

UNEARTHING ARTIFACTS  
IN WEST TEXAS

JUNETEENTH'S LONG PATH  
ACROSS AMERICA

STAUNCH COMPETITOR  
FINALLY WEARS OUT

# Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

JUNE 2023

## Comfort Food

New food editor  
Vianney Rodriguez  
opens her kitchen  
to TCP readers





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# June 2023



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## Scratching the Surface

West Texas ranchers team up with researchers to unearth pieces of history.

*By Eileen Mattei  
Photos by Dave Shafer*

## 12 'On Juneteenth'

A Pulitzer Prize-winning historian describes the holiday's long path out of her home state.

*Excerpt by Annette Gordon-Reed  
Illustration by John Jay Cabuay*

### ON THE COVER

New food editor Vianney Rodriguez in her studio kitchen, Cocina Gris.  
*Photo by Jason David Page*

### ABOVE

Joey and Laurie Roland show teeth from an extinct three-toed horse at their ranch.  
*Photo by Dave Shafer*

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*By Pam LeBlanc*



# Making Magic With Vianney

**MEET VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ**, the Corpus Christi foodie who will be inviting readers into her kitchen every month as *TCP*'s new food editor. You first met Vianney in December 2020, when she wrote in delicious detail about *pan dulce*.

She fell in love with cooking as a child in Aransas Pass. "Growing up watching my *abuelita* and mami cook together in perfect sync ... They were creating magic. I wanted to be a part of this world and have been cooking ever since."

Vianney—"simply say the letters V-N-A"—started her blog, Sweet Life, in 2009, joining the online conversations that she saw as "mini love letters to food." Her passion kept growing. "I have authored two cookbooks—*Latin Twist*, a cocktail book featuring cocktails from Latin countries, and *The Tex-Mex Slow Cooker*."

Today she works out of her studio kitchen, Cocina Gris—gray kitchen—where she can't wait to dive into more reader recipes from Co-op Country.



“Don’t be told something is impossible. There’s always a way.”

—ROBERT RODRIGUEZ

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE THANKS, DAD, FOR ...

**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.

Here are some of the responses to our April prompt: **I drove all night to ...**

Find myself *still* in the great state of Texas!

ROXANNE NEWMAN  
VIA FACEBOOK

Be by my mother’s bedside in her final hours.

ELLEN ROZNECK COULTER  
VIA FACEBOOK

Be at the gate when he got a weekend leave.

MARTHA BEIMER  
VIA FACEBOOK

Get back to Texas, and I kissed the ground when I did.

RICHELLE NASH  
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC  
SHERMAN

Get to Concan after heavy spring rains so I could float the Frio.

LISA HOLLOWAY FITZSIMMONS  
VIA FACEBOOK

Visit our website to see more responses.



## QWERTY, USA

When typing while using proper form on a QWERTY keyboard, only two U.S. states' names can be typed using just one hand (overlooking the need for the shift key for capitalization). Texas is one of them. Ohio is the other.



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Holiday Desserts

#### **FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS**

Helping Out

#### **RECOMMENDED READING**

National Egg Day, June 3, reminds us of all the great reader recipes on our website that use eggs—especially those found in *Eggs: Plain and Fancy* from March 2016.



## Welcome Signs

With the arrival of 470,708 people in 2022, Texas became just the second state to surpass 30 million residents—now with 30,029,572. The other one? Well, that would be California, with 39,029,342.

## Super Cool or Old School?

**THE FIRST LP** came out 75 years ago this month, when Columbia released the New York Philharmonic's rendition of Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in E minor as a long-playing record June 21, 1948.

Since then, we've hoarded records, then eight-track and cassette tapes, and compact discs. Those made way for digital files and streaming as our favorite music ended up both in a closet and in the cloud.

But take heart, record geeks: Vinyl albums outsold CDs in 2022 for the second year in a row.



### Grounded in Mystery

“An East Texas minister built an airship that supposedly flew in 1902. It was destroyed before it could fly publicly at the 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis.”

VAL L. ERWIN  
COSERV  
LANTANA

### 442nd’s Heroism

My father took part in the rescue as a member of an antitank company [*Rescue of the Lost Battalion*, February 2023].

The 442nd suffered 800 casualties rescuing 211 Texans. After the battle, Gen. John E. Dahlquist ordered everyone in formation to congratulate them. He scolded the regimental commander that he wanted *everyone* there. The commander stood at attention and replied, “That’s all that’s left.”

Sidney Miyakawa  
CoServ  
Lewisville

Bless your heart  
[*A Pet Project*, March 2023]. It’s the hardest thing fur parents have to do, but it’s our last, best gift to them. You’ll know when it’s time.

MARY HENDERSON  
HARP  
VIA FACEBOOK

### Sacred Memory

As a boy growing up in north Louisiana, we would go exploring on a small creek near my house [*Caught Cuisine*, February 2023]. Along one stretch of the creek was a very low area that always contained numerous pitcher plants. The local name for the plants was preacher in a pulpit.

John Tubb  
Medina EC  
Houston

### Wreaths Matter

Thanks to TCP’s December 2022 mention [*Wreaths for the Fallen*] of the November 2018 *Circle of Life* article about the impact of Wreaths Across America in Texas. That story helped grow 86 WAA Texas locations to 313 in 2022, with over 250,000 wreaths placed on veterans’ graves. Nationwide, over 2.7 million wreaths were placed at 3,702 locations.

Ellen Fuller  
Bryan Texas Utilities  
Bryan

My dad, Jack Andrews, was a proud member and captain in the 442nd in World War II. The 442nd ended up being the most highly decorated unit for its size and length of service in U.S. military history. The 442nd was also credited as being one of the first to find Dachau and release prisoners.

