

REMEMBERING THAT  
FIRST LIGHT BULB

DON'T MIND THOSE  
ALLIGATORS

WINDMILLER KEEPS  
WITS IN A PINCH

# Texas Coop Power

FOR KARNES EC 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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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*

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**FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS**  
 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](mailto: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](http://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

**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



B.J. HINKLE

**TCP WRITE TO US**  
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 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor  
 Austin, TX 78701

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

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# Open Roads, Open Eyes

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





PHOTO ESSAY BY WYATT MCSPADDEN

**W**hen 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**

**K**atie 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.’ ” ■



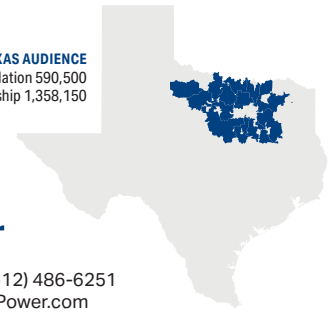
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The stainless steel blade, bolster and pommel are exquisitely etched and would have looked great with a less ambitious handle. But the results of overachieving are stunning here. The turquoise-blue colored handle is ablaze with assorted stones like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

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# 10 Things You Might Not Know About Power Restoration

AS THE GENERAL MANAGER of Karnes Electric Cooperative, I'm accustomed to members' questions about power outages and why it can take time to get the lights back on. Given our reliance on electricity, there's simply never a good time to be without it.

This month I'd like to shed light on our restoration process to help our members understand what can happen behind the scenes. Here are 10 things you might not know about restoration.

**1. We need you.** When your power goes out, it might be just your home or a small section of a neighborhood that's affected. There's a chance we don't know about it and that no one has reported it. Let us know if your power is out.

**2. Our employees might be affected.** Because Karnes EC is a local business, our employees are local too. When you're without power, our people might be too.

**3. It's a team effort.** Every one of our employees are working to get your power restored as soon as possible. Our member services representatives take your calls, engineers and field staff survey damage, our vegetation management team clears hazards, dispatchers organize crews, and communicators keep everyone informed of progress or potential dangers. When your power goes out, we all work together as quickly and safely as possible.

**4. We assess the situation first.** Every outage is different, bringing different dangers and damaged equipment. We first need to see what happened, then figure out what materials we need and make a plan for how to fix the problems.

**5. We have priorities for restoring power.** Our crews focus first on public safety issues and critical services like hospitals. Then we complete work that impacts the largest number of people.

**6. Our employees face many hazards.** Besides working around high-voltage electricity, our crews are on alert for wild animals, active weather, falling trees and fast-moving cars.

**7. Flickering lights are a good thing.** "Blinks" are sometimes mistaken for outages, but they actually indicate our equipment worked and prevented a possible outage.

**8. You need a backup plan.** We always do our best to help those who need it, but if you depend on electricity for life support purposes, you must have a backup plan.

**9. Our employees have to plan and eat.** If you ever see our trucks in a restaurant parking lot while your power is out, know that sometimes our employees huddle in a safe common area to map out their plan for getting your power back on. Also, our crews work long, hard hours during outages and need to take time for meals.

**10. Sometimes it's a waiting game.** Our portion of the power grid is connected to other electric utilities. If our outage is due to an issue from their feed into our system, we must let them do their repairs to get the power flowing again.

If the lights go out, know that your co-op team is working as quickly and safely as possible to restore power. ■

## COMMON CAUSES OF POWER OUTAGES

There is never a good time for the power to go out, but if it happens on a sunny day, you might be left wondering why. Here are the most common causes of a power outage.



### WEATHER

High winds, snow and ice can cause tree limbs to fall on power lines. Other weather effects, like wildfires and lightning strikes, can cause major damage to equipment.



### CRITTERS

Squirrels, birds, snakes and other animals can inadvertently contact power lines, causing short circuits and disruptions to electrical supply.



### ACCIDENTS

Vehicles can crash into utility poles, bringing down power lines. Construction and excavation work can also result in disruptions to underground lines.



### MAINTENANCE

Occasionally, we plan outages to perform upgrades or repairs to parts of the local grid.





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## Hacks To Beat the Summer Heat

**AS SUMMER TEMPERATURES** stay hot, there's no need to let the heat get you down. There are several ways you can keep cool this summer—without wreaking havoc on your home's air conditioner. Use these simple life hacks to beat the summer heat.

