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OCTOBER 2023

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'just won't let them be old yet'

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# October 2023



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## It's Rocket Science (And so Much More)

High school students learn to problem-solve by building giant, powerful rockets.

*Story by Mark Wangrin  
Photos by Scott Van Osdol*

ON THE COVER  
The 88-year-old hands of Jimmy Tobolka await their next chance to rope a calf.  
*Photo by Julia Robinson*

ABOVE  
Time for McGregor's rocket class to learn whether all its hard work will fly.  
*Photo by Scott Van Osdol*

## 10 Still in the Saddle Again

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*Story and photos by Julia Robinson*

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# 'The Right Thing To Do'

**SHORTLY AFTER** Mark and Cheryl Brown bought 200 acres near Ammannsville, halfway between Houston and San Antonio, they turned to conservation.

They gave their land a break from grazing, worked on grassland restoration and began networking with fellow landowners on the benefits of habitat management.

"Changing that mindset where people want to be a part of the land rather than dominate the land—it just seems like the right thing to do," says Mark, a member of Fayette Electric Cooperative.

It's been rewarding—for Mother Nature and the Browns.

More than 250 species of native plants thrive on their land, as do bird species with dwindling populations. And in May, the Browns received the Leopold Conservation Award—the state's highest honor for private land conservation—for their prairieland restoration and community outreach.



## Concern for Community

Texas electric cooperatives donated nearly \$750,000 to at least 360 volunteer fire departments across the state in 2022. We celebrate that community involvement during October, which is National Co-op Month.

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## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

**I collect ...**

**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 August prompt: **Back to school means ...**

Making new memories with my best friends, getting to meet new people, learning and experiencing new things.

ELVIRA PULIDO  
MAGIC VALLEY EC  
MISSION

An uninterrupted second cup of coffee.

PHYLLIS SUTTLE  
MIDSOUTH EC  
IOLA

New shoes, cooler weather and FOOTBALL!

MIKE WEBER  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES  
GRANBURY

Mother buying each of us boys two pair of Levi's blue jeans for the new school year. (We used them as work jeans at the farm the following summer.)

MANUEL G. TREVIÑO  
MEDINA EC  
PEARSALL

Visit our website to see more responses.



AUGUST 2023 Charming the Alamo

“There’s a new Alamo cat? Ruby is my favorite part of Alamo history, so good to see they’re continuing the tradition.”

CINDER SCOTT  
VIA FACEBOOK



STEPHANIE DALTON COWAN

### Good To Hear

Thank you for the audio about Larry McMurtry in *A Page of the Past* [August 2023]. It was much easier and enjoyable to listen to the story than to try to read the small print with my old eyes of 75 years.

Becky Parks  
Bluebonnet EC  
Maxwell

### A Long and Winding Labyrinth

About 20 years ago, my husband built a labyrinth on top of a hill on our 17-acre hobby farm west of Trent [*Circles of Life*, August 2023]. He integrated it into the natural landscape of the hill, resulting in a multilevel path.

The entire labyrinth is approximately a mile walk. At the time it was built, we were told it was the largest one in North America. Visitors can reach us at [dancingwithherbs@gmail.com](mailto:dancingwithherbs@gmail.com).

Cyndi Hughs  
Taylor EC  
Trent



LAURA JENKINS

### In Defense of Mockingbirds

The mockingbird was chosen by the Legislature to be the state bird of Texas in 1927—chosen because of its courage to protect its home and family even in the face of death [TCP Talk, August 2023]. It stands tall without fear to protect its brood, much like those who fought for Texas independence. That’s why it was chosen.

We have witnessed the mockingbird attacking snakes and hawks. It would serve us all well to take note of the parenting skills, courage and intelligence of these awesome birds.

Tim and Tammy Layman  
Coleman County EC  
Ballinger

Legislators in 1927 described the mockingbird as “a fighter for the protection of his home, falling if need be, in its defense, like any true Texan.” Need any more be said?

David Snipes  
HILCO EC  
Aquilla

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

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# IT'S ROCKET SCIENCE

(AND SO MUCH MORE)





## High school students learn to problem-solve by building giant, powerful rockets

In the predawn hours one Friday in May, a yellow school bus hurtles down U.S. Highway 281 with 19 students, one teacher and a lot of uncertainty.

A few things are known. The juniors and seniors from McGregor High School are heading to the town of Stonewall in the Hill Country. They will launch three rockets they have designed and built based on their own research and calculations—part of a curriculum called SystemsGo, developed by a local STEM teacher in 1996.

And that's where the uncertainty begins.

The science, technology, engineering and math students have never done this before. The year before, a funding mishap robbed them of the chance. This school year, they've done and redone the math, studied and applied the physics, checked the aerodynamics, and then built the rockets based on what they've taught themselves, measuring 100 times if they measured once. Because of the nature of rockets, they haven't been tested outside of computer simulations.

If that isn't enough, weather forecasts call for afternoon thunderstorms in Stonewall, which means their launch window could be compressed.

And it doesn't help that most haven't slept much. Some worked through the night. Others were bothered by an overnight storm; others consumed by what-ifs.

And there are a lot of what-ifs.

Moments after stepping down the bus steps at the Stonewall Chamber of Commerce, where five other classes from five other schools are already gathered, teacher Johnathan Whatley is approached by one of his students. Mario Suarez is wearing a T-shirt with "Never Waste Talent" on the back and a sheepish grin.

"We have a predicament," he says. Of course they do.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP A.J. Jimenez carries a McGregor High School rocket off the bus on launch day. Aaron Olivera checks parachute lines. McGregor rocket club students huddle during the competition. A rocket launches during a SystemsGo event in Stonewall. RIGHT The thrill of a successful launch for members of the McGregor class.

### STAGE 1 | Getting Off the Ground

Dozens of high schools participate in the SystemsGo rocketry curriculum, which culminates in competitive launches at the end of the school year. Teachers leave the rocket building and problem-solving up to the students.

Whatley's go-to response is, "That's interesting. What do you think?" The idea is for the students to figure things out on their own, which is how SystemsGo got started.

Brett Williams was a marine fisheries expert at Texas A&M University at Galveston. When he retired in 1996, he became a science teacher at Fredericksburg High School.

"I didn't have lab equipment," Williams says. "I didn't really have anything. I didn't have a curriculum. I was making it all up as I went."

Today—27 years later—65 schools across Texas and New Mexico launch more than 150 rockets each spring at test sites in Texas and New Mexico as part of SystemsGo, Williams' brainchild.