Bill Andrews  
Big Country EC and Pedernales EC  
Shackelford County and Buda



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

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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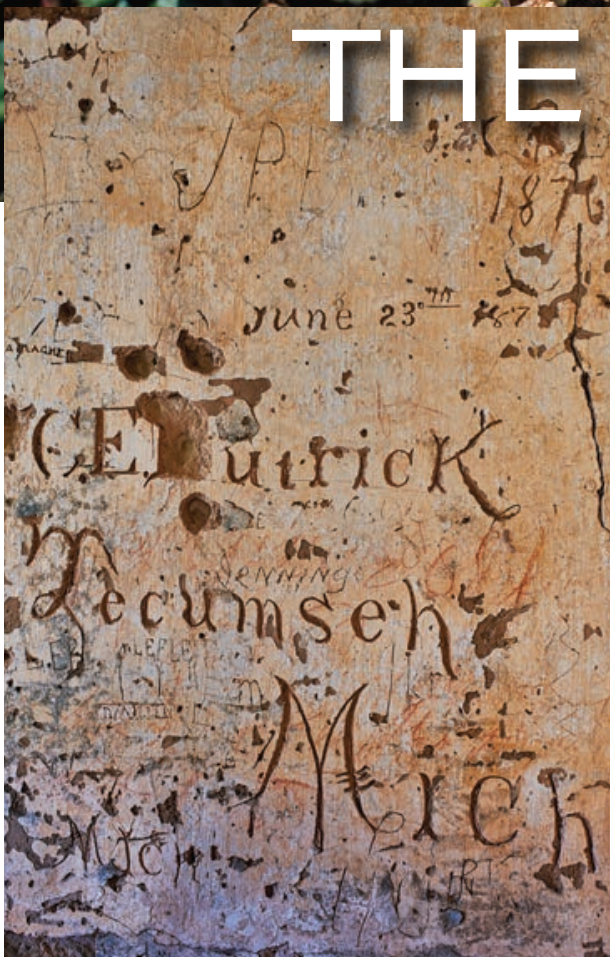
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# SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

**WEST TEXAS RANCHERS** team up with researchers to unearth artifacts



LEFT Graffiti on the plastered walls of Fountain House at Fort Chadbourne dates to 1870.  
TOP Artifacts, such as this nail, sometimes emerge after rains. ABOVE Rosettes that went on horses' bridles denoting cavalry Company F.





LEFT Garland and Lana Richards outside the restored east barracks at Fort Chadbourne. ABOVE Looking through the walls of the ruins of the west barracks, across the parade grounds and to Fountain House.

**I**n its heyday, more than 150 years ago, Fort Chadbourne housed 450 soldiers. Today, it sits by its lonesome on a desolate rise in West Texas. Six restored limestone buildings and others, crumbling but stabilized, surround the parade grounds.

The inhabitants are long gone, but traces of them remain.

Garland Richards' family has lived on ranchland here, north of Bronte, in rural Coke County, for eight generations. The site includes a former stagecoach stop on the Butterfield Overland Mail Co. route and the remains of the frontier fort, used by the U.S. Army 1852–67.

Richards, a member of Taylor Electric Cooperative, knew history was being lost to time and the elements.

"When I was a kid, there was a waist-high adobe wall here," he says. "In my lifetime, it has melted to ground level."

The Richardses and another West Texas ranching family, knowing their properties hold remarkable history, are trying to stop the destructive march of time, welcoming excavations by archaeologists and paleontologists and

preserving important stories.

In 1999, soon after he inherited the property, Garland and his wife, Lana, set up the nonprofit Fort Chadbourne Foundation and gave the fort to the foundation to preserve and protect it. They marked a grid over an aerial photo and began keeping meticulous records.

"Everything we have found has been recorded on the grid," Richards says. "You do the best you can with the money you have and common sense."

Their first goal was to stabilize the weathered fort buildings, making them safe to work in and around. Lana took grant writing classes and got the needed funding.

"We joined the Concho Valley Archeological Society and let them come," Lana says. "It was one way of learning about what we had." CVAS members under the direction of Larry Riemenschneider, a Concho Valley Electric Cooperative member and volunteer steward with the Texas Historical Commission, began unearthing the fort's past.

The volunteers cost the Richardses a lot of bologna sandwiches, Lana says, but the workers are proud of their part in excavating a frontier fort. I know that's true, because 15 years ago, my husband and I participated in a Fort Chadbourne dig, working alongside a group of military retirees. The painstaking work of troweling and then sifting through the soil removed from meter-square sections was balanced with the joys of minor discoveries and the unsettling real-



ization that humans leave behind a lot of debris.

“We found almost half a million artifacts below the floor of the double officers’ quarters—the dogtrot house where rancher Tom Odom and his wife raised 13 children,” Garland says. In 1877, the Odoms purchased the land from well-known pioneer Mary Maverick and turned the fort into a ranch headquarters.

“The archaeological picture of Fort Chadbourne is probably more complete than any other Texas military site,” Garland says, based on the number of artifacts recovered.

The 12,500-square-foot Fort Chadbourne Visitor Center opened in 2012 to give people a firsthand look at some of the military, ranching and Native American history of West Texas. Half of the center’s exhibits sit inside a spacious walk-in vault with displays of cavalry items uncovered during digs: buckles, spurs, buttons, helmet badges and metal powder flasks along with flattened bullets used as poker chips. A Native American exhibit contains 48 large knife and spear points found near the fort in a foot-square cache that dates back 6,000 years. There’s also a 450-piece antique gun collection and a replica stagecoach.

A walk around the fort and into the buildings puts the center’s displays into perspective. Even in daylight, the quiet creates a haunting atmosphere. Inside the restored Fountain House, bullet holes in its thick, plastered walls shared space with graffiti from 1870 on. After circling the unrestored hospital and the restored barracks, I spotted a rusty, 4-inch sliver of metal on the ground. Garland explained it was a square-headed nail common until 1880 or so. “You’re in the Butterfield stage corral area,” he says. “It’s littered with artifacts.”

Each excavation answers some questions but raises others. Ground-penetrating radar has revealed a building that isn’t mapped.

If you discover archaeological treasures on your land, contact your local archaeological society, Lana recommends. “We did this correctly, thanks to Larry’s help,” she says.

## Millions of Years Away

**WHILE** exploring family property near Snyder, about 80 miles northwest of Bronte, Tina Roland came across large bones eroding out of a gully. Determined to find somebody who could identify the bones, Roland contacted Eileen Johnson, professor of museum science and a paleobiologist at Texas Tech University.

