

REMEMBERING THAT
FIRST LIGHT BULB

DON'T MIND THOSE
ALLIGATORS

WINDMILLER KEEPS
WITS IN A PINCH

Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

AUGUST 2024

On the Road Again

A photographer
piles on the miles to
capture rural Texas

I'm thinking more today about how to protect the money I've earned.

I've learned a lot of things over the years, talking to all sorts of experts in all sorts of fields. But one of the most important lessons I learned was from two former Directors of the U.S. Mint, who taught me everything I needed to know about the importance of protecting my savings with physical gold and silver.

In 25 years of working dirty jobs, the thought of a diversified portfolio really didn't cross my mind—but the more I learn, the better I feel about buying gold and silver from U.S. Money Reserve.

Is gold right for you? That's not for me to say. You've got to do your own due diligence. All I know is that today, it's not enough to simply work hard—you also have to save smart. So, call the number below. The folks at U.S. Money Reserve are standing by to help.



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August 2024



12

06 Open Roads, Open Eyes

Over five decades of crisscrossing Texas, a photographer learns to slow down to really see.

Photo essay by Wyatt McSpadden

In the Beginning

Few recall when electric co-ops lit up the countryside; Katie Phillips remembers every bit of her dad's life-changing work.

*Story by Tom Widlowski
Photo by Caytlyn Calhoun*

ON THE COVER

On the way north to Amarillo, just after crossing the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River.
Photo by Wyatt McSpadden

ABOVE

Katie Phillips enjoys quilting—and air conditioning, ample lighting and watching TV.
Photo by Caytlyn Calhoun

04

Currents

The latest buzz

05

TCP Talk

Readers respond

16

Co-op News

Information plus energy and safety tips from your cooperative

25

Footnotes in Texas History

LBJ's Sense and Humor
By W.F. Strong

26

TCP Kitchen

Party Drinks
By Vianney Rodriguez

30

Hit the Road

A Jaw-Dropping Journey
By Chet Garner

33

Focus on Texas

Photo Contest: Textures

34

Observations

Friends in High Places
By Sam W. Young



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 Young Photographers

RECOMMENDED READING

True or false: People used to believe you could dynamite rain out of the sky. They sure did, as we explained in *Rain, You Blasted Sky!* from August 2013.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I can't wait to learn ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our June prompt: **The next book you should read is ...**

The Time It Never Rained by Elmer Kelton. You will laugh. You will also cry.

JANIS HAGAN
 NAVARRO COUNTY EC
 CORSICANA

The Madstone by Elizabeth Crook. An amazing historical novel based in Texas just after the Civil War.

SUSAN ERVIN
 PEDERNALES EC
 GEORGETOWN

The Women by Kristin Hannah. An eye-opening book about the women of Vietnam.

DANI MACNEIL
 BANDERA EC
 PIPE CREEK

Visit our website to see more responses.

Rural Showcase

OVER THE NEXT YEAR, seven Texas cities will host a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition that examines the evolution of small towns as the American population moved into urban areas over the past 125 years.

Crossroads: Change in Rural America debuts August 24 in San Augustine. After six weeks in deep East Texas, the exhibition will move on to weekslong stays in Clifton, Brenham, Rockport, Buffalo Gap and San Elizario. The tour through Texas will end in Bandera on August 2, 2025.

To learn more, visit museumonmainstreet.org.



August 20
World Mosquito Day

Don't forget to celebrate **World Mosquito Day**. Wait, maybe not. Scratch that.

JUNE 2024 We Brake for Steak

“Chet Garner needs to go back to the Leona General Store on Thursday nights, when it’s just some of the best catfish anywhere.”

DARRELL HUTTO
 NAVASOTA VALLEY EC
 JEWETT



COURTESY CHET GARNER

Traveling South, Traveling East

I loved the idea of emotional healing by traveling to every state park [Trailblazer, June 2024]. I was a little disappointed that no South Texas parks were mentioned.

My favorite story in the issue was *Renewal in Blue*. I traveled to East Texas with the young girl and loved the ending with the bluebonnets.

Penny Brown
 Magic Valley EC
 Rio Hondo

Multiplying at the Sixes

As an avid fan of the *Yellowstone* TV series, it was captivating to learn about the Burnett family and how the Four Sixes Ranch began and grew into one of the 10 largest ranches in the state [Sixes on the Small Screen, May 2024].

Sarah Brown
 Bluebonnet EC
 Cedar Creek



B.J. HINKLE

Avenging Uncle

James Franklin Norfleet was my great-uncle [Payback Time, May 2024]. I remember when we would visit the Norfleets at their home in Hale County in the 1950s, and Aunt Eliza would regale us with stories of earlier days.

Uncle Frank awed us kids as he would always strap on his pistol belt before going outside. For kids growing up listening to *The Lone Ranger*, we were quite impressed.

Jim K. Hudgins
 San Bernard EC
 Bellville

Roadside Attractions

It seems to me that Michael Ford has discovered and perfected a new art form on the Texas landscape [Overpass Easels, May 2024]. His work is extremely expressive of Texas and unique in each example.

Mary E. Specia
 GVEC
 McQueeney

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

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Open Roads, Open Eyes

Over five decades
of crisscrossing Texas,
a photographer learns
to slow down to really see





PHOTO ESSAY BY WYATT MCSPADDEN

When I was younger and living in Amarillo, it always seemed important to get where I was going and back as soon as possible.

For a few years after a divorce, my two boys and their mom lived in San Marcos. And so a couple of times a month, I'd make that 500-plus mile drive as fast as I could.

When I abandoned the Panhandle and moved to Austin, my freelance photography business kicked into a higher gear. The jobs were in every direction, in and around my new city.

I never griped about the mileage, but as I matured, I did start listening to my eyes. I made it a rule that if I saw something that caught my attention at 70 mph and I couldn't get it out of my mind after a couple miles, I'd go back to get a picture—or at least to visit and decide if what I saw was worth a return trip at a particular time of day.

The drives are much more mellow these days after 50 years as a professional photographer, and I navigate using a spiral-bound detail map of Texas counties. Driving seems to be the second-most important skill in my line of work.

