

A GEM OF A THRIFT STORE  
IN COMFORT

RECIPES SHOWCASE  
CAST IRON'S EXCELLENCE

A TINY CALICO  
RUNS THE SHOW

# Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

MARCH 2023

## Herd Mentality

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





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# March 2023



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## Gently Used, Generously Shared

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

*By Kristen Pettineo  
Photos by Scott Van Osdol*

## 10 Until the Cows Swim Home

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

*Story and photos by Erich Schlegel*

### ON THE COVER

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

*Photo by Erich Schlegel*

### ABOVE

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

*Photo by Scott Van Osdol*

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# Antsy Onslaught

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

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

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



## Bragging Rights

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

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

## **TCP** Contests and More

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March 6

## National Dentist's Day

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

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE IF I COULD FLY, I WOULD ...

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

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

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

SHELLI CONWAY  
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC  
ANNA

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

MIKE DENEHY  
PEDERNALES EC  
LAGO VISTA

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

AARON DENMAN  
TRINITY VALLEY EC  
KEMP

George Strait.

JACKSON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
VIA FACEBOOK

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

MATTHEW D. KONOPA  
PEDERNALES EC  
SPRING BRANCH

Visit our website to see more responses.

TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM



# Women's History Month

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

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

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





COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Afterlife Sentence

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

LORENA BOREN  
BAILEY COUNTY EC

## Distant Relative?

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

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

Vincent C. Kemendo  
Pedernales EC  
Canyon Lake

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

NANCY KEIM  
VIA FACEBOOK

## Welcoming an Opossum

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

Brenna Quebbemann  
CECA  
Comanche

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

Rick Martin  
Coleman County EC  
Santa Anna



KIRSTEN ULVE

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

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

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

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POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

# Gently Used, Generously Shared

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

April Langston is also part of that cycle of generosity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OPPOSITE April Langston at Pass It On in Comfort.









# Until the **COWS** Swim Home



STORY AND PHOTOS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

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

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

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

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





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

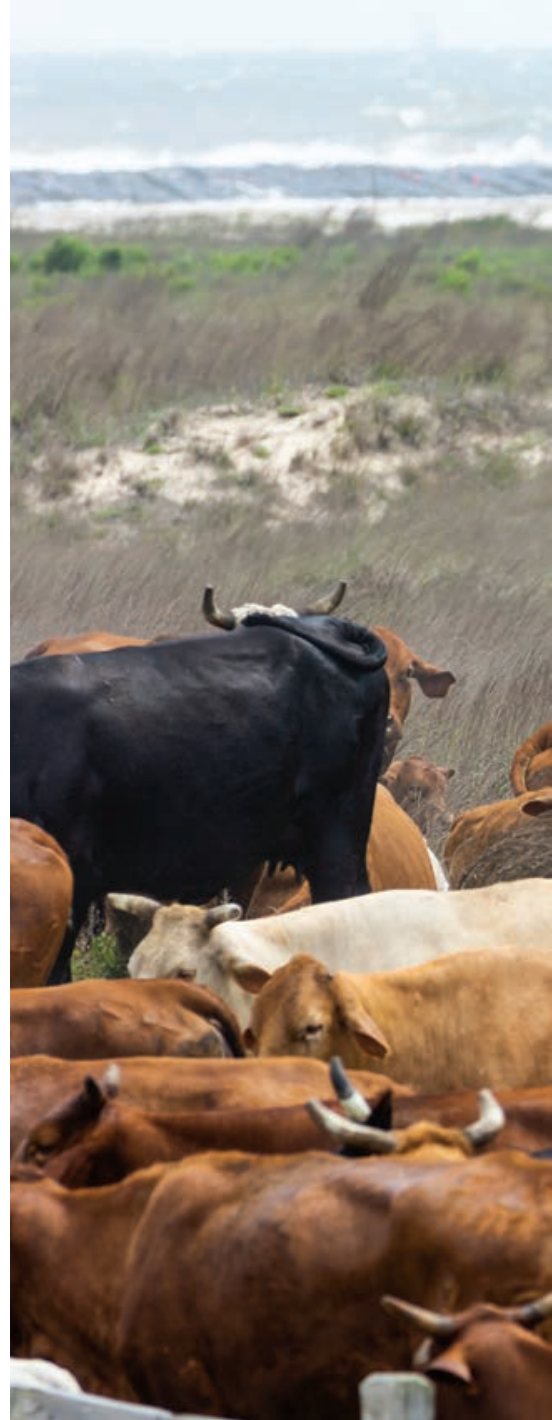
Except this isn't a dusty trail to Abilene, Kansas, but a Gulf beach in Matagorda County. And instead of a marathon drive, it's more of a bovine biathlon.