When Johnson went to Snyder in 2005 to see the discovery, she found herself looking at bones dating from 1.8 to 2.6 million years ago, a time known as the Early Pleistocene. The gully marked an ancient stream bed.

“We knew this was important and exciting. We’re still working 17 years later,” Johnson says. “There are a handful



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Laurie and Joey Roland inside the 15-foot-deep paleontological dig site at Roland Springs Ranch. Graduate student assistant Madison Westfall tends to specimens from the ranch that are filed at the Museum of Texas Tech University. An ancient tortoiseshell recovered from the ranch.







of Early Pleistocene sites in the country of this age, but none has this diversity of species or is so well preserved.”

Numerous wading birds, camels, rabbits, giant tortoises and ancestors of coyotes, mountain lions and prairie dogs lived here once. Fossils have revealed the first appearance of some animals and the last appearance of others. Microbiological material excavated with the bones gives clues about the ancient plant community and climate.

The paleontological site is 15 feet deep and measures approximately 30 feet by 30 feet. For six weeks each summer, a small international crew trowels up dirt and washes the sediment through a fine mesh screen. Joey Roland, Tina’s son, and Joey’s wife, Laurie, host the field camp, providing small cabins next to their house and pool. “They are both very much involved,” Johnson says.

“I’m not a paleontologist, but they’ve taught us so much, mostly during talks around the pool after work,” says Joey,

a member of Big Country Electric Cooperative. “A random bone is exciting, but it doesn’t tell a story. It’s out of context. For us, this is fascinating. I love it, and I’ve fought tooth and nail to protect it.”

With doggedness, he managed to get an oil pipeline diverted around the site. Unlike archaeological sites, no federal or state laws protect paleontological sites.

Laurie loves the picture that the finds suggest: huge Galapagos-like tortoises roaming the West Texas grasslands about 2 million years ago with tiny, three-toed horses grazing nearby. She is thrilled to sometimes find prehistoric bones on the surface after a rain. “Humans have never seen or touched them,” she says. “How could you not know that’s special?”

The Rolands share their findings with their community, allowing the Scurry County Museum in Snyder to offer seasonal public tours at the site. The museum has a temporary exhibit of casts made of the finds. The Museum of Texas Tech’s Roland Springs Ranch materials are part of ongoing lab research and not currently viewable by the public.

“Joey and Laurie are the first and only landowners I know with the willingness to let people on their land,” Johnson says.

“It’s selfish not to let them come to the site,” Laurie says. “Texas is about hospitality.”

Texas has millions of years of buried history—giant mammoths, dinosaurs, oyster reefs, frontier trails. Does that make you wonder what could be in your backyard? ■





# ‘On Juneteenth’

A Pulitzer Prize-winning historian describes the holiday’s long path out of Texas

**TO MY SURPRISE** some years back, I began to hear people outside of my home state, Texas, talk about, and *actually celebrate* the holiday “Juneteenth.” June 19, 1865, shortened to “Juneteenth,” was the day that enslaved African Americans in Texas were told that slavery had ended, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed, and just over two months after Confederate General Robert E. Lee had surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. Despite the formal surrender, the Confederate army had continued to fight on in Texas until mid-May. It was only after they finally surrendered that Major General Gordon Granger, while at his headquarters in Galveston, prepared General Order Number 3, announcing the end of legalized slavery in the state.

The truth is, I confess here, that I was initially annoyed, at least mildly so, when I first heard that others outside of Texas claimed the holiday. But why? After all, it was a positive turn in history, evidence that our country was leaving behind, or attempting to, a barbarous institution that had blighted the lives of millions. Such a thing should be celebrated far and wide.

My twinge of possessiveness grew out of the habit of seeing my home state, and the people who reside there, as special. The things that happened there couldn’t have happened in other places. Non-Texans could never really understand what the events that took place in Texas actually meant. I am certain that I’m not alone in this attitude.

From my earliest days, it was drummed into me and, I believe, other young people growing up in Texas at that time, that we inhabited a unique place that we were always supposed to claim, and of which we were always supposed to be proud. I’ve noticed over the years, that it is hard to meet a person from Texas who does not, at some point in the conversation, let you know, either with a drawl or without, that he or she is from the state.

My proprietary attitude about Juneteenth quickly disappeared. Rather than keeping the holiday to ourselves, Texans have been in the forefront of trying to make Juneteenth a national holiday. As I think of it, it’s really a very Texas move to say that something that happened in our

state was of enough consequence to the entire nation that it should be celebrated nationwide.

It has been offered, as part of the justification, that the end of slavery in Texas was the end of the institution period. That’s not quite true. Granger’s order did not end slavery in the country. That did not happen officially until December 1865, when the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified by the necessary number of states. But it is significant that Texas was the site of the tail end of the Confederate war effort. As the war had been fought to preserve slavery, celebrating Juneteenth throughout the land is a fitting way to mark the end of that effort.

It also is fitting to think of Texas in relation to the nation for another reason. The state has been described as a bellwether for what the United States will become; the term “Texification” has come into use to describe a process that is, supposedly, of recent origin.

The history of Juneteenth, which includes the many years before the events in Galveston and afterward, shows that Texas, more than any state in the Union, has always embodied nearly every major aspect of the story of the United States of America. That fact has been obscured by broad caricatures of the state and its people, caricatures that Texans themselves helped to create and helped make the state seem exotic, almost foreign to the rest of the Union.

My Texas roots go deep—on my mother’s side back to the 1820s, on my father’s side at least to the 1860s. Significantly, my wide-ranging approach to Juneteenth reveals that behind all the broad stereotypes about Texas is a story of Indians, settler colonialists, Hispanic culture in North America, slavery, race, and immigration. It is the American story, told from this most American place. ■

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## JUNETEENTH

COMMEMORATED ANNUALLY ON JUNE 19TH, 1865, THE  
OLDEST CELEBRATION OF THE END OF SLAVERY IN THE U.S.  
THE PROCLAMATION OF THE PRESIDENT  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN SEP. 22, 1862, THAT "ON  
THE 1ST JANUARY, A.D. 1863, ALL PERSONS WHO  
WITHIN THE REBELLION, SHALL BE  
AND FOR THE FUTURE, HOWEVER, IT WOULD  
AND PASS THE 13TH AMENDMENT TO  
TO END THE INSTITUTION OF AFRICAN

APRIL 1865 MOST SLAVES IN TEXAS  
FREEDOM. THIS BEGAN TO CHANGE  
IN GALVESTON MAJ. GEN.  
OFFICER, DISTRICT OF TEXAS,  
POSTERMAN BUILDING (STRAND  
NO. 3) ON JUNE 19, 1865.  
TEXAS ARE INFORMED THAT, IN  
FROM THE EXECUTIVE OF  
FREE. THIS INVOLVES  
RIGHTS AND RIGHTS OF  
AND SLAVES." WITH THIS  
GAN!