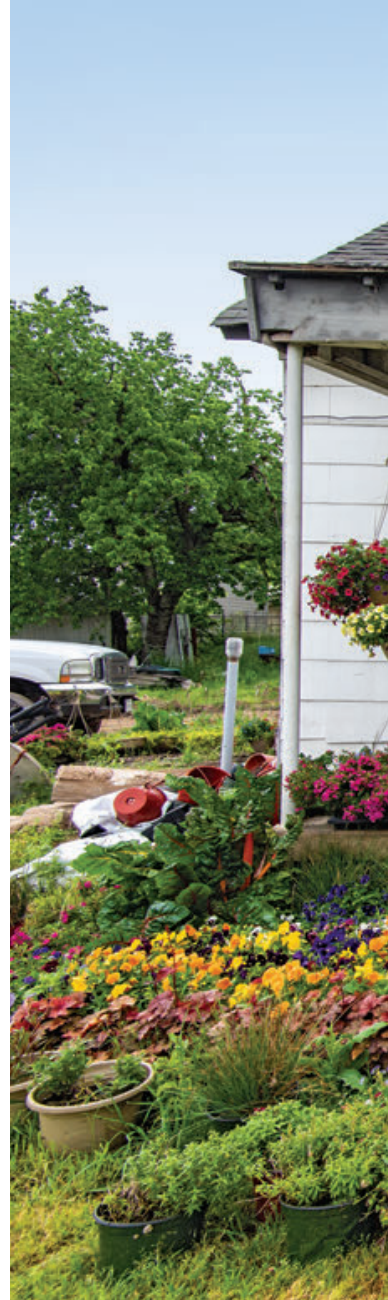
Of course, skill No. 1 is making a good picture upon reaching my destination. Most often the job involves capturing a portrait of someone who has accomplished something a magazine editor thinks is worthy of a story. But sometimes it's capturing the feel, the presence of a place.

I'm pretty sure I've driven a million miles in Texas, but now I do it a mile at a time. That's how the pictures in these pages were made, driving slow(ish), with eyes wide open. ■

I know my way around the Amarillo area, having lived there until I was 40. I was joyriding and admiring the late-day clouds when the lonely little tree appeared on the horizon.



Early morning on the road between Earth and Dimmit, in the Panhandle, familiar territory from my early years making a living shooting for seed and cattle operations. I hadn't seen such a tall silage mound, and the man with his pitchfork caught my eye.





I was passing through Hico on my way to the Metroplex when I spotted this little house. It took some coaxing for the woman to pose.





ABOVE I have a collection of barbed wire, plastic and wind pictures. Artsy pictures of trash.

LEFT A blue Dodge seems to have a permanent parking spot between Sandy Fork and Luling.

OPPOSITE A classic farmhouse, newly plowed field and epic sky near Granger, in Williamson County. Irresistible.



In the Beginning

**Few recall when electric cooperatives lit up the countryside;
Katie Phillips remembers every bit of her dad's life-changing work**

Katie Phillips is old enough to remember the dark ages—when nightfall at her family's farm outside Coleman meant navigating by the shadowy illumination offered by carbide and coal-oil lamps and lanterns. When much of the work on her dad's dairy farm—milking, separating and bottling—happened before sunrise and without the benefit of electricity.

"It's a hard life," says Katie, who turns 97 next month. For her and her brother and two sisters growing up in the 1930s, there wasn't much free time for fun, and before electricity, there was no reading or playing games at night.

Milking started every day at 3 a.m., and a few hours later, Katie's dad, Charlie Pitts, was making the first of his twice-

daily deliveries of Oak Grove Dairy Farm milk to homes, stores and cafés around Coleman, south of Abilene, on the western Central Texas plains.

It never escaped Pitts' notice that just 4½ miles east, in town, folks had the luxury of electricity.

Back then in rural America, those 4½ miles might as well have been a million. Electricity stopped where the profits did, and in 1936, fewer than 3% of Texas farms had electricity.

But before long, farmers, ranchers and their neighbors

Katie Phillips' dad helped create Coleman County Electric Cooperative. She saw the co-op's first light bulb flicker on in 1937.

Katie remembers the first appliance in the house—a two-door refrigerator picked up at Gray Mercantile in town. It meant no more lugging ice home.

pooled their money and worked together to build the electric cooperatives that lit up the countryside and brought a better quality of life.

Katie Phillips is among few living Americans who witnessed that important history. She had a front-row seat.

Katie turned 9 in 1936, the year her dad became a local leader in the cooperative movement that was in its early stages.

In those days, the town of Coleman had not only electricity but phone service too, and Pitts realized he needed that to keep up with milk orders. To get it, he paid to have a line strung from Coleman, across a creek, to the farm. Katie remembers their party line phone number: 4-0-0.

“I always wanted something better,” Pitts told the family.

Getting electricity to the farm was another matter.

Pitts traveled to Washington, D.C., to learn about the Rural Electrification Administration, which provided loans for the creation of cooperatives. He then visited neighboring farms, asking folks to contribute \$5 to help start a co-op.

Finally, in April 1937, the first Coleman County Electric Cooperative light bulb flickered on in the Pitts farmhouse—an honor befitting the co-op’s first board president.

“It was a great day for everybody because it was a completion of a long journey for Daddy,” Katie says. The Pitts kids had better lighting for their schoolwork, and Dad had a perfect place to read the Fort Worth newspaper he always had in the house.

Soon lines brought power to the dairy barn, where milking machines freed up farmhands.

Katie remembers the first appliance in the house—a two-door refrigerator picked up at Gray Mercantile in town. It meant no more lugging ice home. “I just know that it was one of the most wonderful feelings there was when we could go to that refrigerator and open both doors and look in there and see what was in it,” Katie says.

Decades later, Katie spends a lot of her days knitting under a lamp in a corner of her living room in a 100-year-old farmhouse 6 miles east of Coleman. Electricity is too commonplace to warrant much thought. It powers her iPhone, tablet, two TVs and brand-new Singer sewing machine.

She’s known around Coleman County EC for being there at the dawn of the co-op. When the co-op held its 85th annual meeting in July 2023, she was there, and it was her 85th annual meeting too. She has attended every last one.

“The first light bulb was the beginning of an amazing future for all of us,” says Synda Smith, the co-op’s CEO and

general manager. “There are few businesses that have a past connection like this. It feels so good to know that Katie still feels like we are doing what our earlier leaders wanted us to do by continuing to uphold the co-op business model.”

Katie has farmed most of her life around Coleman, except for two years in high school at Our Lady of the Lake in San Antonio. She dated Harold Phillips for a little less than a year—sometimes on horseback—and they married in 1948 when she was 21.