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

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

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





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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

Thus begins the trek back to the Huebner ranch.

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

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

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

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

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



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



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## Stay Safe During Windy Months

**THE OLD ADAGE**, “In like a lion, out like a lamb,” refers to March starting out stormy and ending calmly—and that includes wind patterns.

“Across most of the country, spring is the windiest time of the year,” according to a South Carolina weather forecaster’s blog. “Wind speeds and wind power tend to be [three to four] times stronger in March and April than in July and August. In the [Dust Bowl] days, most of the dust storms were in late winter and spring. That continues to be the case in the Plains today.”

High winds can blow objects around and present a threat to your safety. Understanding what to do before, during and after high winds can help you weather windstorms more safely. Consider these tips from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

### Before Strong Winds

Trim tree branches away from your house. Call your electric cooperative about tree branches that are too close to power lines.

Secure loose gutters and shutters.

Find an interior room of your house, such as a closet or bathroom, that you can take shelter in.

If you live in a mobile home, seek out a sturdy building where you can go when it’s windy.

Charge batteries of all essential items such as cellphones, booster packs and weather radios.

Secure any items that could blow away to avoid damage or injury once the wind starts picking up.

### During Strong Winds

Immediately go inside a sturdy structure and move to an interior room or basement.

Take shelter in your car if you are not near a sturdy building. If possible, drive to a nearby sturdy structure.

If no shelter is available, avoid trees and power lines.

If you’re driving and aren’t near a sturdy building, hold the steering wheel with both hands and slow down.

Keep a safe distance away from high-profile vehicles such as trucks, buses and vehicles towing trailers. One strong gust of wind can be enough to flip a trailer onto its side.

### After High Winds

Do not go near downed power lines. Report downed power lines to the police and your co-op.

Continue to listen to the local news and NOAA Weather Radio for updates following the storm. ■



# Spring Brings a Chance To Save

**THE SPRING EQUINOX** occurs March 20, harkening warmer weather and longer days—and the temptation to use more electricity. Instead, let the start of the season be an opportunity to save energy and money. **Here are some tips from the U.S. Department of Energy to start your spring off right.**

**Install and set a programmable thermostat.** You can save an estimated 10% per year on heating and cooling costs by using a thermostat that adjusts the temperature automatically for when you're home, away or asleep.

**Use sunlight to your advantage.** Choose window treatments that allow you to use natural light while reducing heat transfer.

**Open windows** to cool your home with a natural cross breeze rather than turning on your air conditioner.

**Turn on your bathroom fans** to expel unwanted heat and moisture and improve comfort.

**Switch to Energy Star-certified appliances** and other electronics, which can save you hundreds of dollars over the lifetime of the products.

**Choose energy-saving lighting.** Replacing five of your home's most frequently used incandescent lightbulbs with LED bulbs could save you \$75 in energy costs.

**Use an electric power strip** to help reduce phantom loads and save up to \$100 a year. Turn off the power strip when electronics are not in use.

**Reduce energy for water heating** by lowering your water heater temperature to 120 degrees, installing low-flow showerheads and using cold water to wash clothes.

**Hire a professional** to maintain your heating and cooling system. Check and replace your air filters regularly and arrange for annual maintenance with a qualified technician.