"EMANCIPATION DAY," A  
1866 IN GALVESTON,  
TEXAS, CELEBRATED  
READINGS  
CENTURY COM  
VATE COMMEM  
NCE HUNDRE  
INITIALLY

STATE HOLIDAY  
DARK EVEN  
COMMEMOR  
THE HUMAN

John Jay



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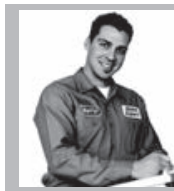


Based on an 1818 painting that depicts John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin presenting a draft of the Declaration of Independence

## A D V E R T I S E M E N T

# Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

**DEAR DARRYL:** My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



Dear  
Darryl

My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

*Clogged and Smelly – Lubbock, TX*

**DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY:** As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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*"The renown of Italy's jewelry, with its sensual beauty and extraordinary craftsmanship, is founded on the goldsmithing skills passed down through generations." – The New York Times*

A.



B.



I guess I was a little bored. For the past hour, I'd been on the phone with Daniele, the head of my office in Italy, reviewing our latest purchases of Italian gold, Murano glass and Italian-made shoes and handbags.

"Daniele," I said, "What is the hottest jewelry in Italy right now?"

His reply? Woven gold bracelets studded with gems. He texted me some photos and I knew immediately that this was jewelry that Raffinato just had to have.

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## Less Expensive Home Cooling Options

**IF YOU LIVE IN** a home with no air conditioning and are dreading the high temperatures that summer is sure to bring, it may be time to invest in a little comfort.

There are a few low- and no-cost cooling strategies, like using ceiling fans to keep air moving, turning off unused electrical devices and appliances, and blocking direct sunlight with window coverings.

If that's not enough, you can install air conditioning. **Here are three common options for home cooling.**

### Window and Portable Units

Window or portable air conditioning units are the lowest-cost approaches. Portable units can be moved from room to room and come equipped with a length of duct to exhaust hot air out a nearby window. Window units are mounted in a window opening and cool one room. The efficiency of portable and window units has improved over the years, but none of them are as efficient as most central AC units or a mini-split heat pump system.

You might also consider an evaporative cooler (sometimes referred to as a swamp cooler). Evaporative cooling units can be less expensive than traditional AC, but don't buy one until you do the research to determine how well evaporative cooling works in your area. Whatever you choose, make sure it's rated for the size of the space you're cooling.

### Central Cooling

If central AC wasn't installed in your home when it was built, adding it can be expensive and challenging. Fortunately, there are solutions to installing central air in a house without ducts: ductless mini-split systems and high-velocity systems.

A high-velocity air conditioning system can be an ideal air conditioning solution to retrofit your home. These systems deliver cool air through 2-inch flexible ducts designed to fit your existing framework. The compact air handler can be easily installed in attics, crawl spaces or even closets.

### Mini-Split Heat Pumps

A ductless mini-split heat pump has a compressor outside the home that's connected to air handler units in as many as four rooms inside. Each room's temperature can be controlled separately.

Ductless mini-splits are an especially good choice for homes without forced air ducting systems or with leaky or undersized ductwork, and they're much smaller, cheaper and easier to install than central AC systems. Heat pumps can also be a supplemental source of heat in the winter. ■



# Work Safely on the Job and at Home

**ELECTROCUTION IS THE** fourth-leading cause of work-related deaths among construction workers, according to the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, with an average of one worker electrocuted every day across the country.

Proper training and knowledge of electricity on the work site can help keep construction workers out of harm's way—and the same principles extend beyond the workplace into everyday life. **Here are 10 tips from OSHA to keep safe on the job and at home.**

1. Plugged-in electric tools with exposed metal parts must have a three-prong grounding plug—and be grounded—or be double-insulated.
2. Equipment grounding only works when there is a permanent and continuous electrical connection between the metal shell of a tool and the earth.
3. Proper polarity in electrical wiring is important: hot to hot, neutral to neutral, equipment ground to equipment ground.
4. Circuits must be equipped with fuses or circuit breakers to protect against dangerous overloads. Fuses melt and circuit breakers trip to turn off current like a switch.
5. Most 120-volt circuits are wired to deliver up to 15 or 20 amps of current. Currents of 50–100 milliamperes can kill you.
6. Wet conditions lower skin resistance, allowing more current to flow through your body. Currents above 75 milliamps can cause a life-threatening irregular heart rhythm.
7. A ground-fault circuit interrupter protects from a ground fault, the most common electrical hazard. GFCIs detect differences in current flow and trip when there is current leakage. Test a GFCI every time you use it.
8. Extension cords must be properly rated for their intended use.
9. Overhead power lines can kill. The three major methods of protection are maintaining a safe distance, de-energizing and grounding lines, and having the power company install insulating sleeves.
10. Underground power lines can kill. Call 811 before you dig to locate all underground cables. ■



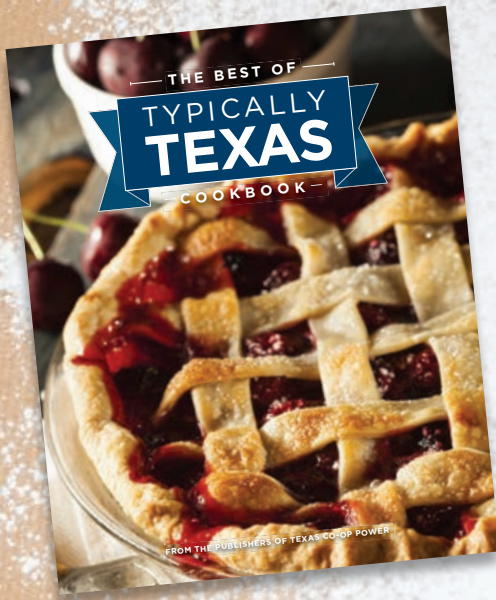
## 5 Ways To Be A Good Steward

**WANT TO BE PART** of the solution rather than the problem when it comes to being a good steward of Earth? **Consider these suggestions:**