**Make aloe vera cubes.** Whether you're nursing a sunburn or just wanting to cool off, aloe vera cubes can offer some relief. Simply fill an ice tray with aloe vera gel, freeze it, then place the cubes on your body's pulse points, like the neck and wrists, for a quick cooling sensation.

**Try a cooling pillow.** If you're willing to spend a little, a cooling pillow can help you feel more comfortable on those muggy summer nights. These typically run \$20–\$180.

**Just add mint.** Menthol makes our bodies feel cool, so by adding spearmint essential oil to products like body wash and lotion, you can get an instant cooling effect. Essential oils can be purchased at most drugstores or online.

**Spend a few bucks on a handheld fan mister.** Sure, you may feel a little silly carrying around a tiny fan, but you'll be more comfortable than everyone else—and they'll probably ask to borrow it. You can typically find these at big-box stores or online.

**Here are some additional ways to keep you and your home cool this summer:**

- ▶ Close blinds and curtains during the day, and open them during the evening when temperatures are cooler.
- ▶ Use ceiling fans to stay comfortable indoors. But remember, fans cool people, not rooms, so turn them off when you leave the room.
- ▶ Only use appliances that put out heat, like clothes dryers and dishwashers, during the evening, to minimize indoor heat during the day, when temperatures are higher. ■

## Karnes Electric Cooperative

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## KEC, New Manager Welcome Members at Annual Meeting

**ERIC HALFMANN HAS ONLY BEEN** general manager of Karnes Electric Cooperative since December, but he already feels right at home.

“Karnes has excellent people,” Halfmann said. “That’s been the best part of coming here: getting to meet everyone and work with the people.”

And on June 11, the people—KEC employees, directors and 219 members—came together for fellowship, co-op business and democratic elections at the co-op’s 86th annual meeting at the Karnes City Performing Arts Center.

### Democratic Member Control

All cooperatives are guided by a set of seven principles, one of which is Democratic Member Control. Members are entitled to vote for the directors who represent them in the boardroom. Directors are members, too.

This year three directors were up for election. Melissa Sykes, attorney at McGinnis Lochridge, announced that incumbents Paul T. Brysch Jr., representing District 5, and Clif Royal, Dis-

trict 6, each were reelected to three-year terms. Board newcomer Boyd Vaughan was elected to serve District 2, which was vacant due to the retirement of Shirley Hofmann last year. Vaughn had been appointed to fill the vacancy in March.

### Members’ Economic Participation

Another cooperative principle is Members’ Economic Participation, which means that members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative.

Larry Schendel, board secretary-treasurer, provided an overview of the co-op’s finances via prerecorded video. “The cooperative is in excellent financial condition, and that is a direct result of member participation,” he said.

Operating revenues in 2023 were \$119.4 million compared to \$127.2 million in 2022. KEC sold just under 1.36 billion kilowatt-hours last year, an increase of 4.3% over 2022. The reduction in revenue is due to lower power costs being passed through to members via the power cost recovery factor.

Expenses were \$115.9 million in 2023, a decrease of 4.5%



from 2022. This means the cooperative realized operating margins of \$2.6 million for 2023 compared to \$5.2 million in 2022. In October 2023, KEC returned \$1.7 million in capital credits to members.

Halfmann presented his manager’s report via prerecorded video, highlighting opportunities and successes for the cooperative. He shared that supply chain issues have largely improved over the past year and into 2024, though some equipment, such as transformers and vehicles, still have long lead times.

“Shortages of materials and the increased cost of materials still presented challenges,” Halfmann said in the video. “The team worked hard to successfully maintain sufficient operation despite these challenges.”

He also highlighted safety, namely that KEC recently was recognized by Texas Electric Cooperatives for achieving five consecutive years of no lost-time accidents. The cooperative has also implemented an apprentice lineworker program and the construction of field training facilities to allow for advanced in-house training.

Several employees were recognized for reaching milestones in their service to KEC: Leroy Castillo, Justin Jarzombek and Charles Luttrell for five years; Christopher Shane Knight and Raul Salinas II for 10 years; Pedro Garcia for 20 years; and Bonnie Wiatrek and Darlene Woelfel for 40 years.

### Concern for Community

One of the most deeply held principles for cooperatives is Concern for Community, and KEC celebrates this guidance with various methods of giving.