Together they farmed for 66 years, until he died in 2014. Harold was one of the first farmers in the area to grow sunflowers and to use parallel terracing. They had five children, four of whom are still living—all within five miles of Katie. Two of the sons are farmers.

By her 50th wedding anniversary, Katie figured she was ready to give up farming, and she broke that news to Harold.

“I told him, ‘I think I’ve done enough now,’ ” Katie says. “And he said, ‘What would encourage you to do a little more?’

“I said, ‘You buy me an air-conditioned, four-wheel-drive tractor.’ ”

And that’s how she ended up the proud owner of a John Deere tractor that’s still in the family.

Katie, who says she needed no prescriptions until she turned 90, has other family heirlooms that she holds dear: A six-leaf table brought by covered wagon from Louisiana by Katie’s great-grandparents in the mid-1800s graces her dining room, and there’s a couple of glider-style chairs that her mother bought in New York and the chair her dad used to rock her to sleep.

But the greatest treasure might be Charlie Pitts’ old desk chair, the very one where he worked out the wrinkles and legal details of creating the electric utility that gave his kids—and his community—a brighter future.

And Katie still has a direct connection to the co-op office in town. One of her six grandchildren, Kathreyn Portis, is a member services representative at Coleman County EC, where she has worked almost four years.

“My family’s legacy in this county is a big one, so to get to be able to continue that means a lot to me,” Portis says. “Family isn’t just blood relatives. It’s these people,” she says of her three dozen colleagues at the co-op.

They all follow in the footsteps of a dairy farmer who wanted to leave the dark ages behind.

As Katie knits or quilts or watches her beloved Dallas Cowboys, she joins nearly 5,000 fellow co-op members in her community living a better life because of co-op power.

But she alone remembers that day in 1937 when her dad helped that first light bulb come on.

“It was magical,” Katie says. “It’s just the greatest thing in the world. When he found out that you could get electricity, he said, ‘We’re going to do it.’ ” ■



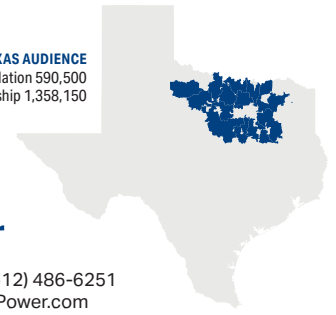
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It's not often you happen upon a bladesmith who has gem cutting skills. But finding needles in haystacks is what we do best, so when we saw this master craftsman's handiwork, we made certain to procure some of these Southwestern masterpieces to complete our collection.

The stainless steel blade, bolster and pommel are exquisitely etched and would have looked great with a less ambitious handle. But the results of overachieving are stunning here. The turquoise-blue colored handle is ablaze with assorted stones like jasper, marble, sunstone, and coral that have been hand cut and inlaid in a Southwestern motif.

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Back to School

Electric co-ops continually learn to improve service for members



CEO
HERBERT "TREY"
GREBE III

IT'S A NEW SCHOOL YEAR, and students of all ages are getting ready for a fresh start. Kindergarteners and college students—and all students in between—will crack open books to build their skills, widen their perspectives and gain new knowledge.

In much the same way, Medina Electric Cooperative is continually learning the best ways to implement technology and processes that improve electric service, reliability and safety and, in turn, enhance the quality of life for the members we serve.

Medina EC is tapped into energy sector trends in an industry that's rapidly changing. Innovations in technology and fuel types are increasing consumer demands and expectations. People are looking for more ways to manage their energy use with smart technologies, and folks expect more convenient payment methods—whether through automatic bill pay, prepay, online or through a smartphone app.

We're always looking for opportunities to make life easier for our members. At the same time, we never lose sight of our top priority—laid out by our founders more than 80 years ago: providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity to the communities we serve.

Advanced Meters Work Smarter, Not Harder

Automated meter reading automatically collects energy consumption data and transfers it from the electric meter to the co-op. Because this information can be collected remotely, it enhances our system's efficiency, helps control costs and improves work processes.

Advanced metering infrastructure takes this tech one step further. This integrated system of smart meters, communications networks and data management systems enables two-way communication between your cooperative and its members' meters. In the event of an outage, AMI helps to distinguish between events that impact a single home and something more widespread.

This distinction is critical because resolving these issues requires very different processes. Two-way communication is integral to AMI because it provides a means to verify that power has been restored after an outage. However, one of the biggest benefits of improved metering technologies, especially for outages caused by extreme weather, is pinpointing the outage location, which helps to reduce risk for crews out on the road during severe weather.

This AMI technology is in communication with our supervisory control and data acquisition technology is managed by our system operations team. They monitor our distribution grid in real time while collecting data from various sensors, devices and control systems to provide up-to-date information on the performance and status of Medina EC's distribution grid.

In addition, the AMI and SCADA technologies will be able to run algorithms and analytics that can detect faults, abnormalities and deviations from normal operating conditions. When a fault occurs, such as a power outage or equipment malfunction, the system can quickly pinpoint the affected area, isolate the problem and provide diagnostic information to aid in troubleshooting repair.

Technology Improves Efficiency

Medina EC's residential members now have access to a better understanding of their energy use with increased insight into which appliances may be contributing to their monthly bill and by approximately how much. This feature, known as consumer analytics, utilizes meter data disaggregation to identify individual appliance types and their respective contributions to total energy consumption within the home.

Armed with this personalized information, members will have increased opportunities to make informed decisions regarding their electricity usage, potentially leading to energy and cost savings on their monthly bills. Learn more about this feature at MedinaEC.org/ConsumerAnalytics.

For Medina EC, our "school year" is never over. We'll continue to learn from our members about their priorities, and we'll continue to study and research the issues so we can better serve you—now and well into the future.

Until next time,
Trey Grebe



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Beware of Lightning Strikes

TEXAS TALLIED MORE lightning strikes than any state in 2023, with summer being the most active period for bolts, according to a report by *USA Today*. The summer season also recorded the most fatalities from lightning strikes, which killed 13 people in 2023.

Knowing and following proven safety guidelines can help reduce the risk of injury or death during a storm. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration describes what to do to stay safe from lightning.

Where to Go

The safest place to be during a thunderstorm is in a large building like a home, shopping center, school, church or office. If lightning strikes the building, the plumbing and wiring will conduct the electricity more efficiently than the human body. Many buildings are grounded to protect them from lightning. If a large building is not a viable option, stay in a vehicle.