These aren't toy rockets. These are full-fledged 7-foot-long projectiles, some carefully configured to carry a 1-pound payload as close to a mile high as possible or break the sound barrier. The most advanced few among them carry a payload of university research to an altitude of 50,000 feet.

### STAGE 2 | Preparing the Mission

A few miles down the road from McGregor is Crawford, home of SpaceX's rocket testing facility. Occasionally, Whatley's class hears the loud roar of ignition.

Last year's class even got to visit. They saw the facilities



McGregor's Kirsten Galle, left, and Isaiah Thomas prepare a rocket. Teacher Johnathan Whatley calls Galle "a mathematical whiz."



and were allowed off the bus just once—to see close-up the first rocket the company landed safely.

"That was the 100th rocket they'd launched," Whatley says. "That's not a cautionary tale, it's a tale of hope. Here are professionals who have it blow up on them. And then they succeed."

After graduating from Baylor University in 2014, Whatley applied for a coaching job at McGregor, also agreeing to teach the rockets class after he was hired.

"It made me really excited for just the possibilities of different types of education," he says. Some students—even the brightest ones—don't learn to think for themselves, and some need to be challenged, he says. So that's what he does.

The fall semester focuses on the basics of flight. During the first weeks of class, Whatley dumps an assortment of rocket parts on a large table and asks the students to build a small rocket that's fitted with a beginner's rocket engine and launched.

"They make some pretty terrible stuff," Whatley says. "They think the more fins the better. They get creative. Like why not? But that's them failing—but then learning from their mistakes."

Their second goal, Whatley says, "is to build a stable rocket." That's the one they'll try to fly in Stonewall.

### STAGE 3 | The Race to Launch

It turns out the predicament Suarez mentions is minor. They forgot a section of plastic tubing vital to fueling. "It's a chance to work on your social skills," Whatley says to Suarez. The implication is clear: Ask around.

The group is an amalgam: football players, makers, math nerds and more. But all plan to attend college, many in technical fields.

"This class definitely reshaped the way I went about doing school," says Suarez, who wants to be a hair stylist. "Before, I would slack in classes. But whenever I got to rockets, I understood that you can't do that. There are deadlines that need to be met."

For Williams, there's more than just hard work, or even serendipity, at play with SystemsGo. He recalls cold calling a rocket parts company only to unexpectedly catch the CEO at lunch, reading an article about the program as he ate. He was a yes.

And there was a real long shot—dialing the Pentagon from the middle of nowhere, hoping to find someone to ask about borrowing some launch technology. He reached a general's adjutant, who was in Fredericksburg the week before for a presentation. Impressed, he connected Williams to the general, who said, "I know I'm supposed to say no, but this guy tells me I have to say yes." And he did.

### STAGE 4 | Launch, Recovery, Retrospection

The storms do not materialize in Stonewall. After much back and forth with officials examining the rockets, a few close calls, and frantic recalculations, all three McGregor rockets pass muster: They launch and fly straight and high.

None earns an award, though one just misses reaching the 1-mile threshold. The students don't know that as they bus back to McGregor, stopping at the Chick-fil-A in Marble Falls for a celebratory feast.

Once back, the teams do their post-launch analyses, looking at what they did right and what they didn't. Uncertainty will be met with experience next year, when the nucleus of 11th graders returns for a chance to improve.

Schematics will be honed. Math will be tightened. Construction will be polished.

Next May, the sky's the limit (weather permitting). ■





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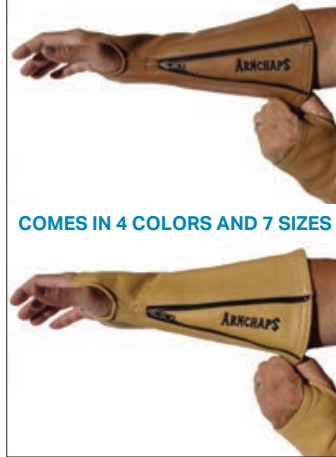
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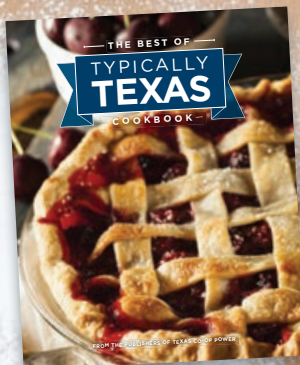
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# ***Still in the Saddle Again***





## **CALF ROPING AT 80? COMPETITION—AND CAMARADERIE— HAVE NO UPPER LIMITS IN THE SENIOR RODEO CIRCUIT**

**C**ompetitors pace their horses before a barrel racing event on a warm October day at Circle T Arena. It's the statewide finals, and competitors are wearing their finest—spotless boots, hats and tack. Their high-strung mounts trot back and forth at the dusty arena in Hamilton, about 70 miles west of Waco, awaiting their call times.

When the clock starts, horse and rider burst from the gate in a blaze of energy and graying hair. Precision turns, pivots and raw speed streak through the arena. Cheers of support rise from the grandstands: "You got this, Grandma!" and "Let's go, Gram!"

It's all over in a few blinks.

Billie Bright, 63, takes the win with a time of 15.8—only 2.5 seconds slower than the current national champion, who is about 35 years younger. Not bad for an oldster. Four-time National Finals Rodeo world champion Hailey Kinsel, 29, holds the fastest barrel time—13.34 seconds.

Today's statewide finals are one of the 23 events the Texas Senior Pro Rodeo Association, celebrating 45 years in 2023, hosts for competitors 40 and older. Rex Sandifer's father, Morris, was one of the founding members of the organization in Waco in 1978.

"There were lots of amateur rodeos at the time, but it's just difficult as a 40-year-old to compete against 20-year-olds," Sandifer says. So Morris and a few other aging cowboys organized calf roping events for the older crowd. That grew into steer dogging, bareback and bull riding. "And all of them said, well, why don't we just go in and make a rodeo association out of it?"

The TSPRA put on full rodeos, including bull and bronc riding, in the 1980s. "There were probably two or three of those guys that were pretty good bull riders, and then the rest of the guys were people who wished that they were bull riders earlier in their lives," Sandifer says with a laugh.

The decision was made to drop the more dangerous events from the schedule but not because they didn't have competitors. "It was hard to get producers to haul animals for eight or 10 people," says Sandifer, a member of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative.

Today, many of TSPRA's 300-plus members are former pro rodeo riders, ropers and barrel racers from Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Ages range from the association minimum into the 80s, and competitors are grouped by age. But some old-timers can still beat the young whippersnappers, and many older members choose to compete in multiple younger divisions.