KEC awarded scholarships to 20 graduating seniors this year—double the number compared to last year. Those students were Cayla Albers, Paul Bernal, Evelyn Caraway, Ariana Coolidge, Marti Ducote, Wendy Fuentes, Kaylie Garcia, Rosemary Garcia, Julia Johnson, Jayden Jones, Halleigh Kopecki, McKenzie Lutz, Tyler Martinez, Logan Pawelek, Samantha Saenz, Caden Soliz, Kevin Tam, Ryan Trudeau, Riley Turner and Kiley Wiechring. And the co-op selected students Ryan Bailey and Kianna Cruz to represent KEC on this year’s Government-in-Action Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., with 145 other Texas teens.

In 2023, KEC awarded grants to three nonprofit organizations—Courage Ranch, Cowboys Ranch and NRECA International—with CoBank matching the funds for a total of \$20,000 in donations.

The co-op showed its appreciation for members who attended the annual meeting with fun giveaways, including gift bags for every member and door prizes such as gift cards, tools, an Apple smartwatch, Pit Boss wood pellet grill and a smart TV.

Concern for Community isn’t just limited to KEC’s service territory.



Lineworkers Glenn Kelley and Randy Ortiz joined workers from nine other South Texas electric co-ops in Matasanos, a rural village in Guatemala, last year. The endeavor was life-changing, not just for the residents but for the employees, too.

“I’m grateful that we got the job done and that we were able to overcome a lot of things down there,” Kelley said. “Coming back knowing that we started the change to better these people’s lives. For them to have electricity now is going to change everything.”

Highlighting yet another co-op principle, Cooperation Among Cooperatives, Ortiz was excited for the chance to work with employees from around the region.

“I’m appreciative that the people that volunteered understood what we were there for,” he said. “We all had confidence in each other that we were doing what we needed to do for the ultimate goal. We had 10 groups of strangers come together and accomplish something.”

That something was bringing electricity to people in a remote area—exactly what co-ops like KEC did in rural Texas more than 85 years ago.

Halfmann is ready to continue that legacy at Karnes EC. His engineering background and seven years of service at San Miguel Electric Cooperative, a generation and transmission co-op in South Texas, informs what he’s most looking forward to for KEC.

“I’m excited about the continued growth in our territory as well as continuing to improve our service to the members through the advancement of grid intelligence technologies such as geographical mapping,” he said. “And for continuing to improve the reliability of the systems and service to our membership as a result of these technologies.”

It’s a new chapter at Karnes EC, and Halfmann is excited to be part of it.

“I want the members to know that I grew up on co-op lines and that I’m not only passionate about the co-op business but also about the rural way of life and raising my family within that,” he said. “And that brings a connection with our purpose as a rural co-op.” ■

## TEXAS DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

# Hurricane Preparedness Guidelines

Hurricane Season Is June 1–November 30

### Preparedness Checklist

- ▶ **Make an evacuation plan.** Find activated evacuation routes at [DriveTexas.org](https://www.drivetexas.org) or by dialing 1-800-452-9292. Call 211 to find out if you live in an evacuation zone.
- ▶ **Sign up for emergency alerts.** Make sure your mobile device is enabled to receive Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs).
- ▶ **Prepare an emergency supply kit.** Learn how to build an emergency kit at [ready.gov/build-a-kit](https://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit).
- ▶ **Review your home insurance policy.**
- ▶ **Register with the State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEAR)** at [stear.tdem.texas.gov](https://stear.tdem.texas.gov) or by dialing 211 if you live in an evacuation zone and:
  - Have a disability or medical needs and do not have a car or other vehicle to use in an evacuation.
  - Have a disability or medical needs and do not have friends or family to help in an evacuation.

*Information collected for STEAR is confidential.*

### Hurricane Preparedness Online Resources

Texas Division of Emergency Management: [tdem.texas.gov](https://tdem.texas.gov)  
Texas Department of State Health Services: [texasready.gov](https://texasready.gov)  
American Red Cross: [redcross.org](https://redcross.org)  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security: [ready.gov](https://ready.gov)  
Office of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott: [gov.texas.gov](https://gov.texas.gov)