Where Not to Go

Some buildings aren't safe during thunderstorms. Unsafe shelters include metal sheds, picnic pavilions, carports and baseball dugouts. Porches aren't safe either. Even though most vehicles are safe, remember that convertibles (even with the top up), golf carts and tractors do not protect from lightning.

What to Do

Once inside a secure building, stay away from electrical appliances and plumbing fixtures. For even more protection, seek an interior room. If in a vehicle, roll up the windows and don't touch anything that conducts electricity such as the radio or the ignition.

What Not to Do

Especially in rural areas, lightning can travel long distances—so don't assume the lightning storm is far enough away that you're safe. Stay off corded phones and don't use electrical appliances. Additionally, don't take showers or baths because water and metal are good conductors of electricity.

Medina Electric Cooperative



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Is Your Contact Information Up To Date?



MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE is asking members to contact the cooperative to update any account information.

This information includes:

- name on the account
- cellphone and landline numbers
- email address
- mailing address
- primary use for electricity
- gate code

It's important to inform Medina EC of any updates to your account so we can continue to provide better service and communication to members.

If at any time you have a change to your account information, please call us at 1-866-632-3532, email Info@MedinaEC.org or update on SmartHub.

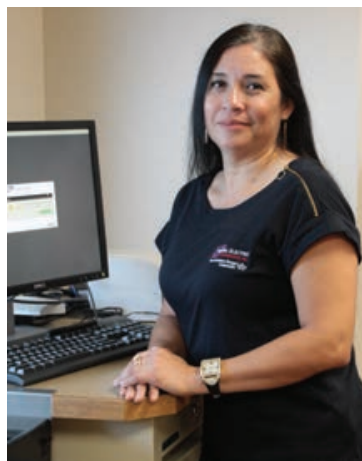
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STARTING THE WEEK OF AUGUST 5, 350 members will be randomly selected to take an online survey about Medina Electric Cooperative. Your answers will help the cooperative understand how we can improve service to and better communicate with our members.

The emailed survey should take less than five minutes. This feedback is important to the cooperative, and we appreciate members taking time out of their busy schedules to provide it to us.

The surveys are conducted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Emails will show Medina Electric Cooperative in the "From" line.

The cooperative has been conducting these surveys quarterly throughout the year, and the last survey for 2024 will take place in



November.

If you do not receive a survey email but would like to share feedback or an idea with the cooperative, email us at MyCoop@MedinaEC.org.

Sharing Power Poles

ALMOST 85 YEARS AGO, Medina Electric Cooperative began to provide reliable, safe and affordable power for our members. In this time, the cooperative has built and continues to maintain more than 9,990 miles of lines and over 150,000 utility poles. This infrastructure is critical for the more than 21,000 members who rely on Medina EC to provide electricity.

It is not a new phenomenon for electric utilities to work with and allow other service providers, like telephone, cable and internet, to attach to our poles. Infrastructure installed by electric utilities such as Medina EC essentially provides the backbone for communications companies to provide telephone, cable and internet services—their wires and equipment attach to Medina EC-owned poles.

Medina EC appreciates the value these services hold for people who live in the rural areas the cooperative serves, but also puts the co-op's members and assets first. That's why companies wishing to attach to cooperative infrastructure must go through the proper process to obtain contracts, permits and approvals from the cooperative as well as easements from landowners.

To learn more about the cooperative's process, visit MedinaEC.org/Attachments.

Did You Know?

Posting signs to utility poles puts both you and Medina EC linemen at risk. You are potentially exposing yourself to thousands of volts of electricity when you staple a sign to a pole. The signs and staples also clutter poles and compromise linemen's safety gear.



Member Benefits Bingo!

You have FIVE lucky chances to win a \$100 credit on your electric bill.

Chance 1: Register your account on SmartHub

Sign up at MedinaEC.SmartHub.coop or download the app and register your account there. SmartHub allows you to report outages with one click, view past electricity use and see your use before you get your monthly bill.

Chance 2: Verify Your contact methods in SmartHub

Verify your contact methods in SmartHub to ensure your account information is up to date. This will also enroll you in outage alerts and allow you to sign up for other notifications. Go to “Contact Methods” on SmartHub to verify your phone number and email address.

Chance 3: Build your Home Profile

Residential members can enhance their consumer analytics by completing the Build Your Home Profile section in SmartHub. You can find this under the “Usage” tab. Learn more at MedinaEC.org/ConsumerAnalytics.

Chance 4: Sign up for automated payments

Have your bill automatically charged to your credit or debit card or bank account each month. Set it up online through SmartHub or by calling 1-866-632-3532.

Chance 5: Choose paperless billing

Opt out of receiving a paper bill every month and have your bill emailed to you instead. Change your account settings in SmartHub or call us at 1-866-632-3532 and staff will change it for you.

Members enrolled for each of these programs as of 5 p.m. November 1 will be entered. This includes members who are already signed up for these options and any new sign-ups between now and November 1.

There will be five separate drawings, and five \$100 bill credits will be awarded and automatically issued as bill credits.

Winners in each category will be randomly selected and announced in the December issue of *Texas Co-op Power*.

Department Spotlight: Information & Technology

In honor of National IT Professionals Day, recognized September 17, Medina Electric Cooperative is recognizing our information and technology department. The IT team works hard to protect Medina EC's data and systems by keeping all of the cooperative's technology up to date, scanning countless emails and implementing needed updates and firewalls. They also do a great job answering computer and technology questions and helping employees and members whenever needed. Medina EC's information technology team is always busy, helpful and doing everything to keep us at the forefront of technological advancements. We would like to give our IT department a shoutout for all the work they do—in front of us and behind the scenes.



DOUGLAS KINDRED
Chief Information Technology Officer

THE INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY TEAM



ARIEL VALVERDE
Network Administrator



JOSE MONTALVO
Network Administrator



BRYCE THAYER
Information Technology Technician



OLIVER STONE
Information Technology Technician



RICHARD GREEN
Information Technology Technician

Insulation Made Easy

INSULATION AND AIR SEALING typically provide the biggest bang for your buck when it comes to home energy efficiency improvements. When installed together, they can save you money and make a big difference in comfort and energy use.

Insulation Rating

Insulation is rated in R-value. The R stands for resistance to heat transfer. The higher your R-value, the slower the heat transfer, resulting in less wasted energy.