"Some people join and think it's going to be easy because it's all old-timers, but we have cowboys and cowgirls that are still going to circuit finals and winning open rodeos," says Beverly Shoaf, secretary of the TSPRA board of directors.

Bright, a member of Taylor Electric Cooperative from Baird, has been competing in rodeos for 50 years and is one of the top barrel racers in the 60-plus division. She has had to refine her approach.

"For me, at my age, I've learned that I can't ride just every horse that comes around," she says. "I have to look for a



OPPOSITE J.J. Jolley of Stephenville whips around a barrel during the Texas Senior Pro Rodeo Association finals last October in Hamilton. ABOVE Karen Little of San Saba gets a hug from her grandson Asher.



***"It's real important to have these rodeos because if you ever quit, you're done." —REX SANDIFER***

horse that moves a little smoother and doesn't throw a whole lot of torque."

Earlier in her career, Bright could spend hours training on horseback, but these days, she rides for half an hour before giving her knees a break. "We have to have a lot of core strength to do what we do at our age," she says. "Your hand-eye coordination needs to be real sharp. And if you don't compete fairly often, like every two weeks or so, you get slower and slower."

But Bright says other skills have only improved. Her ability to read animals gives her a competitive advantage that came with age. "You can anticipate nearly what a horse is fixing to do from each step that they take," she says. "Each stride that they take, they're telling you something if you're really listening."

Tomm Owens, vice president of the TSPRA board and a member of Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative, didn't join the association until he was 50.

Rex Sandifer of Elgin prepares his lasso. His father, Morris, was one of the founders of the senior circuit in 1978.

"I was competing in [pro] events when I was 35, 40, 45. I was one of them that held out," says Owens, who's trying to convince his friends to join. "Their pride just won't let them be old yet."

For Owens, aging into a new bracket is part of the fun. "You kind of get excited again," he says, "because you're going to be the youngest in the group, and you're hoping you're one of the best."

Like Bright, he says his experience gives him a competitive advantage—but for a different reason. "Mentally it's easier as I get older. I don't get as frustrated when things don't go right," Owens says. "You learn not to let the little things bother you."

But he admits that the physical aspect only gets tougher. "Once you get out of shape, it's really hard at 55–60 to get back into shape," he says. "I do 20–30 minutes of stretching every morning and then some situps and pushups."

Jimmy Tobolka is living proof that bodies in motion tend to stay in motion. At 88, he's TSPRA's oldest member and still competes in the 80-plus breakaway, where a mounted rider ropes a running calf.





ABOVE Pat and Jimmy Tobolka of Caldwell are regular TSPRA competitors. Jimmy, at 88, is the circuit's oldest member. LEFT Doug Richards of Bedias closes in on a calf.



"Once you start doing it, it's hard to get quit doing it, you know?" he says. "It's helped keep me going all these years."

One of the youngest members of the association is Seth Smithson, the president of the board, who turns 40 in December. "I think it's a breath of fresh air from the hustle and bustle," he says. The 2023 TSPRA statewide finals are October 19–21 at Circle T Arena in Hamilton. "You come hang out with the older crowd and watch these guys compete and see how great they are with their horses, and you can definitely learn a thing or two."

**T**he TSPRA's prizes aren't much—trophy saddles and buckles—but that's not the main reason any of these competitors are here.

"Nobody's going to get rich at our rodeos," Owens says. "So much of it is just being able to see all the guys you used to rodeo with, cook steaks out back at the trailers and eat a meal Saturday night with maybe 10 or 15 people at every other trailer. That's a big, big part of it."

But no one can question the enthusiasm and the dedication these athletes have for their sport—for continuing to hone their craft, even as their bodies falter.

"We're all just very grateful to still be able to throw a leg over a horse," Bright says. "And when you have that gratitude of still being able to do it, nobody's moaning and groaning about winning." ■



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# 1920s Style for a 1920s Price

It was a warm summer afternoon and my wife and I were mingling with the best of them. The occasion was a 1920s-themed party, and everyone was dressed to the nines. Parked on the manse's circular driveway was a beautiful classic convertible. It was here that I got the idea for our new 1920s Retrograde Watch.

Never ones to miss an opportunity, we carefully steadied our glasses of bubbly and climbed into the car's long front seat. Among the many opulent features on display was a series of dashboard dials that accentuated the car's lavish aura. One of those dials inspired our 1920s Retrograde Watch, a genuinely unique timepiece that marries timeless style with modern technology.

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SAM HOUSTON EC NEWS

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# October Is National Co-op Month

**FALL IS A BUSY TIME**, and October is a particularly eventful month with school, community and sports activities in full swing. It's also when all cooperatives celebrate National Co-op Month.

When Sam Houston Electric Cooperative celebrates Co-op Month, it really means we're celebrating you! After all, our Co-op wouldn't exist without you, our members.

Our core business purpose is to serve as your electricity provider, but the larger mission of the Co-op is to help make our corner of the world a better place.

Concern for Community is one of seven guiding principles that all co-ops share. Like our wires running through our service territory, our concern for friends and neighbors flows through all of our decisions—because being a co-op means being a responsible partner and good neighbor.

Sam Houston EC works to help our community thrive through initiatives led by our employees and local board that's composed of neighbors who live right here in our community. Because we're local, we understand our community's unique needs and strive to help meet them.

We're proud to support local youths through the Government-in-Action Youth Tour and scholarship programs. With your help, we offer programs to provide assistance to our community's most vulnerable members.

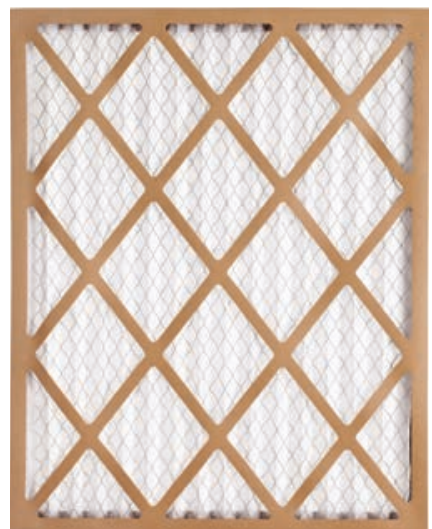
The word "cooperative" is close to "cooperation," meaning people working together toward a common goal—mutually benefiting one another and the larger community. That's the essence of the cooperative spirit. Our employees and member-elected board are invested in the community in which we live and serve.

Above all, as a co-op, we put our members' priorities first. As your trusted energy partner, we know that saving energy and money is important to you. We have numerous programs in place to help, so give us a call if you have questions about your energy bills.