## DIVISIÓN DE ADMINISTRACIÓN DE EMERGENCIAS DE TEXAS

# Preparación para huracanes

La temporada de huracanes es del 1 de junio al 30 de noviembre

### Lista de verificación de preparación:

- ▶ **Haga un plan de evacuación.** Encuentre rutas de evacuación activadas en [DriveTexas.org](https://www.drivetexas.org) o marcando 1-800-452-9292. Llame al 211 para averiguar si usted vive en una zona de evacuación.
- ▶ **Regístrese para recibir alertas de emergencia.** Asegúrese de que su dispositivo móvil esté habilitado para recibir Alertas de emergencia inalámbricas (WEAs).
- ▶ **Prepare un kit de emergencia.** Aprenda como construir un kit de emergencia en [ready.gov/build-a-kit](https://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit).
- ▶ **Revise su póliza de seguro de hogar.**
- ▶ **Regístrese con el Registro de Asistencia de Emergencia del Estado de Texas (STEAR)** en [stear.tdem.texas.gov](https://stear.tdem.texas.gov) o marcando el 211 si vive en una zona de evacuación y:
  - Tiene una discapacidad o necesidades médicas y no tiene un auto u otro vehículo para usar en una evacuación.
  - Tiene una discapacidad o necesidades médicas y no tiene amigos o familiares para ayudar en una evacuación.

*La información recolectada para STEAR es confidencial.*

### Recursos en línea para la preparación para huracanes

División de Administración de Emergencias de Texas: [tdem.texas.gov](https://tdem.texas.gov)  
Departamento de Servicios de Salud del Estado: [texasready.gov](https://texasready.gov)  
Cruz Roja Americana: [redcross.org](https://redcross.org)  
Departamento de Seguridad Nacional de los Estados Unidos: [ready.gov](https://ready.gov)  
Oficina del Gobernador de Texas Greg Abbott: [gov.texas.gov](https://gov.texas.gov)

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## Chicken Salad on Sourdough Toast

- 1 can chicken in water (10 ounces)
- ¼ cup low-fat sour cream
- ¼ cup Greek yogurt
- 1 stalk celery, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- ¼ cup sliced almonds
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- 4 slices sourdough bread
- ¼ cup spinach leaves
- 1 large tomato, sliced (optional)

1. Combine chicken, sour cream, yogurt, celery, mustard, salt, almonds and cranberries in a large bowl and mix well.

2. Lightly toast bread. Top with chicken mixture and spinach leaves. Add sliced tomatoes if desired. Serve immediately.

SERVES 2

 Find this and more delicious recipes online at [TexasCoopPower.com](https://TexasCoopPower.com).

# Catch a Wampus Cat

Irreverent Texans imported a mythical creature created in Appalachia

BY CLAY COPPEDGE • ILLUSTRATION BY TAYLOR CALLERY

**CHEROKEE LEGEND** tells of a young woman named Running Deer who once defeated an evil spirit, called Ew'ah, that she believed was responsible for driving her husband insane. Running Deer drew strength from the spirit of a mythical mountain cat but was afterward relegated to the deep woods and remote mountain passes of North Carolina, where she terrorized and drove insane anyone unfortunate enough to glimpse her.

Another legend has Running Deer as a young shape-shifter who slayed a catlike demon and became her tribe's spirit protector.

This is likely how the wampus cat of lore was born in the Appalachian Mountains, probably in East Tennessee or western North Carolina. And that's why all wampus cats—including those on the grid-iron in Texas—have a Cherokee lineage.

Appalachian settlers took the story from there and anglicized Ew'ah into a wampus cat, which likely derives from the 1840s slang term "catawampus" or, as some prefer, "cattywampus."

If something was cattywampus, it was peculiar or frightening (likely influenced by the term "cata-mount," another word for a cougar), and the wampus cat of lore can be as peculiar as a storyteller wants it to be. In some accounts, it has six legs (two for walking, four for fighting), walks upright and swims like a mink.

It didn't take long for the wampus cat to become the subject of stories designed to scare children into doing as they were told.

"Parents are telling us that they are experiencing less trouble keeping their children in after dark since the report gained circulation that the Wampus had been seen here," *The Greeneville Daily Sun* in Tennessee reported in 1918.

The wampus cat began showing up in Texas newspapers in the early 1900s, most notably as the subject of a series of stories by frontier journalist and historian Don Hampton Biggers in a satirical Rotan newspaper called *Billy Goat Always Buttin' In*. Biggers had come to the small town northwest of Abilene in 1907 to establish a respectable weekly paper, but he published satire on the side as "a journal of such things as the editor takes a notion to write."

When he needed to fill space in the paper, Biggers spun a series of yarns about the wampus cat, which

he called "a cross between a wildcat, badger and a lobo wolf, with fangs 2 inches long and claws that could peel the bark off of a mesquite tree."

The locals knew it was a hoax, but visitors to the region often left Rotan dreading an encounter with the wampus cat of Biggers' imagination.