**Check with an energy auditor** or a member services professional at your electric cooperative to achieve larger savings. They can do an audit of your whole house using special tools to measure your home's energy efficiency and offer suggestions to make beneficial changes. ■



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## Inspect Outdoor Tools Before Starting Yardwork

**CAN'T WAIT TO** get outside to start sprucing up your yard for spring? Take a few minutes before you power up your lawn tools to make sure they're in good shape for the season ahead.

**Here are some tips for spring cleaning your power tools.**

**Dust tools off.** Even if you store your tools in a cabinet over the winter, they can get dusty. And even if you cleaned them before you put them away for the season, you might find some residual grime and dirt on blades and filters. Use a damp cloth to wipe down all moving parts.

**Inspect them for rust.** Older tools are especially prone to rusting. Use steel wool to gently rub rust from metal parts. For tough spots, use a degreaser, and then spray the moving parts with a corrosion inhibitor or lubricant.

**Do a test run.** Before you start trimming hedges or mowing your lawn, turn your tool on to determine that it's operating properly. Odd noises, dull blades, loose bolts and frayed wires are warning signs that it needs repairing or replacing.

**Working with damaged** or malfunctioning tools can cause injuries. Keep yourself and your family safe by inspecting, repairing and replacing tools that could turn a beautiful spring into a disaster. ■





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# Pack Your Emergency Kit

A collage of emergency kit items. In the foreground, a yellow flashlight with a black handle stands vertically. To its right, a clipboard with a black clip holds a white sheet of paper titled 'EMERGENCY' in large, bold, black letters. Below the title, the text 'Section 1: Emergency' is visible, followed by a checklist with two empty checkboxes and the word 'Water' partially visible. In the background, there are several white cylindrical containers, some with silver lids. At the bottom, several black AA batteries are visible, along with a blue first aid 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

**Toilet paper**, cleaning supplies, duct tape, tarp, rope

**Can opener**, knife, tools

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# You Know Newbury

Even if the Texan's name doesn't ring a bell, his soaring folk, rock and country songs should

BY PETER BLACKSTOCK

**NOT MANY PEOPLE** knew Mickey Newbury's name when he made his first and only appearance on Billboard's Hot 100 pop chart in 1972—but they probably knew the songs he stitched together on *An American Trilogy*, one of the most unlikely hit singles ever.

Written 100 years before Newbury combined them, the folk songs *Dixie* and *Battle Hymn of the Republic* presented contrasting views of the American South. The former became an unofficial anthem of the Confederacy; the latter was written during the Civil War by a well-known abolitionist. Newbury added *All My Trials*, a traditional folk song popularized during the mid-20th century folk revival by artists such as Joan Baez.

His dramatic arrangement and recording of the three songs hit No. 26 on the Hot 100 in 1972. It also caught the attention of Elvis Presley, who made *An American Trilogy* a staple of his live repertoire. All of this might have made Newbury a one-hit-wonder footnote, but in fact his music offered a much deeper well for those willing to dive in.

Newbury had been on the charts before but as a writer—and with a similarly unlikely single. Fellow native Houstonian Kenny Rogers' first hit came from Newbury's pen. Rogers' 1960s band the First Edition had a top-five smash with *Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)*, a psychedelic rock song steeped in the counterculture of the era.

Rogers wasn't actually the first artist to record *Just Dropped In*. That was Jerry Lee Lewis, who subsequently took Newbury's *She Even Woke Me Up To Say Goodbye* to No. 2 on the country charts in 1969. By that time, Newbury's career as a writer had taken off, with artists ranging from Don Gibson to Solomon Burke to Eddy Arnold scoring hits with his tunes.

Suddenly, major record labels had reason to bet on Newbury's solo career. He responded with a magnificent string of solo albums from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s that rival the works of such masters as Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell.