Sam Houston EC is continually examining ways to operate more efficiently while providing the highest level of friendly, reliable service you expect and deserve. After all, we were built by the members we serve. We're your local Co-op. ■



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## A Small Change for the Better

**WHEN IT COMES** to energy efficiency, sometimes small changes can make a big impact. A small, unglamorous task like changing the filters on your air conditioning and heating system makes your unit run more efficiently, keeping your house cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. It also saves money.

As you move around your home, you lift dust into the air from carpets, furniture and drapes. Dust and dirt trapped in a system's air filter leads to several problems, including reduced airflow in the home and higher operating costs, potentially costly duct cleaning or replacement, and lowered system efficiency.

Many HVAC professionals recommend that you clean or change the filter on your air conditioner or furnace monthly. In many cases, it only takes a few minutes.

Don't forget about the winter months: Your heating system needs to work as efficiently as possible to keep you warm, and a clean air filter helps it do just that.

Turn your system off before changing the air filter. Make sure that the arrow on the filter—which indicates the direction of the airflow—is pointing toward the blower motor. When you've replaced the filter, turn your system back on and breathe a little easier. ■



# Texas' Spooky Stays: Do Some Guests Never Check Out?

Legendary hotels dot the state and leave present-day guests with stories to tell

BY JEFF MILLER

*Hotels, like houses, can haunted be,  
By ghosts one can both hear and see.  
In cozy rooms and trysting places,  
Spirits dwell in hidden spaces.  
Why, there's a wraith that walks the halls,  
Where shadows play upon the walls.  
Doorknobs turn, and lights go out,  
To tell us spirits are about.  
No need to fear, or have alarm,  
Our friendly spirits mean no harm.  
They loved this inn, and so they cleave,  
Close by its shelter, loath to leave.  
Please, dear friends, do not feel fright,  
When 'ere you stop to spend the night!*  
—Docia Schultz Williams

IN THE EASTERN HALF of the Lone Star State, the past weaves haunting tales into the fabric of time. East Texas is an area rich in history, where the lines between reality and the supernatural blur and the secrets of olden days linger in the shadows. Within this enigmatic landscape, a series of spine-chilling stories has emerged, centering on a collection of haunted hotels that stand as silent witnesses to the mysteries of bygone eras.

Amid the Piney Woods, vast prairies and bustling cities, grand establishments beckon travelers with their elegance and timeless charm. Yet beneath the veneer of hospitality lies a tapestry of eerie occurrences and unexplained phenomena that have earned these hotels a reputation as some of the most haunted in the nation.

As night descends, some guests find themselves entangled in spectral encounters, their experiences becoming ghost stories





**1–2.** Jefferson’s Excelsior House Hotel as it appears today and in 1938. Tales of hauntings began long before each of these photos were taken.

**3.** The Emily Morgan Hotel in San Antonio uses tales of its haunted past in its advertising, offering “haunted specials” in October.

**4.** According to legend, while scouting locations for *The Sugarland Express*, director Steven Spielberg attempted to stay at Jefferson’s Excelsior House Hotel but was startled by apparitions and promptly left with his crew in the middle of the night.

**5.** Also in San Antonio, the Menger Hotel has a long history of haunting tales and is considered one of the most haunted hotels in Texas.



whispered in hushed tones to the next daring guests who venture within the creaking halls. Each hotel possesses a unique and unsettling history, with tales of tragic love, unsolved mysteries and tormented spirits that refuse to rest.

Gather your courage and embark on this adventure through the haunted hotels of Texas. But beware, for the spirits that dwell within may not let you leave without imparting their chilling tales upon your soul.

Of course, the mere existence of ghosts is a subject of much debate and differs depending on personal or religious beliefs and intellectual perspectives. Science has yet to provide evidence of ghosts or spirits, and paranormal sightings are sometimes written off to a host of factors, including misunderstandings of naturally occurring phenomena, psychological and perceptual factors, folklore, and simply plain old pranks. However, ghost stories have long been a part of recorded history, and regardless of their factuality, they still fascinate listeners.

### The Excelsior House Hotel

Perhaps the most famous of the haunted hotels in East Texas is the Excelsior House Hotel in Jefferson. As the oldest continuously operating hotel in Texas, the Excelsior has hosted famous guests including Ulysses S. Grant, Oscar Wilde, Lady Bird Johnson, President Rutherford B. Hayes and Steven Spielberg (at least for a very short time).

The Excelsior Hotel is believed to be haunted by a ghost named Emily who met a tragic end there. According to legend, Emily was an attractive and dynamic woman who fell deeply in love with a man named Samuel. They had plans to elope and start a new life together, away from their families, both of which were against their marriage.

On a hot summer night, tragedy struck when Samuel had a change of heart and broke off the engagement, leaving Emily heartbroken and alone. Overwhelmed by grief, Emily sought solace at the Excelsior Hotel, where their life’s journey was meant to begin.

According to the legend, at midnight, Emily climbed to the hotel’s rooftop and took her life. Her spirit is said to be confined to the hotel’s walls. Since that incident, guests and staff at the Excelsior Hotel have reported strange encounters and unexplained phenomena. Many guests claim to have seen a ghostly figure, dressed in a flowing white gown, floating down the hallways or by a window, staring into the distance.

One guest even wrote at length about her “visit from the other side” on [tripadvisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com).

“My mother and stepfather were in one bed, and my friend and I in another bed in the same room,” the review reads. “Around midnight, my mother’s arm began to levitate. I went out of my mind and grabbed my camera. At first, I thought she was playing with us, however, I confirmed she was asleep.



1

"I set up a live feed and began documenting a very long and unusual night. Her arm was in the air and her fingers spread out. During this time the room became freezing cold not once but twice. While mom's arm was waving around in the air, I was in my bed taking pictures and suddenly felt something walking across my legs. The dents made on the bed covers were very obvious."

Probably the most prolific story about the Excelsior involves Steven Spielberg, who was in Jefferson in 1973 reviewing locations for his film *The Sugarland Express*.

According to more than a dozen ghost-related websites and radio station KKYR-FM in Texarkana, "Spielberg stayed in the Jay Gould room, where he tossed his briefcase on a chair, only to have it fly right back at him. In the wee hours of the morning, a small boy awakened the director, asking if he was ready for breakfast. Spielberg allegedly gathered his crew that very minute and checked out of the hotel. He wrote and produced the film *Poltergeist* soon after."

There are many different versions of the story, but they all end the same, with Spielberg and his crew departing in the middle of the night.