1. **Throw less away.** Reuse it in your own household, recycle it through your community waste pickup or dump, or donate it if it still has life left. Another approach is to collect fewer disposable items in the first place.
2. **Use less water.** That saves not just water but also energy if the water you conserve would have been heated. Shorter showers, using cold water for washing clothes, and running the dishwasher only when it's full are a few ideas.
3. **If you still have incandescent lightbulbs** lingering around your home, switch them out for LED bulbs or fixtures. These lightbulbs' technology makes them far more efficient than the old ones, and they last much longer.
4. **Buy energy-efficient electronics and appliances** when it's time to replace your old ones. Look for the Energy Star label to ensure you're getting a product that meets efficiency standards.
5. **Turn off and unplug electric devices** when you're finished using them for the day. ■



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# Cool Pool Safety Tips

**Remember these rules for safe pool-time fun this summer.**

**Keep electric radios, TVs, grills, lights and other electrical appliances** at least 10 feet from pools and wet surfaces. Use battery-powered appliances whenever possible.

**Electric appliances** should not be used outdoors unless they have a heavy-duty cord and three-pronged plug.

**All outdoor** electrical outlets should be weatherproof and equipped with a ground-fault circuit interrupter.

**Swimming pools** should be well away from overhead wires to avoid contact when using long-handled equipment.

**If you think** you are being shocked while in the water, move away from the source of the shock. Get out of the water, if possible, without using a metal ladder.

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

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# Full STEAM Ahead

In a San Angelo library basement, crafting equipment is available to the masses

BY ADDIE BROYLES

**MAGICAL THINGS HAPPEN** in the places where people make things.

In the basement of the main branch of the Stephens Central Library in downtown San Angelo, a group of librarians has created just this kind of a place. STEAM Central, open since 2016, is a studio where patrons can build, make, shape and sew with high-end equipment and tools—for free. It has become a gathering space for quilters, crafters and anyone who has ever wanted to try implements such as a soldering iron, 3D printer or laser cutter—or browse the largest collection of puzzles and games in the Concho Valley.

And STEAM Central—science, technology, engineering, art and math—is open to everyone in Texas.

The Tom Green County library system offers a card to anyone with a Texas ID, so when I heard about the long-arm quilting machines they had, I planned my first quilting vacation.

Casey Dees, who oversees the makerspace, says that people come from all over the state to learn how to use these \$25,000 machines, which are often booked for weeks at a time. Guests have to take an online class beforehand and reserve a four-hour session.

When the studio first opened, it was mostly experienced quilters who came in to use the machines, but in the past few years, Dees has seen an influx of newcomers.

“We’ve had so many people coming in with different skill levels, people who have been sewing, making quilts at home for 30 or 40 years,” he says. “We’ve got some people who are brand new who have never touched a sewing machine in their life. If they can afford the materials, fabric and thread, then they can get started.”

Experienced quilters can finish four or five quilts in a session, but newbies are advised to bring in expendable fabrics because there’s a learning curve.

In other words, plan for mistakes.

I’ve been quilting for more than a decade, but I’d never used a long-arm machine, many of which have robotic functions that my needle-wielding ancestors could have never dreamed of. With equal parts fascination and intimidation, I picked out my fabrics, packed up my sewing kit and headed to this historic county seat.

Once I got settled in, Dees started our lesson. Quilters receive a one-on-one tutorial, which means

they can learn at their own pace.

As I pinned the maroon backing and dark paisley top layer to a pair of zippers that would hold the fabric in the machine, Dees told me about some of the memorable patrons they’ve had, like a father and his son, who wanted to learn how to sew. Together they learned how to use not only the sewing machine but the fabric-cutting and embroidery tools as well.

Dees showed me how to zip the fabric sandwich onto the machine and thread the delicate needle. Once I did it a few times myself, he showed me how to move the needle around and use the computer interface. Then it was time for me to try.

I grasped the handles and felt a little jolt. Not because of the machine but because of those sewing ancestors, who suddenly appeared in my mind, eager to be part of this 21st century experience. “This is the stuff of a quilter’s dream,” I think. Her dream. My dream. Our dream.

I pushed a button on the handle, and within minutes, the needle was buzzing all over, doodling patterns and words that my little machine at home could never produce. I quilted all afternoon. By the time my session was over, I signed my name in stitches and swelled with pride.

As I packed up, I chatted with a white-haired woman who was set up at one of the tabletop sewing machines. She was making soup bowl holders, expertly hitting each corner stitch before moving onto the next.

“My mother, she used to measure our dresses with string,” she says of growing up in nearby Brady. “She made all of our dresses. All of them.”

I wasn’t surprised to learn on my way out that the long-arm machines are the most popular reservations at STEAM Central. “It’s been the most amazing thing to see people not just say, ‘This is making my quilting life, my sewing life, my crafting life so much faster and more convenient,’” Dees says, “but to watch people get into a craft for the first time. For the younger kids, especially, I can show them, ‘This is what’s possible. Everything that is available, you can do down here.’” ■

The author tries her hand at STEAM Central’s quilting machine.









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



# Special Delivery

How a crudely scrawled message 300 years ago saved its sender's life

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN WILSON

**THE LUCKIEST LETTER** in Texas took six months to reach its destination. But the fact that it arrived at all was a miracle within a miracle, and it saved the sender's life. This was more than 300 years ago, when Texas was under Spanish rule. It was a Hail Mary mailing.

François Simars de Bellisle was just 24 when he left France to come to America in 1719. He was headed for Louisiana on a small ship, but his captain overshot their destination, ending up near present-day Galveston, about 300 miles off course.

Bellisle and four other French passengers took meager supplies—biscuits, guns, swords—and went ashore to determine their location and seek help. They slept well that first night, but when they

awoke the next morning, their ship was gone. They had been abandoned.