Where to Insulate

The typical locations for insulation are the attic, walls and floor. If you have a forced-air heating or cooling system, your duct-work should be insulated, too. You want a consistent thermal barrier around your home for maximum efficiency.

Attic insulation minimizes energy waste and can help maintain a more consistent temperature throughout your home.

Attics can be insulated using batts or blown-in insulation. Recommended R-values range from R-30 to R-60. If you use your attic for storage, you can build a raised platform with room for insulation underneath. Add insulation and weatherstripping to access doors or hatches.

Exterior walls and walls separating heated and unheated areas of the home—such as garages or enclosed porches—should be insulated to an R-value ranging from R-13 to R-21, based on your location and wall construction.

Wall insulation can be installed during construction or a remodel. If your home wasn't insulated when it was built, you can have the insulation blown in by a contractor.

Your home should also be insulated between the floor and crawl space with an R-value from R-13 to R-30.

Importance of Air Sealing

Air sealing prevents drafts and air infiltration from outside. It can improve efficiency, comfort and indoor air quality.

Air sealing can be done as a DIY project, but it's challenging to pinpoint and properly seal air leaks. Consider hiring a contractor to complete a blower door test and seal leaks.

Typically, air sealing is done around plumbing and electrical penetrations with spray foam or caulk. If using spray foam around gas appliances, temporarily turn off pilot lights. Spray foam is extremely flammable.

DIY Considerations

If you're considering a DIY approach, wear a properly fitted mask or respirator around insulation. Wearing a Tyvek suit and gloves also is recommended. Kneepads can come in handy and make the crawling more bearable.

Before going the DIY route, get estimates from two or three contractors. Sometimes a contractor can do the job for less.

We hope to see you at our **85TH ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

SATURDAY, SEPT. 28 • HERBY HAM ACTIVITY CENTER • UVALDE
BREAKFAST AT 9 A.M. • MEETING AT 10 A.M.
ANOTHER YEAR IN THE BOOKS!

Join Us To:

- Have a chance to win the \$1,000 grand prize!
- Meet with Medina EC staff and directors
- Get updates on your cooperative and hear the 2024 director election results
- Learn about local libraries and the services they provide to their communities
- Bring books to donate in the book drive and be entered for additional prizes!
- Mingle with other members
- Win door prizes
- Enjoy breakfast on us!



SCAN TO RSVP!

**More details will be available in the
September issue of *Texas Co-op Power* or
visit MedinaEC.org/AnnualMeeting2024.**



Community Empowerment Grants: \$5,500 Awarded to Area Organizations

In June, Medina Electric Cooperative awarded \$5,500 in grants to area organizations through the Community Empowerment Program to encourage community and economic development throughout the 17 counties served by the cooperative.

The program focuses on projects that encourage economic diversity, contribute to community health and development, and improve the quality or quantity of services essential for the development of viable communities.

These organizations will receive grants to further their community impact:

Bluebonnet Children's Advocacy Center (Medina, Real and Uvalde counties) - \$750

The grant is being used to stock up the Rainbow Room, an emergency resource room, with clothing, baby food and diapers and other items given to women and children while at the center.

Briscoe Animal Resource Center of Uvalde (Uvalde County) - \$1,000

The grant is being used to fund a new memorial animal shelter.

Joe Finger Youth Benefit Fund (Medina County) - \$750

The grant is being used to purchase a scoreboard for the first of three little league fields.

Medina Healthcare System (Medina County) - \$750

The grant is being used to enhance patient safety when medications are administered by using a point of care device that scans a patient's armband and the barcode on the medication prior to administration to ensure the right patient receives the right drug.

Medina Valley Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8134 (Medina County) - \$1,500

The grant is being added to funds already raised and go toward repairing and leveling the VFW building's foundation. This includes removing and replacing pipes, beams and floor joists.

Restoring Hope Family Resource Center (Frio County) - \$750

The grant is being used to purchase three polywood glider benches for the center's Hope Garden. The center hopes clients and community members will use the space as an area to interact, reflect, grieve and pray.

"It is important as a member-owned cooperative that we help make a difference in our community beyond providing safe, reliable electricity," said Trey Grebe, Medina EC's CEO. "One of the best ways to do this is by supporting local nonprofit organizations that promote education, economic growth and are often safe places for our community members, young and old."

Medina EC is proud to include these organizations in the more than \$83,000 in grants awarded to various nonprofits and local governments since the CEP grant program started in 2015.



For more information visit
MedinaEC.org/Grant.



MEDINA EC DIRECTOR JIMMIE RAINES (SECOND TO RIGHT) AND CEP COMMITTEE MEMBER ROY KOTHMANN (RIGHT) PRESENT A \$1,000 GRANT TO BRISCOE ANIMAL RESOURCE CENTER.



MEDINA EC DIRECTOR KEN WEYNAND (LEFT) PRESENTS NURSES AT MEDINA REGIONAL HOSPITAL IN HONDO WITH A \$750 GRANT.



MEDINA EC DIRECTOR KEN WEYNAND (THIRD FROM RIGHT) PRESENTS VETERAN MEMBERS OF THE MEDINA VALLEY VFW POST 8134 WITH A \$1,500 GRANT.

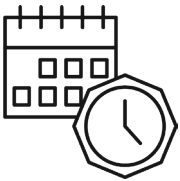
SIGN UP FOR SMARTHUB

SmartHub is a great tool to manage your account and here are a few of the reasons why!



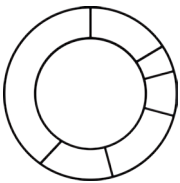
ALERTS & NOTIFICATIONS

Members enrolled in SmartHub with a verified mobile number on their account receive text messages notifying them when their meter is out of power and when power is restored. You can also sign up for other notifications like bill alerts and more.



24/7 ACCESS

Through SmartHub, all Medina EC members have access to their online account, manage their use, pay their bill or report an outage at any time, day or night.



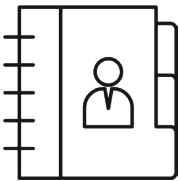
ENERGY USE ANALYTICS

Residential members have access to advanced analytics detailing their energy use by appliance. As a result, Medina EC members can gain a deeper understanding of their energy usage, specifically pinpointing which appliances are driving up electric bills and by approximately how much.



VOTE

Members can use SmartHub to vote in Medina EC's board of director elections each year.



UPDATE CONTACT INFORMATION

Using SmartHub, members can update their contact information including mailing address, mobile phone numbers and emails. Updated information is important for the co-op to communicate with members.