### The Historic Jefferson Hotel

While the managers at the Excelsior are understandably reluctant to discuss the property's alleged supernatural history, another Jefferson landmark touts the fact that it may be haunted. The

Historic Jefferson Hotel features its Haunted Bride, Room 19, on the hotel's website, complete with a video designed to enhance the frightfulness.

According to the hotel, Room 19 is known for its ghostly past. "This room is known for its haunted history," the hotel's website says. "There was a bride that hanged herself from this very bed because her husband did not show to the wedding. It is said that she still resides with the antique bed."

Rates for that room are about 20% less than other rooms in the hotel.

### The Tremont House

The Tremont House in Galveston was built in 1839—years before Texas became part of the U.S. It burned down a couple of times and survived the 1900 hurricane, and it still draws guests wanting the thrill of staying in a haunted yet lavish hotel. The Tremont is included as a stop on Galveston's famous Ghost City Tours, which lead visitors to haunted cemeteries, pubs, homes and hotels on the island.

According to the hotel's guests and employees, there are three primary ghosts that reside at the Tremont.

The most famous is Sam the Salesman, who, back when Galveston was a gambling mecca, brought his substantial winnings back to his room at the hotel, only to be murdered in his sleep and his winnings stolen. According to tour guides from





1. Originally built in 1839, before Texas became a state, the Tremont House in Galveston has three specific ghosts who frequent the hotel, according to the hotel's guests and employees.

2. Virtually all of the ghostly tales in Texas' haunted hotels involve a young woman floating through the hallways at night.

3. Even though this painting, titled *Love Letter*, is not of the girl who died at the hotel, guests who have viewed the painting in the hotel's lobby describe feelings of levitation and movement.



Ghost City, Sam had a limp and his unique footfalls can be heard in the lobby. Random knocks on hotel doors have also been attributed to his ghost.

The second most-talked about specter at the Tremont is an unidentified Civil War soldier. Several guests over the years have witnessed the soldier marching across the lobby toward the elevator and back again. He has also been seen by guests and hotel employees in offices, the hotel bar and dining room.

The final apparition is that of a young boy, lovingly referred to by hotel employees as Jimmy. This ghost, whose background is unknown, primarily shows himself to new hotel employees, although his presence has been reported to the staff as the one responsible for turning cups over at dining tables occupied by guests.

### The Olle Hotel

Sometimes having a ghost or two can be good for business. Over the years, that has been the case with the Olle Hotel in Flatonia.

Guests and employees have reported seeing floating orbs on a regular basis. The orbs differ in color and size and seem to show up spontaneously.

Built in the late 1800s, the Olle was named a Texas Historic Landmark in 2009, but that didn't stop several apparitions from remaining there. Most often seen—or heard—are a couple arguing at the top of the stairs, supposedly continuing an argu-

ment from a century ago that ended with both getting shot.

Another ghost that hasn't ever been seen but still leaves his mark is that of a cigar smoker, affectionately referred to by the previous owner as Bob. Even though the property is a nonsmoking facility, when Bob is there, guests have reported a strong smell of cigar smoke lingering in the air.

### The Menger Hotel

The Menger Hotel in San Antonio is a historic establishment with its own spooky tales. Situated next to the Alamo, this impressive hotel attracts visitors with its charming appeal. Beyond its lavish appearance, however, there are rumors of ghostly encounters and strange occurrences.

One of the most famous spirits is well-known Texan Col. Richard King, a successful cattle rancher and the founder of the storied King ranch. He stayed at the Menger Hotel often while he was alive.

The tale goes that even after King passed away, his spirit decided to stay in the hotel. Many have claimed to see the ghostly figure of a tall man wearing a black Stetson hat and a long coat. This apparition is said to move silently through the hallways before disappearing into thin air.

Numerous guests have mentioned seeing other ghostly figures dressed in everything from World War II uniforms and Victorian-era clothing to early hotel staff uniforms wandering



around the lobby, only to vanish without explanation.

The hotel's reputation has attracted many ghost enthusiasts and thrill-seekers. To cater to their curiosity, ghost tours have been organized, allowing guests to explore the most haunted parts of the building and hear the chilling stories connected to each spot. To be totally transparent (no ghost pun intended), I have stayed at the Menger on numerous occasions, and the only time I let out a gasp was when I saw my bill.

### The Emily Morgan Hotel

Just a short walk from the Menger is the Emily Morgan Hotel. According to hotel management, during the Battle of the Alamo, there were more than 600 fatalities on the site where the hotel now stands, giving credence to the possibility of ghostly specters.

But rather than downplay the haunted nature of the hotel, management has used it as a selling point in their advertising.

They offer a "Room With a Boo" package every October, which includes an overnight stay, a Halloween gift and breakfast in bed featuring "boo-berry" pancakes.

Many of the stories of mysterious occurrences have come from management and staff at the hotel. For example, a sales manager spending the night at the hotel returned to her room after dinner to find her bathtub filled with blue water. Other staff members have reported doors opening or closing for no

Austin's Driskill Hotel dates to the 1880s, and the haunted stories began soon after a state senator's daughter fell to her death on the main staircase.

reason, and the hotel's video cameras have captured orbs floating around the premises.

Coincidence or malfunctioning camera? No one is saying.

### The Driskill Hotel

Each year, Yelp publishes its Top 15 Haunted Hotels in Texas list, and the reigning establishment is the Driskill Hotel in Austin. Built in the 1880s, the Driskill has hosted everyone from President Lyndon Johnson (he and Lady Bird had their first date there) to Willie Nelson.

But perhaps the most famous story to come out of the Driskill is that of 4-year-old Samantha Houston, daughter of state Sen. Temple Lea Houston. In 1887, little Samantha and her family were staying at the hotel. Samantha was playing in the hallway at the top of the grand staircase chasing a ball. She tripped and fell to her death down the staircase.

Today, a painting of a little girl hangs at the top of the staircase, and guests have reported several phenomena regarding the portrait, including changes of expression on her face and a sensation of being levitated. Unfortunately, the painting is not of Samantha, it is a replica of a painting by renowned Texas artist William Henry Huddle, yet guests still report mystical manifestations to this day.

There are no doubt many more hotels and motels throughout Texas that may have a ghost or two wandering about, so don't worry if you happen to hear a bump in the night. ■



## Q&A: Breaking Down Energy-Saving Claims

**WHEN IT COMES TO** saving energy, it can be challenging to separate fact from fiction. Here are answers to some common conservation questions.

**Q: Is it true that turning lights off and on uses more energy than just leaving them on?**

**A:** Not true. Turning off lights definitely reduces energy use. Turn off LED and incandescent bulbs every time you leave the room. The situation is a little different with compact fluorescent bulbs. Turning them off does save energy but can shorten the life of the bulb. The rule of thumb for CFLs is to turn them off any time they won't be used for 15 minutes or more.