They walked east to what was likely the mouth of the Sabine River, where they could go no farther because of deep mud. Soon they began to succumb to starvation, and within two months, Bellisle had buried all his friends. He was alone and desperate.

Bellisle believed he was living his last days. He had made his way back to Galveston Bay, out of bullets and reduced to eating boiled grass and worms. Then one clear morning, he saw the first Native Americans he had seen since being stranded. They were Akokisas and his only hope for survival.

He made his way across the bay in a

crude boat he had found. The Akokisas took his goods and stripped him. He wrote that he was forced into labor, ordered about mercilessly and beaten regularly—but fed.

After a forced 150-mile walk to the Brazos River to hunt buffalo, he couldn't help but marvel at the landscape, later writing, "This is the most beautiful country in the world. The earth is black. Grass grows there to a prodigal height, and in abundance, which is a certain sign that the earth is good."

Bellisle soon realized his situation was still dire. So he retrieved one of the few pieces of paper he had, carved a crude pen out of wood, and made ink out of charcoal and water. He wrote a letter begging for rescue from anyone who might receive it and gave it to visitors from the Bidai tribe.

Then the miracle: Members of the Hasinai tribe, which had close ties to the French, took it to the commander of the garrison at Natchitoches, Louisiana. The commander, Louis Juchereau de Saint-Denis, wrote a letter in return and ordered the Hasinai to bring the cast-away back, dead or alive.

When Bellisle's rescuers reached the Akokisa camp, they gave Bellisle the letter that informed him the Hasinai would escort him to Natchitoches. His captors relented.

It still took him months to get to Natchitoches, but at least Bellisle was free. He had sent what was the land version of a message in a bottle. It caught the best currents and washed up on the perfect shore. His literacy—and luck—saved him. ■



# Texas Seafood

The catch of the day sparkles in these inventive dishes

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Growing up near the Gulf, my mami loved getting shrimp from local shrimpers. One evening she surprised us with shrimp *albóndigas*, succulent meatballs swimming in a rich tomato broth. Served with warm corn tortillas, this dish is comfort at its best. I am excited to share my mami's recipe—a bit of her love from my home to yours. Enjoy!

## Albóndigas de Camarón (Shrimp Meatballs)

**½ pound Roma tomatoes**  
**½ pound tomatillos**  
**6 cups shrimp or vegetable broth, divided use**  
**1 pound shrimp, peeled and deveined**  
**1 egg**  
**2 teaspoons dried oregano**  
**1–2 tablespoons masa harina (corn flour)**  
**2 tablespoons olive oil**  
**½ onion, diced**  
**2 stalks celery, diced**  
**2 medium carrots, diced**  
**2 cloves garlic, minced**  
**2 teaspoons cumin**  
**3 teaspoons salt**  
**2 teaspoons ground black pepper**  
**½ cup rinsed and chopped cilantro**  
**Rice, steamed (optional)**  
**4 corn tortillas, for serving**  
**Sliced radishes, for garnish**  
**Cilantro, rinsed and chopped, for garnish**

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place tomatoes and tomatillos on a baking sheet. Roast until skins have charred, turning occasionally, 10–13 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to cool.
2. Blend the cooled tomatoes and tomatillos in a blender or food processor with 1 cup broth until smooth. Set aside.
3. Pulse shrimp in cleaned food processor until finely ground.
4. Move ground shrimp to a bowl. Add egg, oregano and masa harina. Mix by hand until well combined.
5. Lightly oil clean hands and form shrimp mixture into ¾-inch meatballs. Place meatballs on baking sheet and refrigerate to keep firm.
6. In a stock pot or Dutch oven, add olive oil over medium-high heat. Add onion, celery and carrots and sauté until tender, about 4 minutes. Stir in garlic and cumin and cook 30 seconds. Stir in tomato mixture and cook an additional 2 minutes.
7. Add remaining broth and bring soup to a boil. Reduce heat to low and season with salt and pepper. Gently add meatballs to broth. Simmer without stirring 8–10 minutes. Stir in cilantro.
8. Serve over steamed rice or alone as a soup. Garnish with radishes and cilantro and serve with warm tortillas.

**SERVES 4**

**TCP** Follow along with Vianney Rodriguez while she cooks in Cocina Gris at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Skillet Pico de Gallo Shrimp.





## Hatch'en Cocktails

ANN CYCHOSZ  
TRI-COUNTY EC

Cychosz stashes away a few hatch peppers when they're in season to whip up these shrimp cocktails, a neighborhood favorite. Feel free to use canned roasted hatch peppers. Served in cocktail glasses, this appetizer will be a hit at any gathering.

### SHRIMP

- 1 tablespoon salt**
- 2 pounds Gulf shrimp, peeled and deveined**

### COCKTAIL SAUCE

- 3 cups ketchup**
- 2 tablespoons horseradish**
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce**
- 1 teaspoon hot chili sauce**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- Juice of 2 limes**
- 3 avocados, pitted and cut into ¼-inch cubes**
- ½ cup diced red onion**
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro**
- 1 cup chopped roasted hatch peppers**
- Tortilla chips, for serving**

- 1. SHRIMP** Bring a pot of water to a boil and add salt. Add shrimp and cook 2–3 minutes, or until shrimp are cooked through.
- 2.** Remove shrimp with a slotted spoon, place on a baking sheet and allow to cool.
- 3.** Cut shrimp into ¼-inch pieces.
- 4. COCKTAIL SAUCE** In a large bowl, stir together ketchup, horseradish, Worcestershire sauce, hot chili sauce, pepper and lime juice.

\$500 WINNER

## Escabeche

KARA HILL  
WOOD COUNTY EC



Hill's husband has fond memories of his Filipino mom cooking fresh fish that he, his brother and dad caught. This escabeche has the perfect level of acidity to pair wonderfully with black drum, a white fish with a mild, sweet flavor.

