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AN OLD PAINTING

THE ART
OF THE SANDWICH

WHEN FATHERHOOD
TURNS GRAND

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FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

JUNE 2026

She Walked the Walk

Opal Lee helped elevate
Juneteenth every step
of the way





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June 2026



10

06 Giant Footsteps

Even as Opal Lee—the Grandmother of Juneteenth—approaches 100, she says her important work isn't done.

*By Michael Hurd
Portraits by Robert Seale*

J.O. Was Here

The history of this Hill Country vista goes right through a century-old Julian Onderdonk painting.

By John R. Millard

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

Go the Other Way
By W.F. Strong

26

TCP Kitchen

The Art of the Sandwich
By Vianney Rodriguez

30

Hit the Road

Play Time on the Prairie
By Chet Garner

33

Focus on Texas

Photo Contest: Making a Splash

34

Observations

Papa Hits His Stride
By Mark Troth

ON THE COVER

Opal Lee at her home on East Annie Street in the Historic Southside neighborhood of Fort Worth.
Photo by Robert Seale

ABOVE

Live Oak Trees on Williams Ranch, Bandera County is a 1915 oil painting by Julian Onderdonk.
Painting by Julian Onderdonk



Volts Charge Into Texas

AFTER A FOUR-TEAM barnstorming season in 2025, the Athletes Unlimited Softball League is set to start its second season with six teams, including one in Texas.

The Texas Volts will return and play their home games at Dell Diamond in Round Rock and join teams based in Chicago; Durham, North Carolina; Oklahoma City; Portland, Oregon; and Salt Lake City.

"Texas is synonymous with softball excellence at every level," said Kim Ng, the league's commissioner.

The Volts start their 25-game season June 9 in Oklahoma City. Their first home game is June 18 against the Utah Talons.

"We have simply got to make people aware that none of us are free until we're all free, and we aren't free yet."

—OPAL LEE

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

The greatest innovation in my lifetime is ...

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 April prompt: **If I could use only one electronic device, it would be ...**

The air conditioner.

MARILYN WERKHEISER
BLUEBONNET EC
BASTROP

My cellphone.

KAT CROSS
HOUSTON COUNTY EC
CROCKETT

My coffee maker.

KERRY BEREND
FORT BELKNAP EC
LOVING

Ham radio. Communication is most important.

GARY DAVID ANTLEY
VIA FACEBOOK

Phone with FaceTime.

JOHNNA HALE
TRINITY VALLEY EC
CANTON

Visit our website to see more responses.



TCP Contests and More

\$500 RECIPE CONTEST

Cranberry Harvest

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS

Tailgating

RECOMMENDED READING

The Bluebonnet Painter from April 2023 tells more about how Julian Onderdonk's ethereal South Texas landscapes flourish. Find it on our website.



APRIL 2026 Kickin' Ashe

"A lot of fitness can still be gained by using a chain saw. The sweat washes off, but the sap stays on the arms for many days."

RAY WOLBRECHT
PEDERNALES EC
BLANCO



A Whole Mess of Trash

I had seen all the Don't Mess With Texas signs and so was surprised by a surge in litter [A *Tidy Revolution*, March 2026]. I complained and complained to my husband about the litter and the fact that no one seemed worried about it.

Finally, I grew tired of complaining and decided to act. Now, I try to collect litter once a week—one bag of cans and bottles and one bag of trash.

Lynda Southwick
Bluebonnet EC
Brenham

Wear a Life Jacket

I was excited by the paddling trails article [Charted Waters, March 2026]. However, I was dismayed when pictures showed paddlers not wearing life jackets and reading only to "pack a personal flotation device, as required by Texas law."

While canoeing, I've experienced several hairy situations and would never not wear one. According to the U.S. Coast

Guard, 85% of boating-related drowning victims were not wearing a life vest.

Kat Saul
Grayson-Collin EC
Allen

Cavalry Hopes

I always wanted to be in the Army cavalry [From Posts to Pillars, February 2026].

When I came of age, the cavalry was no more.

But I knew a man who was born on Fort Ringgold. His father was the post bandmaster. He used to tell me many interesting stories of those times.

Wallace L. Morgan
GVEC
Nixon

Blocker Billboard

Yes, at one time there was a billboard announcing that O'Donnell was the hometown of Dan Blocker [Tiny Dots on a Big Map, January 2026]. Sadly, the fading signage went AWOL, probably blown away by high winds that frequent this part of the High Plains.