**Q: Would replacing my old windows with new, more efficient ones really cut my energy use in half?**

**A:** No. While replacing inefficient windows with new, energy-efficient windows can cut heat loss through windows in half or more, windows typically account for only about 25% to 30% of your space heating costs. The amount of energy you use for heating and cooling is likely one-third to one-half of your total energy use, so replacing your old windows might only reduce your total energy costs by about 10%. When you consider the high cost of new windows, you may not recoup your investment for 15 or 20 years.

**Q: Burning wood in my fireplace should lower my heating costs, right?**

**A:** Possibly, but certain conditions need to be met. The wood should be dry and burned efficiently in a properly installed, properly placed, high-efficiency wood stove or fireplace insert. Otherwise, it's likely you'll lose as much heat through your chimney as you're distributing throughout the house.

**Q: My kids claim using the dishwasher is just as efficient as washing dishes by hand. Are they right?**

**A:** Yes. In fact, it's usually more efficient. Properly used dishwashers actually use less water while doing a better job, and as a bonus, they will save you more than 200 hours a year. For maximal energy savings, make sure your water heater is set to about 120 degrees and use the most efficient wash/dry settings.

**Q: I've heard it's better to heat individual rooms with an electric space heater and keep the doors closed to trap the heat. Is this true?**

**A:** It's possible to save money with an electric space heater if you use it only a few hours a day and reduce your home's thermostat setting by a couple of degrees. Space heaters can cause fires, so they need to be used wisely and should never be left unattended. Heating your entire home with space heaters is inefficient and dangerous.

**Q: Should I close the vents in rooms that aren't being used?**

**A:** Most experts advise against this because closing supply registers forces your furnace to work harder. They advise keeping all vents and doors open. If your system supplies too much heat to some rooms and too little to other rooms, you should talk to a heating and air conditioning professional about modifying your ductwork.

**Q: Does the age of my home determine how energy-efficient it is?**

**A:** Newer homes tend to be more efficient because energy codes have improved, but every home can have hidden energy issues, no matter its age. If you want to evaluate the efficiency of your home, it's best to schedule an energy audit with a professional. ■



IKA RAHMA | ISTOCK.COM

## Small Appliances Are the Kitchen's Stars

**COUNTERTOP APPLIANCES** are great energy savers and cut down on added heat in the kitchen.

Slow cookers allow you to put in all the ingredients for a dish in the morning, turn the cooker on for the day and come home to a finished meal in the evening.

Most electric pressure cookers can take the place of slow and rice cookers. Some models even have a sauté function that can cut out stovetop steps like browning meat.

Besides preparing rice effortlessly, rice cookers are also good for steaming and for cooking other grains.

A good toaster oven can do much of the work of a full-size oven, such as roasting vegetables or baking breads, casseroles and cobblers.

Microwaves do a lot more than heat up your leftovers. They can steam things easily and melt butter, chocolate and cheese efficiently.

Air fryers are popular for crisping foods and for quickly roasting vegetables and warming leftovers. ■

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



# It Still Reigns

At 50, Elmer Kelton's 'The Time It Never Rained' remains 'a book of the heart'

BY W.F. STRONG

**WE SHOULD ALL BE** grateful that Elmer Kelton was a poor cowboy. When he was a young man, the now-famous writer said his inability to rope and ride well pushed him toward reading and then writing. Had he been a better cowboy, he told a reporter in 1984, "I'd still be working out on some ranch on the Pecos River."

It's been 50 years since *The Time It Never Rained*, Kelton's classic novel, was published. Many Texas literary critics consider it one of the best novels written by a Texan about Texas. It was also Kelton's favorite book and what he called his signature work—of the nearly 50 novels he wrote before he died in 2009.

The novel received the Spur Award

and the Western Heritage Award.

The book is not your run-of-the-mill Western. There are no shootouts. No one dies. Wallace Kaufman, who taught at Duke University, wrote that the novel should rank "with Faulkner's work as the local made universal."

Author Shelley Armitage grew up in the 1950s in the Texas Panhandle, when and where the novel takes place.

"To see oneself and one's landscape so accurately and aesthetically rendered was life-changing—as it remains today: a book of the heart," Armitage says.

Mike Cox, author of 14 books on Texas and the West, notes that Kelton covered the terrible 1950s drought for the *San Angelo Standard-Times* and began

writing fiction on the side.

"He used what he knew about the dry spell for *The Time It Never Rained*, a novel I don't believe he ever expected to become a classic," Cox says. "I predict that as the West continues to get drier and drier due to global warming, his book will become even more important."

For prolific author Wyman Meinzer, Texas' official state photographer who once shared a book signing with Kelton, his "words conjured memories of blinding dust storms, dry stock tanks and a land void of palatable grass."

Jac Darsnek, the man behind the much-loved *Traces of Texas* accounts on social media and a ubiquitous traveler and photographer of Texas, was 17 when he discovered the novel. He still draws inspiration from Charlie Flagg, the novel's admirable protagonist, whom Kelton created from his own cowboy father.

"Elmer Kelton's tale of hardship and endurance and main character Charlie Flagg's astonishing self-reliance resonated within me in a place I never knew I had, and his descriptions of ranch life spoke to my inner Texan," Darsnek said. "Decades later, when confronted with some obstacle or tough choice, I'll ask myself, 'What would Charlie Flagg do?'"

Steve Davis, curator of the Southwestern writers collection at the Wittliff Collections at Texas State University, says *The Time It Never Rained* is one of the most important Texas novels and a masterful example of eyewitness literature.

"Kelton was on the front lines when the great drought devastated the land and people he knew intimately," Davis says. "His resulting novel, richly observed and deeply empathetic, stands as the truest, most profound portrait of that era." ■



# Beans

Versatility turns this kitchen staple into a star

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

A quick and easy mixture of green, black and red beans tossed in a delicious, tangy dressing, this three-bean salad is great the day you make it, but it's even better to enjoy the next day for lunch.

