this house is where we feel the most content, comfortable and safe. We have everything we need. And, after all, isn't that what makes any house a true home? ■



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