Haven't Set Yours Up?

Scan this QR code or visit
MedinaEC.SmartHub.Coop



Questions or Need Help?

Learn more at MedinaEC.org/SH
or call us at 1-866-632-3532.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Operation Round Up Applications Due

Friday, August 2

Learn more about ORU and apply
at MedinaEC.org/ORU.

Purple Heart Day

Wednesday, August 7

National 811 Day

Sunday, August 11

Medina EC Director Election Voting Opens

Tuesday, August 20

Learn more about the candidates
at MedinaEC.org/BoardElection.

Waffle Day

Saturday, August 24

Labor Day

Monday, September 2

Our offices will be closed in
observance of the holiday.
As always, crews will be on call.

SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest— but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and purchased it for our *Sedona Turquoise Collection*. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over \$1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you



could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for just \$99.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. If you aren't completely happy with your purchase, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

The supply of Arizona turquoise is limited, don't miss your chance to own the Southwest's brilliant blue treasure. Call today!

Jewelry Specifications:

• Arizona turquoise • Silver-finished settings

Sedona Turquoise Collection

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------|------|-------------------|
| A. Pendant (26 cts) | \$299 * | \$99 | +s&p | Save \$200 |
| B. 18" Bali Naga woven sterling silver chain | | \$149 | +s&p | |
| C. 1 1/2" Earrings (10 ctw) | \$299 * | \$99 | +s&p | Save \$200 |
| Complete Set** | \$747 * | \$249 | +s&p | Save \$498 |

**Complete set includes pendant, chain and earrings.

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B.

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Arizona turquoise
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A.

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enlarged
to show
luxurious
color

Stauer... *Afford the Extraordinary.*®



Sense and Humor

LBJ's unique penchant for storytelling helped him navigate politics

BY W. F. STRONG

WHEN MOST PEOPLE think of Lyndon B. Johnson, they don't necessarily envision a man with a great sense of humor. After all, he was president during turbulent times.

"When the burdens of the presidency seem unusually heavy," he once joked, "I always remind myself it could be worse. I could be a mayor."

Though he didn't have the public eloquence of Kennedy or King, he was charismatic. He was a wonderful storyteller.

Writer and historian Doris Kearns Goodwin worked closely with the president for seven years, and because of her professional relationship with him, I would argue that her biography—out of all the biographies about the 36th presi-

dent—is the most humanizing.

No writer knew him better.

Goodwin told me she never tired of listening to him, though eventually she came to realize that his stories were not all completely true. Some were apocryphal, she said, and like Abraham Lincoln, LBJ used stories to animate his points, skewer his adversaries, and amuse and entertain.

He learned his storytelling, Goodwin said, from his father and grandfather, growing up in the Hill Country. Johnson would listen at night as they talked politics on the porch with local power brokers.

My own father, a great admirer of the president, shared a couple of LBJ stories with me long ago.

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



When Barry Goldwater and Nelson Rockefeller were campaigning to win their party's nomination for president in 1964, LBJ heard that both men were "cutting way back on their visits to California." Johnson said, "Reminds me of a case in Texas where a man wanted to run for sheriff against an unpopular incumbent named Uncle Johnny.

"Man asked his friend Dave if he thought he had a chance. Dave said, 'Well, I guess it depends on who meets the most people.' 'Yeah, that's what I was thinking,' said the man. Dave explained further, 'If he meets the most people, you'll win, and if you meet the most people, he'll win.'"

LBJ also told of a "boy in Texas who was very poor and tired of seeing his mama struggling so much to feed her family. So he sent a letter to God asking for \$100 for his mama. The letter got forwarded eventually to the postmaster general in Washington, D.C.

"He took pity on the boy and put \$20 in an envelope and mailed it to him. Two weeks later, the postmaster got a letter back from the boy that said, 'Dear God, thank you for sending the money, but next time don't send it through Washington cuz they took 80% of it.'"

Goodwin said she was happy to see that LBJ is getting long-deserved credit for the laws and policies he passed in his time, like the Voting Rights Act, as well as the institutions he helped found, like NASA and the Public Broadcasting Service.

If only he could have known how much progress his work would bring. He certainly would have smiled—and had a story ready. ■

Party Drinks

Find fruity refreshments—and a guide for mocktail options

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Spending every summer in Mexico growing up, nothing made me happier than sipping on a tall glass of *agua de sandía* (watermelon water) sold by local street vendors. It's a bright and refreshing drink made from watermelon, water, lime juice and sugar. August is peak watermelon season in Texas, so I'm excited to share this beloved drink from my childhood.

Agua de Sandía

8 cups diced watermelon

4 cups cold water

¼ cup sugar

Juice of 1 lime

Tajín, for the rim

Lime wedge, for the rim

1. Blend watermelon and water until smooth. Depending on the size of your blender, you may need to divide this into batches, blending half the watermelon and half the water at a time.
2. Strain into a pitcher. Stir in sugar and lime juice.
3. Spread Tajín on a plate. Run lime wedge around the rim of each glass and dip into Tajín. Serve over ice in Tajín-rimmed glasses.

SERVES 8

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in *Cocina Gris* at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Hibiscus Mint Tequila Punch.





Lemon Pucker Martini

DEBI OROZCO
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

I love a lightly sweet but bold-flavored cocktail, and that's exactly what this Lemon Pucker Martini recipe offers. It's a perfect balance between tart and sweet and proves incredibly refreshing.

- 2 tablespoons sugar, for the rim**
- 1 lemon wedge, for the rim**
- 2 ounces vodka**
- 1 ounce fresh lemon juice**
- ½ ounce limoncello**
- ½ ounce orange-flavored liqueur**
- 1 teaspoon agave**
- Lemon slice, for garnish**

1. Spread sugar on a plate. Run lemon wedge around the rim of a cocktail glass and dip into sugar. Place glass in the freezer until ready to serve.
2. Add vodka, lemon juice, limoncello, orange-flavored liqueur and agave to a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Shake vigorously.
3. Strain into chilled, sugar-rimmed cocktail glass. Garnish with lemon slice.

SERVES 1

[MORE RECIPES >](#)



\$500 WINNER

Summer Beer

CINDY JARROTT
BLUEBONNET EC



Pour, stir, serve and sip!
A beer-based cocktail fit for a crowd, this simple summer beer is a fresh and smooth beverage that's designed for batching in bulk.