## Three-Bean Salad

4 teaspoons salt, divided use  
 12 ounces fresh green beans,  
 rinsed and cut into 1-inch pieces  
 6 tablespoons olive oil  
 6 tablespoons lemon juice  
 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
 1 teaspoon ground cumin  
 1 teaspoon ground black pepper  
 1 can black beans (15 ounces),  
 drained and rinsed  
 1 can red beans (15 ounces),  
 drained and rinsed  
 ¼ cup finely diced red onion  
 1 cucumber, diced  
 1 cup finely diced carrot  
 ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley  
 4 tablespoons chopped fresh dill

1. Fill a pot halfway with water, add 2 teaspoons salt and bring to a boil.
2. Add green beans and cook for 3 minutes. Drain and pat dry.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together olive oil, lemon juice, Dijon mustard, cumin, pepper and remaining 2 teaspoons salt.
4. Add green beans, black beans and red beans to bowl. Stir to combine, then stir in red onion, cucumber and carrot.
5. Cover and chill until ready to serve. Before serving, stir in parsley and dill.

**SERVES 6**

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez while she cooks in Cocina Gris at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Roasted Tomatillo Garbanzo Salad.







## Little Pots of Red Beans With Sour Cream

ALEXANDRA DIBRELL  
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

Sometimes cooking for two can be tricky. Don't worry—Dibrell has hungry twosomes covered with a simple one-pot dinner idea. Bacon, beans and a little jalapeño kick, served warm and topped with sour cream, are pure comfort.

**2 strips bacon, diced**  
**1 tablespoon olive oil**  
**½ small red onion, finely diced**  
**1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely diced**  
**½ teaspoon salt**  
**¾ cup chicken broth or stock**  
**1 can kidney beans (15.5 ounces), drained**  
**4 tablespoons sour cream**  
**Fresh cilantro sprigs, for garnish**

1. In a skillet, cook bacon until crisp. Remove from pan and drain.
2. Add olive oil, onion, jalapeño and salt. Sauté until soft and translucent.
3. Pour in chicken broth or stock and return bacon to skillet, bringing to a simmer.
4. Stir in beans and simmer until warmed through.
5. Ladle the beans into two bowls and top each with sour cream and cilantro.

**SERVES 2**

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



**\$500 WINNER**

## Hurry Up Stew

EDITH FORSHAGE  
GVEC



A filling, hearty meal that's easy to prepare at the end of a busy day, Forshage's Hurry Up Stew is pantry-friendly and can be whipped up in under 30 minutes.

**SERVES 6**

**1 pound ground beef**  
**2 tablespoons dried beef bouillon**  
**1 can diced tomatoes with green chilis (15 ounces)**  
**1 carton chicken, beef or vegetable broth (32 ounces)**  
**1 can pinto beans (15 ounces), drained**  
**1 can garbanzo beans (15 ounces), drained**  
**1 can hominy (15 ounces), drained**  
**1 can potatoes (15 ounces), drained**  
**1 can diced carrots (15 ounces), drained**  
**2 teaspoons salt**  
**½ teaspoon ground black pepper**

1. In a nonstick pot, brown ground beef and drain.
2. Stir in bouillon, diced tomatoes and broth.
3. Add pinto beans, garbanzo beans, hominy, potatoes and carrots.
4. Add salt and pepper.
5. Simmer for 20 minutes to thoroughly heat ingredients.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**BEST BRUNCH** DUE OCTOBER 10

Brunch is at your place this time. What will you serve? We're looking for the best recipes in Texas. Submit your favorite online by October 10 for a chance to win \$500.





## Homemade Bean Dip

KAREN YEOMAN  
SAN PATRICIO EC

Yeoman has been cooking up this family-favorite dip for 40 years for family gatherings, church functions and parties. It's easy and delicious, and we're excited to share it with you.

**2 cups fully cooked pinto beans**  
**2 tablespoons picante sauce**  
**½ teaspoon garlic powder**

**¼ pound processed cheese product**  
**2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter**  
**Tortilla or corn chips, for serving**

1. Place beans, picante sauce and garlic powder into a blender. Blend until smooth.
2. In a glass bowl, melt cheese and butter in microwave, stirring at 30-second to 1-minute intervals until smooth.
3. Stir bean mixture into the cheese mixture until smooth. Microwave dip for 30-second to 1-minute intervals until thoroughly heated.
4. Serve warm dip with chips.

**SERVES 10**

**TCP** Among the more than 1,000 recipes in our online archive are dozens that include beans—even some for chili. You can find them all on our website.

## Fabulous and Versatile Beans

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Canned beans, a pantry staple, are not only delicious, they also are extremely versatile and budget-friendly, can shine as a main dish or side, and even work in desserts.

Try these ideas to get more from your pantry beans:

**Blend them into a creamy dip.**

**Stir some into your favorite stew.**  
(And they really are even OK in chili.)

**Use beans as a satisfying filling for your next taco night.**

**Consider them as a meatless option for making burgers.**

**Mix into cold salads for potlucks.**

**Bake puréed beans into brownies for added protein.**



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## Puffy Taco Trailblazer

Legendary Ray's Drive Inn was the first and remains the best

BY CHET GARNER

**WHEN I HEAR** the term “drive-in,” I immediately envision greasy cheeseburgers, thick milkshakes and smiling carhops. But Ray's Drive Inn on the west side of San Antonio isn't that kind of joint. Sure, it's full of nostalgia, an old jukebox and belly-pleasing food. But Ray's has a magical, signature dish that separates it from all others—puffy tacos. After hearing the legend, I took a day trip to the Alamo City to try them for myself.

Ray's opened in 1956 as the entrepreneurial dream of Raymond Lopez. Legend holds that one day, Ray's grandmother was frying corn masa for tostadas. She stepped away from the fryer and a wooden stick (no doubt guided by the hand of God) fell from a shelf and folded the masa into a tacolike form. The family started selling these crispy yet fluffy shells full of meat, cheese, lettuce and tomatoes. In no time, a legend was born.

After almost 70 years, the restaurant is still family owned and operated by the children of Arturo Lopez, Ray's younger brother.

I found the restaurant far from the beaten path and could smell the deep-fried tortillas as soon as I stepped out of my truck. Inside, the walls were a menagerie of family photos, taxidermy and even a neon altar to the Virgin Mary. I ordered up a platter of three puffy tacos (beef, chicken, and bean and avocado) and found a table tucked below a painting of Ray, Arturo and their three other brothers.

One bite let me know that this was unlike any taco I had ever eaten. It was crunchy but soft and perfectly greasy. I had no choice but to order a few more with different fillings. You know, for research. ■

ABOVE Chet shows a close-up of a puffy taco before making it disappear.