His albums weren't big sellers, but fellow Texas songwriters took note. My first exposure to Newbury came many years later, when as a music writer I informed Townes Van Zandt in a 1992 phone interview that Newbury had been booked to open a show for Van Zandt and Guy Clark in Seattle. Van Zandt was thrilled at the news, then explained that Newbury

had been a mentor to both when they were getting their starts in Houston's folk clubs.

Newbury's influence on other writers ran deep enough that he gets name-checked in one of the most famous country songs of all time. Songwriters Chips Moman and Bobby Emmons wrote *Luckenbach, Texas (Back to the Basics of Love)*, which topped the country charts in 1977 when Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson recorded it. In the chorus, they sang about "Hank Williams' pain songs and Newbury's train songs."

Newbury had a few train songs—*Frisco Depot* and *The Future's Not What It Used To Be* from 1971's *Frisco Mabel Joy* come to mind. But he had plenty of pain songs, too. The title track to 1973's *Heaven Help the Child* is almost epic in its grandeur of heartbreak, with Newbury's booming tenor soaring above a majestic orchestral arrangement.

Along with trains and pain, rain figured prominently in Newbury's music. It was more than just a lyrical metaphor: Newbury sometimes used rain sounds as bridges between tracks on his albums.

Newbury, who'd moved from Houston to Nashville when his career caught fire, eventually settled in the Pacific Northwest. He didn't record much in the 1980s and 1990s, but a late-career resurgence resulted in one of his finest albums, 2002's *A Long Road Home*, just a few months before his death. Lung-related ailments had left him mostly unable to sing in his final years; I caught his final public performance in November 1999 at a bar on the Florida-Alabama border, bravely delivered while he was hooked up to an oxygen tank.

That performance helped motivate me to assemble *Frisco Mabel Joy Revisited: For Mickey Newbury*, a 2000 tribute album featuring Kris Kristofferson, Dave Alvin, Bill Frisell, Chuck Prophet and others.

In his liner notes for *Frisco Mabel Joy Revisited*, the late, great Texas art critic Dave Hickey wrote about the Newbury album that inspired the tribute. He described Newbury's compositions as "tiny, perfect songs, perfectly played, perfectly sung and perfectly recorded in perfect time, with perfect intonation." ■

OPPOSITE Mickey Newbury, a songwriter's songwriter, influenced many fellow Texas artists.











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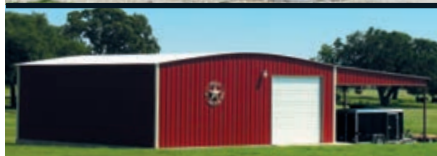
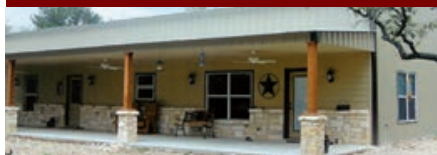
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**TCP** Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



hill that overlooked the vast and sunny Rio Grande delta to the south.

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

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

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

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

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

# Of Birds, Butterflies and Brides

Quinta Mazatlan and its massive adobe mansion remain a McAllen jewel

BY W.F. STRONG

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Cast Iron

Trusted cookware provides timeless value, indoors and out

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

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

## Lemon Skillet Pie

### PIE

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

### TOPPING

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

### GARNISH

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

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

**SERVES 8-10**

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





## Creamy Salsa Verde Pasta

JAZMIN ROMO  
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

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

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

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

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

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

CONTINUED >



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## Henry's Heavenly Chili

HELEN SANDERS  
UNITED COOPERATIVE  
SERVICES



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

SERVES 4-6

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

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

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

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

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## RECIPES CONTINUED

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

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

**SERVES 2-3**

## Dutch Apple Pancakes

GWEN JONES  
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

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

**4 eggs**

**½ cup flour**

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



**½ teaspoon baking powder**

**Pinch salt**

**1 cup milk**

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

**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

**1 teaspoon ground nutmeg, divided use**

**4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter**

**½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**SERVES 4**



## Cast-Iron Skillet

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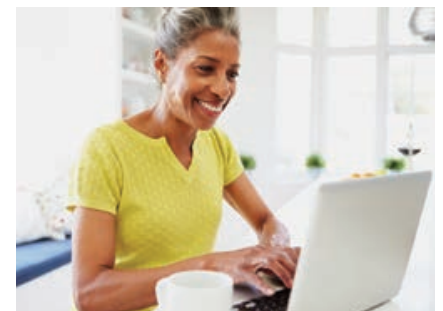
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## 'Lonesome' in a Library