SERVES 6

- 1 can frozen pink lemonade (12 ounces)**
- 12 ounces vodka**
- 4 cans light beer (12 ounces each)**
- Frozen mixed berries, for garnish**

1. Add frozen lemonade and vodka to a pitcher. (You can use the lemonade can to measure 12 ounces of vodka.) Stir until lemonade is dissolved.
2. Add beer and stir to combine.
3. Pour into ice-filled glasses and top with frozen berries.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

HEARTY SOUPS DUE AUGUST 10

When it's cold outside, we want nothing more than to cozy up inside with a piping hot bowl of soup. Send us your favorite comforting soup, and you could win \$500. Enter by August 10.





Texas Bluebonnet

CAROL BRADY
NUECES EC

It's time to pop open the bubbly and celebrate the waning days of summer. The addition of sparkling wine to this cocktail makes it feel a bit elegant, which is always a plus, but this festive drink can easily be whipped up for four or doubled for a crowd.

½ cup blue Curaçao liqueur
1½ cups lemonade
2 cups sparkling wine
Juice of 1 lemon
Orange slices, for garnish
Lemon slices, for garnish
Maraschino cherries, for garnish

1. Fill a pitcher with ice. Add blue Curaçao liqueur, lemonade, sparkling wine and lemon juice. Stir.
2. Serve over ice, garnished with fruit on skewers.

SERVES 4

TCP Vianney Rodriguez features many more cocktail recipes on sweetlifebake.com and in *Latin Twist: Traditional and Modern Cocktails*, the book she co-authored with Yvette Marquez-Sharpnack.

From Cocktail to Mocktail

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Nonalcoholic cocktails don't have to be bland. Here are a few tips and tricks to keep your party hopping:

Replace sparkling wine with soda water for a guilt-free bubbly effect.

A mix of cranberry and grape juice produces a delicious sangrialike option.

Ginger beer punches up the flavor and adds a warm kick to a mocktail.

Nonalcoholic spirits are becoming more common in stores. From vodka to mezcal and nonalcoholic beer and wine, options are hitting shelves, ready to help you shake up a mocktail.

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80

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tfsweb.tamu.edu/PreventWildfire



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Grab Your Piece of America's Silver Legacy



99.9% Fine Silver Bars

Actual size is 30.6 x 50.4 mm

Fill Your Vault with Morgan Silver Bars



Not only are these hefty bars one full Troy ounce of real, .999 precious silver, they're also beautiful, featuring the crisp image of a Morgan Silver Dollar struck onto the surface. That collectible image adds interest and makes these Silver Bars even more desirable. Minted in the U.S.A. from shimmering American silver, these one-ounce 99.9% fine silver bars are a great alternative to one-ounce silver coins or rounds. Plus, they offer great savings compared to other bullion options like one-ounce sovereign silver coins. Take advantage of our special offer for new customers only and save \$10.00 off our regular prices.

No, rather the effect came from tiny flecks of silver glinting in the sun.

A Special Way for You to Stock Up on Precious Silver

While no one can predict the future value of silver in an uncertain economy, many Americans are rushing to get their hands on as much silver as possible, putting it away for themselves and their loved ones. You'll enjoy owning these Silver Bars. They're tangible. They feel good when you hold them, You'll relish the design and thinking about all it represents. These Morgan Design One-Ounce Bars make appreciated gifts for birthdays, anniversaries and graduations, creating a legacy sure to be cherished for a lifetime.

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BUY MORE SAVE MORE!

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Free Morgan Silver Dollar with every order over \$299 (A \$59.95 value!)



FREE SHIPPING over \$99!

Limited time only. Product total over \$99 before taxes (if any). Standard domestic shipping only. Not valid on previous purchases.

Morgan Silver Dollars Are Among the Most Iconic Coins in U.S. History

What makes them iconic? The Morgan Silver Dollar is the legendary coin that built the Wild West. It exemplifies the American spirit like few other coins, and was created using silver mined from the famous Comstock Lode in Nevada. In fact, when travelers approached the mountains around the boomtown of Virginia City, Nevada in the 1850s, they were startled to see the hills shining in the sunlight like a mirror. A mirage caused by weary eyes?

Order More and SAVE

You can save \$10.00 off our regular price when you buy now. There is a limit of 25 Bars per customer, which means with this special offer, you can save up to \$250.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

A Jaw-Dropping Journey

Brazos Bend State Park has acres and acres of alligators

BY CHET GARNER

I LIKE ZOOS. The cages and fences offer comfort when staring into the eyes of an apex predator. But there’s something exhilarating about stepping into a natural habitat and encountering a wild creature in its element.

And that’s the draw of Brazos Bend State Park, which comprises nearly 5,000 acres of wetland marsh and coastal prairie in Fort Bend County. Visit on a sunny day and you’re almost guaranteed to have an encounter with its most famous residents—American alligators.

Driving into the park felt like visiting a movie set, amid oak trees dripping with Spanish moss that create a canopy over the road. It’s hard to believe that I was only 40 miles from downtown Houston. I stopped into the visitor center and asked where to find the gators. They simply pointed me toward the park’s 37 miles of trails and said, “That way.”

It turns out hundreds of alligators inhabit the park, and it’s not uncommon to see 40–50 on a good day, in addition to the park’s other reptiles, amphibians and 300-plus species of birds.

I set off on the trail surrounding 40-Acre Lake, and it wasn’t long before I came face-to-face with a living, breathing dinosaur. It was at least 7 feet long and sunning on the edge of the trail. I cautiously passed by, giving it a Texas nod on my way. Twenty feet down the trail was another and then another.

A ranger assured me that in the park’s 40 years, no one has been injured, much less killed, by an alligator. They’re fairly docile creatures and prefer flight over fight when it comes to humans. Even so, I didn’t want to tempt fate and was more than happy enjoying them all from a very safe distance. ■

ABOVE Chet keeps a safe distance from one of the hundreds of gators that roam freely.

TCP From the safety of your screen, join Chet as he wanders among the gators. Watch 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.