**TCP** Follow along as Chet enjoys puffy perfection. 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.

## OCTOBER 07

**Boerne Book Festival,** (830) 249-3053, boernebookfest.com

**Grapevine Celebra**  
**Grapevine,** (813) 807-3382, latinosingrapevine.org

**Huntington Catfish Festival,** (936) 635-3306, shophuntingtontx.com

**San Marcos [7–8] Sacred Springs Powwow,** (512) 393-5930, sspowwow.com

**Weatherford [7–Dec. 2] Spirit of the West,** (817) 599-6168, weatherfordart.com

## 12

**Corsicana 175th Anniversary Time Capsule Ceremony,** (903) 654-4850, corsicana175years.com

## 13

**Albany [13–14] Living History Days,** (512) 463-6100, thc.texas.gov

**Ingram [13, 15, 20–22, 26–29] Frankenstein,** (830) 367-5121, hcacaf.com

## 14

**Fredericksburg Monarch Celebration,** (830) 990-1393, wildseedfarms.com

## 19

**Tyler [19–22] Texas Rose Festival,** (903) 531-1212, texasrosefestival.com

## 20

**Brenham Brass Transit,** (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

## 21

**Cisco TX Pie Fest,** (254) 334-9621, ciscotxpiefest.com



**San Marcos Eddie Durham Jazz Fest**, (512) 217-0600, facebook.com/calaboosemuseum

**Waco Oakwood Cemetery's Walking Tales**, (254) 717-1763, facebook.com/heartoftexasstorytellingguild

27

**Galveston [27-28] Oktoberfest**, (409) 762-8477, galvestonoktoberfest.com

28

**Cibolo Cibolofest**, (210) 619-3104, cibolotx.gov

**Point Venture Holiday Bazaar**, (781) 363-7161, facebook.com/pvholidaybazaar

**Sanger Sellabration**, (940) 458-7702, sangertexas.com

**Waxahachie Texas Country Reporter Festival**, (469) 309-4045, waxahachiecvb.com

31

**Johnson City Trunk-or-Treat at the Square**, (830) 868-7111, johnsoncitytx.org

NOVEMBER

03

**Oakville Dobie Dichos**, (361) 319-3067, dobiechichos.com

04

**Cottonwood Shores Legends of the Falls Festival**, (225) 747-0730, cottonwoodshores.org

## **TCP** Submit Your Event

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

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# Helping Out

From food donations to fundraising, Texans love to answer the call and lend a helping hand. Here's to all those who look out for others and embrace a challenge, rolling up their sleeves and pitching in for those in need.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



**1 HANNAH WESTERVELT**  
SAN PATRICIO EC

"My son and husband working on his truck."

**2 KERI NAKAMURA**  
TRI-COUNTY EC

"A son takes his 93-year-old mother on an evening walk."

**3 BRANDON EMBRY**  
DEAF SMITH EC

"I always liked this photo of my grandpa with my son trailing him around. We were getting ready to harvest wheat, and my kids always liked hanging out with Pop."

**4 LINDSAY HUMPHREYS**  
SOUTH PLAINS EC

"The beauty of raising kids in West Texas is they get to experience traditional branding and working cattle."



## Upcoming Contests

**DUE OCT 10** Vibrant Color  
**DUE NOV 10** Architecture  
**DUE DEC 10** Pollinators



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

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



## Noteworthy Grace

When the pandemic paused events, a tiny chapel celebrated kindness

BY SPIKE GILLESPIE  
PHOTO BY WYATT MCSPADDEN

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I bought an abandoned ranch just east of Austin. I dreamed of one day converting it to a meditation center, providing space for people of all walks to gather and sit in peace.

Running a ranch, even a small one, is pricey though. So I put my dream on hold and instead created a small wedding venue, a more lucrative way to support the place.

The crown jewel was a tiny chapel I had moved here from Luling. Couples loved the rustic feel and unique beauty of the building, fashioned from reclaimed wood and antique stained glass.

During the pandemic, business fell off and grumpiness befell some of the couples who proceeded with their plans. Frustrated with how the pandemic forced unwanted change—some had to reschedule, others watched guest lists

dwindle—they sometimes took out their aggravation on me. Overwhelmed by this negativity, sometimes I snapped back.

For a spell, after a particularly enraged bride eviscerated me because of the weather, I shut down altogether. Dismayed at how joyful celebrations had become overshadowed, I knew I needed to make a change.

A flash of an idea struck me. I recalled a Vermont chapel where people make pilgrimages to honor their dogs who have passed. I remembered a little chapel in Mexico where visitors leave notes of gratitude and *milagros* (prayer offerings) for St. Francis. I dubbed my itty-bitty church the Tiny Chapel of Kindness and invited people to send stories of kindness to adorn the walls.

And they did.

Their notes run the gamut from heartwarming to heartbreaking to flat-out hilarious. One describes being saved from a car wreck by strangers. Another hails an internet stranger who sent free motorcycle parts to a fellow tinkerer. One details the discovery, late in life, of a long-lost half-brother who embraced his “new” sister wholeheartedly (the siblings had been kept secret from each other because of the sins of their father).

I had many stories of my own to share, finally settling on one. Last fall, one of my longhorns went into labor. It was a bad journey. Unable to assist her alone, I called a neighbor for help. We cried as we worked together to deliver the stillborn calf. Then he administered penicillin so the mom would survive.

Grateful visitors come to read the stories and leave notes of their own. This is not the meditation center I’d envisioned when I first laid eyes on an old run-down property, but in our own fashion, we each meditate on the power of kindness. Powerful indeed.

As I had hoped, my attitude has shifted back to positive and, inspired by others, my anger has been replaced by joy and gratitude. ■



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**2023 American Silver Eagle:** The Silver Eagle is the most popular coin in the world, with its iconic Adolph Weinman Walking Liberty obverse backed by Emily Damstra's Eagle Landing reverse. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the U.S. Mint.

**2023 Canada Maple Leaf:** A highly sought-after bullion coin since 1988, this 2023 issue includes the **FIRST** and likely only use of a transitional portrait, of the late Queen Elizabeth II. These are also expected to be the **LAST** Maple Leafs to bear Her Majesty's effigy. Struck in high-purity 99.99% fine silver at the Royal Canadian Mint.

**2023 South African Krugerrand:** The Krugerrand continues to be the best-known, most respected numismatic coin brand in the world. 2023 is the Silver Krugerrand's 6th year of issue. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the South African Mint.

**2023 China Silver Panda:** 2023 is the 40th anniversary of the first silver Panda coin, issued in 1983. China Pandas are noted for their heart-warming one-year-only designs. Struck in 99.9% fine silver at the China Mint.

**2023 British Silver Britannia:** One of the Royal Mint's flagship coins, this 2023 issue is the **FIRST** in the Silver Britannia series to carry the portrait of King Charles III, following the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. Struck in 99.9% fine silver.

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