**SERVES 6**



### FISH

- 6 black drum fillets (about 2 pounds total), skin removed**
- Salt and ground black pepper**
- ¼ cup flour**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**

### ESCABECHE

- ½ cup white vinegar**
- 1 cup water**
- ⅓ cup brown sugar**
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce**
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch**
- ¼ cup cold water**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 4 cloves garlic, minced**
- 2 tablespoons minced ginger, fresh or jarred**
- 1 medium onion, sliced**
- 1 small red bell pepper, sliced**
- 1 small green bell pepper, sliced**
- 1 small yellow bell pepper, sliced**
- 2 medium carrots, julienned**
- 3 cups cooked rice**

- 1. FISH** Preheat oven to 250 degrees. Gently pat down fish with paper towels. Season fish with salt and pepper. Place flour in shallow dish.
- 2.** Lightly dredge fish in flour, coating each side, and shake off excess. Place on baking sheet and repeat until all fillets are coated.
- 3.** In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Pan-fry fish until golden-brown on each side, 2–3 minutes. Place on baking sheet, then repeat until all fillets are fried.
- 4.** Place fish in oven.
- 5. ESCABECHE** In a bowl, stir together vinegar, water, brown sugar and soy sauce.
- 6.** Dissolve cornstarch in cold water.
- 7.** In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Sauté garlic and ginger until fragrant, stirring often, about 3 minutes. Do not let the garlic and ginger brown.
- 8.** Add onion, bell peppers and carrots and sauté for 2 minutes. Pour vinegar mixture into skillet. Cover and bring to a boil.
- 9.** Remove cover, add cornstarch mixture, and return to a boil, stirring until sauce has thickened. Serve fish over rice, then top with escabeche.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**HOLIDAY DESSERTS** DUE JUNE 10  
We'll help cap off your holiday feasts with reader recipes in the November issue. Submit yours online by June 10 for a chance to win \$500.



CONTINUED >



5. Add shrimp, avocado, red onion, cilantro and hatch peppers. Stir gently to combine. Chill until ready to serve. Serve with tortilla chips.

**SERVES 12**

## Jamaica Beach Snapper

GEORGE GRALL  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Dinner ready in under 15 minutes? Yes, please. Baked snapper served warm with a chili butter sauce is the ultimate week-night dinner. Roast or steam vegetables while the fish bakes and have dinner ready in a snap.

**4 red snapper fillets (6 ounces each)**  
**½ cup (1 stick) butter, melted**  
**2 tablespoons garlic powder**  
**1 tablespoon chili powder**  
**1 large lemon, cut into wedges**  
**Parsley (optional)**

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.



2. Generously coat a 9-by-11-inch pan with cooking spray and place snapper fillets in the pan.

3. Bake 15 minutes or until the fish flakes easily with a fork.

4. Combine melted butter, garlic powder and chili powder in a bowl and stir until well blended.

5. Drizzle butter mixture over fish and serve with lemon wedges and garnished with parsley, if desired.

**SERVES 4**

## Shipsape Shrimp

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Texas Gulf shrimp is a great ingredient for meals that can come together in under 30 minutes. Not sure how to buy and store fresh shrimp? Follow these tips, then check out two amazing shrimp recipes in this month's issue:

**Look for firm, translucent shrimp.**

**Avoid shrimp with slimy shells and any that smell like ammonia.**

**Place fresh shrimp in a bowl on ice to maintain freshness in the fridge.**

**Uncooked shrimp stay fresh in the fridge for up to three days.**

**Freeze shrimp for up to two months.**

**Thaw frozen shrimp overnight in the fridge.**

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Kilgore's Kickers

The Rangerette museum preserves the legacy of the iconic drill team

BY CHET GARNER

**FOOTBALL IS AN EXPERIENCE** in Texas. It's about much more than just what happens when the players snap the ball. I mean, what would the Dallas Cowboys be without their cheerleaders? They certainly couldn't be America's team without America's sweethearts, right? And if you've ever danced in a drill team or enjoyed the precise high kicks and jump splits of these athletes, then you have the women of Kilgore College to thank.

I traveled to East Texas to pay my respects and visit the official museum of the Kilgore Rangerettes—America's first precision dance drill team.

After filling my belly with pork ribs at Country Tavern Bar-B-Que, I cruised Kilgore, between Tyler and Longview, and passed the towering oil derricks of the "World's Richest Acre," which once held 24 wells on one city block. In the 1930s, Kilgore was the definition of a boomtown.

While football games at Kilgore College were popular, the college's president became irritated with fans leaving at half time and drinking under the stands. So in 1940 he tasked teacher Gussie Nell Davis with figuring out a way to keep fans in the stands. Her solution was to bring a group of talented dancers onto the field. It launched a multibillion-dollar industry.

I stepped into the Rangerette Showcase and Museum and was immediately impressed with mannequins showcasing the evolution of the uniforms. While the skirts may have been scandalous at the time—they dared to show knees—the uniform is now iconic. I appreciated the short film giving context to the stories and was blown away by the number of photos depicting Rangerettes with celebrities and presidents throughout the decades.

I'll never think of drill team dancing the same way again. Now to work on my high kick! ■

ABOVE Chet's style might not be *precisely* what the Kilgore Rangerettes look for in a dancer.

**TCP** The Rangerettes' perfected routines are exactly what drew Chet to Kilgore. See 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, and check our website for many more upcoming events.

## JUNE

08

**Coleman [8–10] Rodeo**,  
colemanrodeo.com

09

**Johnson City Dive-In Movies**, (830) 868-7111,  
johnsoncitytx.org

**Blanco [9–11] Lavender Festival**, (830) 833-5101,  
blancolavenderfest.com

**Ingram [9–10, 16–17, 23–24] Newsies**, (830) 367-5121,  
hcaf.com

**Kerrville [9–10, 16–18, 23–25] Beer for Breakfast**, (830) 896-9393,  
caillouxperformingarts.com

10

**Brenham Tapestry: The Carole King Songbook With Suzanne O Davis**, (979) 337-7240,  
thebarnhillcenter.com

**Fredericksburg Craft Beer Festival**,  
fbgcrafterbeerfestival.com

**Nacogdoches Texas Blueberry Festival**, (936) 560-5533,  
tbf.nacogdoches.org

**Terrell [10–11] Antique Tractor and Engine Show and Pull**, (214) 497-1611,  
north-texas-antique-tractor-and-engine-club.net