AUGUST

8

McKinney Thomas Craig, (214) 769-0645, thecomedyarena.com

9

Alpine [9–10] Big Bend Ranch Rodeo, (432) 294-1640, bigbendranchrodeo.com

10

Chappell Hill Wine and Cheese Stroll, (979) 337-9910, chappellhilltx.com

14

Brady [14–17] Heart of Texas Honky Tonk Festival, (325) 597-1895, heartoftexascountry.com

Corsicana [14–17] Red, (903) 872-5421, thewllac.com

17

Brenham Peter, Paul and Mary Alive; (979) 337-7240; thebarnhillcenter.com

Santo Southwest Open Chili Championship, (940) 733-6086, casichilli.net

22

Fredericksburg [22–25] Gillespie County Fair, (830) 997-2359, gillespiefair.com

23

Decatur [23–24] Wise County Guild Quilt Show, (817) 991-3407, wisecountyquiltguild.org

24

Lubbock Book Festival, (806) 775-3634, lubbockbookfest.com

Castroville [24–25]
St. Louis Day Celebration,
(830) 931-2826,
saintlouisday.com

27

**Stonewall Commemoration
of Lyndon Johnson's
Birthday,** (830) 868-7128,
nps.gov/lyjo

29

Uvalde [29–Sept. 1]
Palomino Fest & Pro Rodeo,
palominofest.com

30

Fredericksburg [30–31]
Vereins Quilt Show,
vereinsquiltguild.org

**Marfa [30–Sept. 1] Lights
Festival,** (432) 217-6777,
marfachamberofcommerce.org

Granbury [30–Sept. 2]
**Labor Day Weekend
Festival,** (682) 936-4550,
granburysquare.com

31

**Sunrise Beach Village
Sip & Stroll,** (713) 299-1728,
sunrisebeachtx.gov

SEPTEMBER

7

**Luling Luling Foundation
Youth Grill-Off,** (830) 875-
2438, lulingfoundation.org

**McKinney Jurassic Night
Out at the Heard,** (972) 562-
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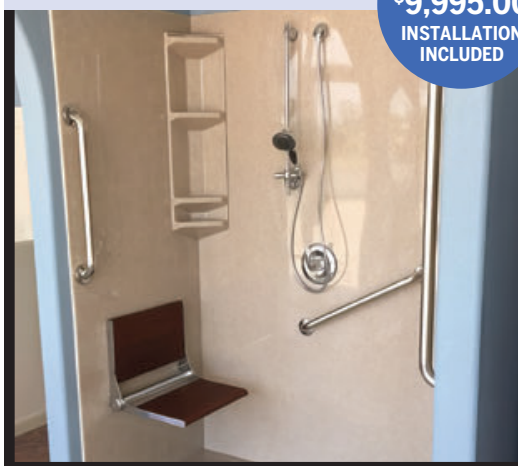


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1

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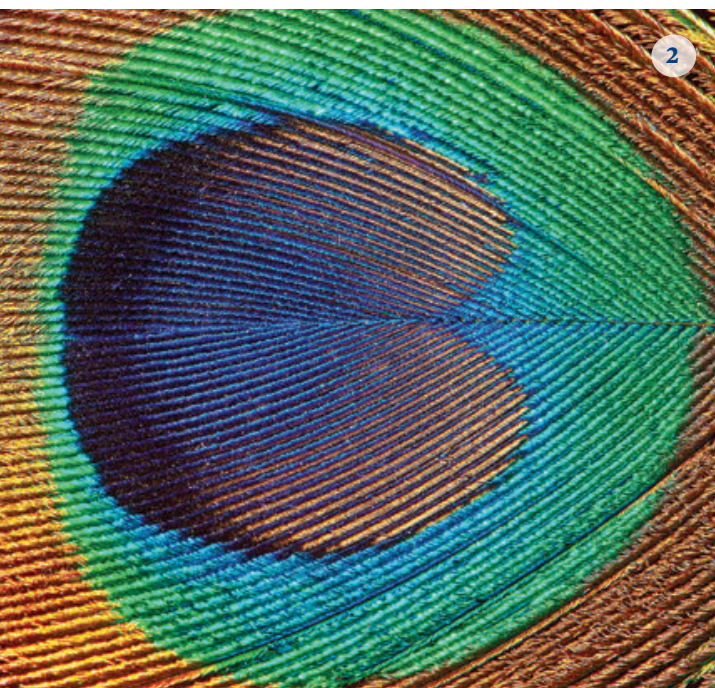
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2



3



4

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TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Textures photos from readers.



Friends in High Places

He was known for saving windmills, but one day he saved a whole lot more

BY SAM W. YOUNG
ILLUSTRATION BY
KEVIN HOWDESHELL

DAD CAME HOME from work one day with his left hand in a big bandage. He had driven himself to a hospital, where his fingers were repaired by a surgeon. One finger was almost severed but was put back together and ultimately saved.

When I was young, he worked for West Texas Lumber Co. in San Angelo, the local Aermotor Windmill dealer. Later he worked on his own. Ranch owners for miles around knew he was the man to call if a windmill needed repairs or replacement from the 1930s into the '80s. The cattle and sheep had to have water.

My brother and I are firmly convinced that no one man installed more windmills than our father. He was still climbing the contraptions after his 80th birthday and after he sold his business.

Working on these machines was dan-

gerous, even for a professional. Windmillers free-climbed and stood with a helper on a platform—untethered—as they made their repairs.

Aermotor windmills pivot on a vertical mast, with all the weight sitting on a washer inside a small cavity just under the motor. The motor has to be lifted a few inches to replace that washer.

To lift the windmill, with all the weight of the mill and the sucker rods, a chain is tied to the push rod and the tower and then a helper has to turn the wheel by hand and hold it.

Dad always had to have a helper, of course, and I was usually his helper in the summertime and over Christmas breaks.

There were days when we would load the pickup in San Angelo with the parts of a new windmill, the rods and pipe, sand, gravel, cement—everything needed for installation. I remember once when we drove to a new well on King Mountain, south of Odessa, assembled the tower and mill, raised it up with the pickup, dug the anchors by hand, and had it pumping water before sundown.

But I wasn't Dad's helper that fateful day south of San Angelo.

On that day, the chain must have slipped, allowing the weight of the rotor assembly to smash his fingers. He didn't say so, but what else could it have been?

There was something else he didn't mention until a few days later.

His helper had reacted to the sight of the blood and started to pass out. Dad reached out and grabbed the man with his right hand to keep him from falling off the windmill platform.

I don't know just how the issue was resolved from that point, but I do know this: While Dad's left hand was trapped, he saved a man's life that day with his right hand—the day he came home with the big bandage. ■

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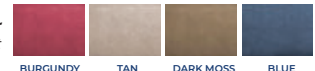
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