Biggers' son, Earl Biggers, in a 1961 interview with historian and scholar Seymour V. Connor, said his father came up with most of the wampus cat tales at the Rotan barber shop, where he and his pals would concoct outlandish stories.

In 1908, the same year Biggers was chronicling the creature's depredations in Fisher County, *The Houston Post* chronicled the game-by-game results of a local baseball team called the Wampus Cats. Since then, a number of schools have chosen the wampus cat as a mascot, including Itasca High School here in Texas.

As with descriptions of the cat itself, there is more than one story about how Itasca, which is between Fort Worth and Waco, chose the beast as its mascot.

A 1996 newspaper story quoted lifelong Itasca Nancy Bowman, who ran the school's special services, as saying that in the 1920s the high school team was having trouble finding a nickname. During a raucous postgame locker room celebration, a player shouted, "Wow, we were really wampus cats tonight!" Itasca had its mascot.

A Dallas radio station has called the wampus cat "the most quintessential Texas high school football mascot," but it's not uniquely Texan. Schools in Conway, Arkansas; Atoka, Oklahoma; Leesville, Louisiana; and as far north as Clark Fork, Idaho, have also adopted the mythical creature as a mascot.

In 2003, a collegiate wood-bat baseball team in Albemarle, North Carolina, brought the creature closer to home. The Uwharrie Wampus Cats square off against the likes of the Carolina Disco Turkeys and the Boone Bigfoots.

Biggers and the other Rotan barbershop regulars would be delighted to know the creature they helped create has come full circle. ■



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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.

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# 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](http://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 >](#)



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## 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

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## 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](http://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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## 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?

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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, casichili.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-  
5566, heardmuseum.org

**New Braunfels Donny  
Edwards: Tribute to the King,**  
(830) 627-0808, brauntex.org

### TCP *Submit Your Event*

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



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## Hit the Road

TCP *Plan now*

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# Textures

The rough bark of a tree, the smooth surface of a pond in early morning, a display of soft bird feathers—the surfaces in our world offer a variety of visual and physical textures. From childhood we are told to look and not touch; but these offerings make us wish we could do both.

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2 CYRIL FERNANDES  
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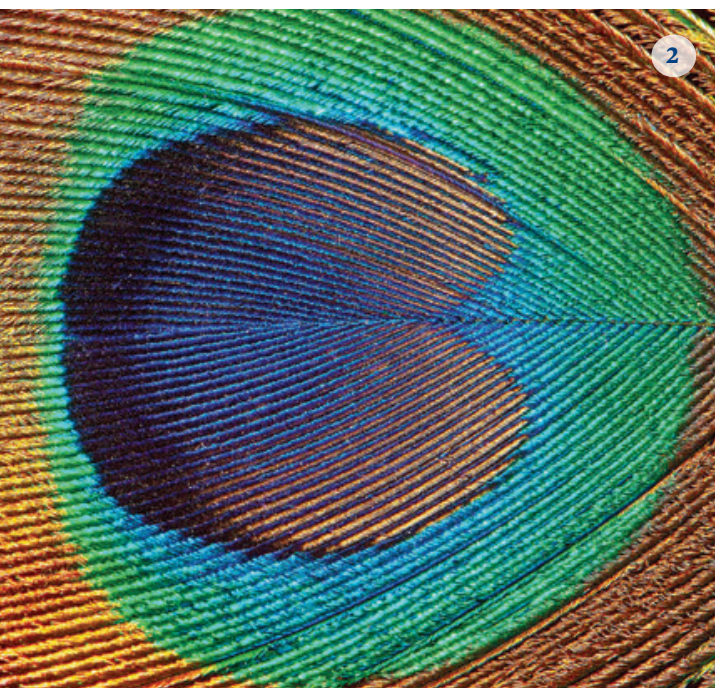
"Peacocks achieve their stunning plumage display through structural coloration called iridescence."

3 CARLY LATHAM  
HEART OF TEXAS EC

"I love looking at the skin of a Texas horse apple."

4 DORA CAFFEY  
TAYLOR EC

"A Rio Grande turkey shown in his finest ruffles."



## Upcoming Contests

DUE AUG 10 Young Photographers

DUE SEP 10 Parks

DUE OCT 10 I Love



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

**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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— J. Fitzgerald, VA



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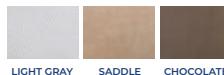
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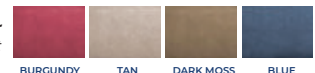
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