11

**Lufkin Madagascar the Musical**, (936) 633-5454,  
angelinaarts.org

15

**Stonewall [15–17] Peach Jamboree and Rodeo**, (830) 644-2735,  
stonewalltexas.com



**Galveston [15-19]**  
**Juneteenth Celebrations,**  
 (409) 457-3570,  
[visitgalveston.com](http://visitgalveston.com)

17

**Linden Underground**  
**Railroad Quilt Auction**  
**and Performance,**  
 (903) 826-2495,  
[lindenpubliclibrary.org](http://lindenpubliclibrary.org)

22

**Fredericksburg Women's**  
**Ranch Seminar,**  
 (830) 456-8956,  
[hillcountrycattlewomen.org](http://hillcountrycattlewomen.org)

23

**McKinney [23-24] Flip**  
**Orley: Comic and Hypno-**  
**tist,** (214) 769-0645,  
[thecomedyarena.com](http://thecomedyarena.com)

30

**Hemphill [30-July 2] Patri-**  
**otic Weekend on Toledo**  
**Bend,** (409) 787-2732,  
[sabinecountychamber.com](http://sabinecountychamber.com)

**Ingram [30-July 28] Summer**  
**ArtMart,** (830) 367-5121,  
[hcaf.com](http://hcaf.com)

JULY

01

**Johnson City Fourth Fest**  
**Parade and Fireworks,**  
 (830) 868-7111,  
[johnsoncitytx.org](http://johnsoncitytx.org)

**The Colony Liberty by**  
**the Lake,** (972) 624-5253,  
[visitthecolonytx.com](http://visitthecolonytx.com)

03

**Giddings [3-4] Freedom**  
**Fest and Fury on the 4th,**  
 (979) 542-3455,  
[giddingsstx.com](http://giddingsstx.com)

04

**Kerrville 4th on the**  
**River,** (830) 315-5483,  
[kerrvilletx.gov](http://kerrvilletx.gov)

**TCP Submit Your Event**

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your September event by July 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.



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The handle is made from genuine natural bone, and features decorative wood spacers and a hand-carved motif of two overlapping feathers—a reminder for you to respect and connect with the natural world.

This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of \$2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

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— H., Arvada, CO



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# Dad

Sharing their passions and leading their families, dads play an important role in the everyday life of Texans. These reader entries warm our hearts and make us smile. Gather around the family album as we celebrate dear old dad.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

**1** HEATHER MEIFERT  
COSERV

"This is daddy's little girl, Madison."

**2** KARI ZIMMERMAN  
HAMILTON COUNTY EC

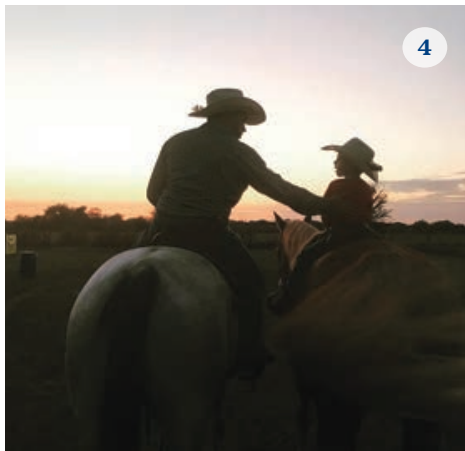
"My grandson shelling peas with his gramps. Such a sweet moment."

**3** MONA PARISH  
SAM HOUSTON EC

First piano lesson with Pops, the man behind the dad.

**4** GALE STEVENS  
BOWIE-CASS EC

"My son Jared Stevens of Campbell and his son Tyler ride almost every day and rodeo on weekends."



## Upcoming Contests

**DUE JUN 10** Helping Out  
**DUE JUL 10** Golden Hour  
**DUE AUG 10** Mailboxes



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

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for more Dad photos from readers.





Texas Water Safari participant Courtney Shaver collapses in her boat after a difficult portage.

## Ending on a Sour Note

Here's a first: Accomplished competitor falls short of the finish line

BY PAM LEBLANC  
PHOTO BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

**I BAILED OUT OF THE BOAT** in Cheap-side—which sounds like a line in a country-western song.

But this was no two-step. I staggered out of a racing canoe under a highway on the Guadalupe River, 154 miles into a 264-mile paddling race called the Texas Water Safari. It was the very first DNF of my life. I laid down my paddle, sobbed a bit and barfed.

My team went on without me.

Quitting's a weird thing. When I tell this story to friends, a lot of them nod and say, "You might have hurt yourself if you'd continued."

But that's not it, exactly. I quit because a tiny voice inside my head suggested I do it, and I listened. I didn't want to slog 100 more miles in 106-degree heat. And so, after 32 hours of nonstop paddling,

I bid my tough-as-nails teammates adieu.

Looking back, I foretold my meltdown. I was afraid of the heat and the low river flow.

In 2019, I finished the race, which starts at Spring Lake in San Marcos and ends at Seadrift on the Texas coast, in about 53 hours as part of a three-woman team. I vowed then never to do it again. But when veteran paddler Deb Richardson invited me to join her five-person crew, I forgot about the alligators, mud, log jams, spiders and hallucinations and signed up.

I began spending every weekend on the river. On race day last June, we lined up our 40-foot boat at the back of the pack. When the starting horn sounded, we sliced through the crowd like we were parting the Red Sea. Then, just a few hundred yards in, our rudder cable snapped, and we fell into last place.

Over the next six hours, we picked off boat after boat, clawing our way from 138th position to 100th, then 50th. We nailed every portage and cut through every rapid. That first night, the frogs were so loud you couldn't hear anything else. I was giddy.

But it was hot, and the water was so low, we had to drag through dozens of gravel bars. My muscles got weak, my butt sore. Racers don't stop to sleep or admire the scenery, and I got weepy.

After I quit and went home, I slept 12 hours. I woke up to news that my team had climbed into 18th place. I sped back to cheer them on.

In the end, half the 138 boats that started quit. My team finished in just under 77 hours, in one of the toughest years in the race's 59-year history.

I couldn't be prouder.

And this time I'm not kidding. I'm never doing it again. ■





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