Betty Morgan
Bryan Texas Utilities
Bryan

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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

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

 Texas Co-op Power

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Giant Footsteps

Even as Opal Lee—the Grandmother of Juneteenth—approaches 100, she says her important work isn't done

Opal Lee says she was the “little ol’ lady in tennis shoes getting into everybody else’s business” when, in 2016, at age 89 and buoyed by her faith, she embarked on an ambitious campaign to make Juneteenth a national holiday by walking from her home in Fort Worth to Washington, D.C. Ten years later, the holiday is official, she is celebrated as the Grandmother of Juneteenth and her well-worn tennis shoes are getting a long-deserved rest.

That doesn’t mean the contemporary folk hero is finally settling into idleness—even as she approaches centenarian status (she turns 100 on October 7). And once you get a sense of her life, you realize inactivity is not a concept she embraces. Retirement?

“You’ve got to be kidding!” she quickly retorts, flashing her wide, congenial smile. “People who are old can’t sit in a rocking chair and wait for the Lord to come and get them. There’s still plenty of work to be done, and I’ll do what I can as long as I can.”

She speaks with an eloquent urgency and passion about her work over many decades as a civil rights and community activist who advocated for the homeless, jobless and hungry; for education; and for Juneteenth recognition—all of which she connects to being free. She says she fully intends to continue her work through her belief that “we are our brother’s keeper, and we’d better act like it”—but at a slower pace.

For sure, there will be no more extended walking campaigns. An illness last summer was a setback, and though she’s recovered, the episode supported growing suggestions from her family, which includes 15 grandchildren and 40 great-grandchildren, that it was time to step back a bit.

“It’s been great to see her dream come true, something she’s been after most of her life,” says Promise Roland, one of Lee’s granddaughters and a Fort Worth real estate agent. “It’s been overwhelming, but we’re delighted. She’s been asked to slow down, but that’s not her.

“With her tenacity, she’s going to keep at it; she doesn’t take no for an answer.”

Lee, a 1943 graduate, at age 16, of Fort Worth’s I.M. Terrell High School, has maximized her century on this planet with service to family, church and community. She raised her four children as a young single mother, got a bachelor’s degree in education from Wiley College in Marshall, earned a master’s degree in counseling and guidance in 1963 from North Texas State University (now the University of North Texas), and taught third grade for 15 years at Amanda McCoy Elementary School, her alma mater.

She helped start a food bank by contributing fresh produce grown in her 5-acre urban farm that also helps address Tarrant County food deserts.

She is an iconic, revered change agent, so getting into everybody else’s business—good trouble—teaching and helping others is what she does, and she does it very well. She’s received eight honorary doctorates, was named 2021 Texan of the Year by *The Dallas Morning News*, was a Nobel Peace Prize nominee and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2023, her portrait was placed in the Texas Senate Chamber, making her only the second Black person (after U.S. Rep. Barbara Jordan) so honored. In January, Mattel introduced the “Opal Barbie.”

Opal Lee on her Juneteenth walks: “If people can be taught to hate, they can be taught to love. The promise of freedom is only as strong as those who choose to uphold it. Will you rise to the occasion or stand still as history passes you by?”





COURTESY OPAL'S WALK 2 DC TEAM

LEFT Lee walks for her cause in February 2020 in Las Vegas.

BELOW Lee, on her porch in November 2025, lives on the same Fort Worth plot where, in 1939, a mob burned down her family's home.

Despite it all, Lee lives in a modest new house on Fort Worth's East Annie Street—on the same corner lot where, in 1939, her family's home was burned down by a mob of 500 angry would-be neighbors who objected to the family integrating the neighborhood. It happened on Juneteenth.

Her new house was a gift from Trinity Habitat for Humanity in 2024 as a tribute to Lee, one of the nonprofit's founding board members.

The Marshall native was a child when she first learned about the date June 19, 1865, when Union Gen. Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston to make the first notifications that enslaved Texans were free—two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. She joined family and friends annually to celebrate the day with “plenty of food, food and more food.”

Lee was a co-founder in 1977 of the Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society, through which she organized Fort Worth's Juneteenth events, including walks, for 40 years. But she felt there was more she could do.

A quest was born: Make Juneteenth a national holiday.

Her plan was to walk to D.C. and present a signed petition to Congress as a symbol of nationwide support for passage



*I don't feel no ways tired,
I've come too far from where
I started from.
Nobody told me that the road
would be easy,
I don't believe He brought me
this far to leave me.*

—African American spiritual

of the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act. Forty-seven states, including Texas, had already established state holidays or observances.

The octogenarian took to the road, her T-shirt emblazoned with “Opal’s Walk for Freedom,” and was joined by thousands of diverse supporters, many carrying homemade signs of support (“Go, Ms. Opal!”) and walking with her in festive, joyous parades.