Texas State University houses memorabilia from the TV miniseries

BY CHET GARNER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Know Before You Go

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

## MARCH

08

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

09

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

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

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

10

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

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

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

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

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

11

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

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

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



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

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

13

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

16

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

17

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

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

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

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

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

18

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

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

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

MORE EVENTS >

## **Submit Your Event**

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



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*here.*

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## Pick of the Month

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

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

## MARCH EVENTS CONTINUED

18

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

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

19

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

24

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

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

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

25

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

28

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

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

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

31

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

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

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

APRIL

01

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Land, Sea or Sky

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CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

**1 MARK HOLLY**  
BANDERA EC

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

**2 CASEY BRUNO**  
PEDERNALES EC

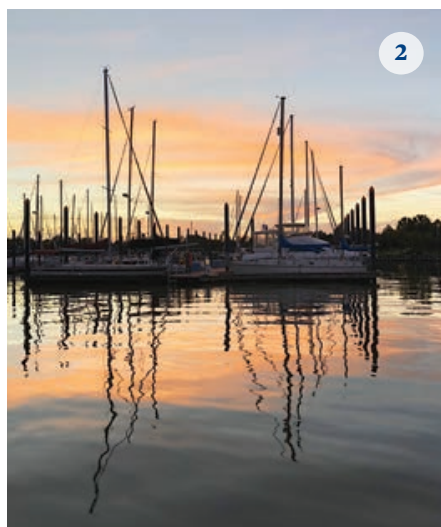
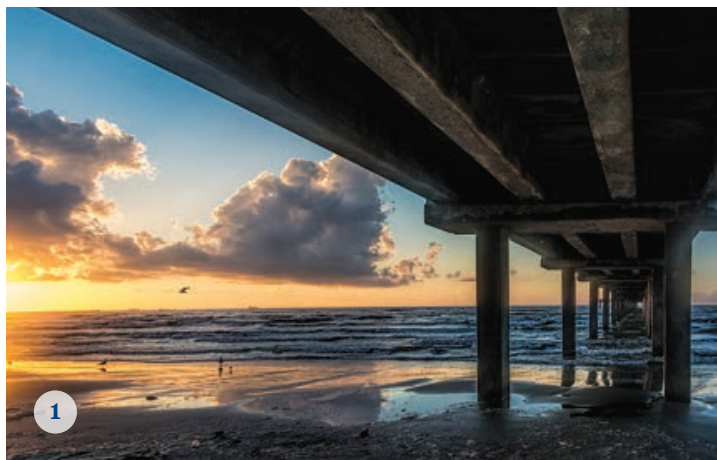
Sunset over Waterford Harbor Marina in Kemah.

**3 PAIGE KILLIAN**  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

"Please don't touch me!"

**4 LARRY SELMAN**  
TRI-COUNTY EC

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



## Upcoming Contests

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



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

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





## A Pet Project

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

BY JESSICA RIDGE  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
STEPHANIE SINGLETON

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

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

Isobel is 12 now, and she is dying.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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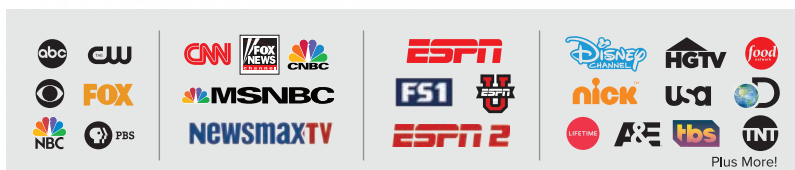
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