“I just started walking, and people started participating, coming to join me, finding a place for me to stay,” she said. “I got 1.5 million signatures. I met all kinds of people, not just those in power. People who were beginning to understand what the day was all about. Not just red soda water and barbecue, but there was meaning to it. People embraced Juneteenth.”

The distance between Fort Worth and D.C. is a little over 1,200 miles as the crow flies. Lee took the scenic route, walking a symbolic 2.5 miles (for the two and a half years it took for news of emancipation to reach Texas) in 20 cities that supported her movement and invited her to walk, including Shreveport, Louisiana; Atlanta; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Pueblo, Colorado; Chicago; and Philadelphia.

She began the walks in September 2016 and four months later was in Washington with the completed petition. Almost five years later, the act passed and was signed into law by President Joe Biden on June 17, 2021.

“I was so happy, I could have done a holy dance!” Lee says.

The crown jewel for her work is the \$70 million state-of-the-art National Juneteenth Museum slated to break ground in Fort Worth later this year. The 50,000-square-foot cultural center is billed as “the epicenter for the preservation of Juneteenth history.”

“Dr. Lee’s advocacy is the foundation on which the museum was established,” says Jarred Howard, the museum’s CEO. “We’re thrilled to collaborate with Dr. Lee and are committed to expanding her extraordinary legacy through the creation of a world-class learning center.”

Though she isn’t moving quite as much now, Lee’s family is gladly taking the baton to keep her legacy going. Her granddaughters are active board members for Lee’s non-



RENDERING COURTESY NATIONAL JUNETEENTH MUSEUM

National Juneteenth Museum

Destined for Fort Worth’s Historic Southside, plans include:

- 10,000 square feet of immersive exhibit space
- A 250-seat theater for lectures, performances and other events
- A business incubator and coworking space
- A food hall featuring culturally diverse cuisine
- The National Juneteenth Plaza, a public courtyard and green space

profit foundation, Citizens Concerned with Human Dignity. The organization assists marginalized families in need of shelter, food, employment, healthcare and education.

“It’ll take more than one person to fill her shoes,” Roland says, “so it will truly be a family effort. She still has a lot of fire, but it’s time for us to do the heavy lifting.”

Lee’s fire has always been about teaching and the fertile minds of young folks, and that flame burns as brightly as ever, sparked by her successful Juneteenth campaigns.

“I want the young people to realize how important Black history is and for them to embrace it, know their history and pass it on,” she says. “The road to true freedom is long, but I’ve walked it my whole life.” ■



TCP Enter online to win two signed illustrated children’s books about Opal Lee’s life.



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ONLINE**



J.O. WAS HERE

The history of this
Hill Country vista
goes right through
a century-old
Julian Onderdonk
painting

BY JOHN R. MILLARD

The west prong of the Medina River arises in Bandera County and flows eastward, fed by underground springs amid steep, canyon-carved terrain northwest of San Antonio. The flow traces a serpentine path through oak and cedar groves, rocky outcrops, and grassy slopes before joining the north prong near the town of Medina.

In 1915, this area was still a wild frontier—sparsely settled, with vast ranches dominating the landscape. The Medina Lake dam, completed in 1912, altered downstream flows, but the upper prongs retained their pristine character: clear waters, rocky riverbeds, and dense cedar and live oak groves.

It was beautiful country. I know this because Julian Onderdonk stopped here in 1915, set up an easel and canvas, and got to painting—and I can prove it.

It all started with a chance discovery: a digital image of an Onderdonk oil painting called *Gulf Clouds in the Hills on the West Prong of the Medina River* instantly caught my eye—not just for its beauty but for its uncanny resemblance to our land.

“Debra,” I called out to my wife, “you won’t believe it, but this is our property.”



I had just hiked those ridges that morning, stood on that same bluff and looked down at that same striated rock in the riverbed. The landscape in the painting wasn't just similar—it was ours.

What started as a curious observation turned into a historical investigation—one that led me through Texas archives, family lore and conversations with art experts, historians and ranchers. The deeper I dug, the more the story grew. Not just one painting but possibly four were painted by Onderdonk during a 1915 visit to what was then known as the Williams Ranch, now part of our West Prong Ranch.

We acquired the property in January 2024—one of seven tracts carved from the historic Garrison Ranch, originally established in the late 1800s. Like many historic properties, the ranch evolved over time—its boundaries reshaped by sales, inheritances and a legal dispute—but the same beauty remains.

John R. Millard was stunned to discover that a 1915 Julian Onderdonk painting, above, portrays a view he enjoys on his Bandera County property, opposite. It's undeniable, Millard says.

Gulf Clouds in the Hills on the West Prong of the Medina River

1915

Oil on panel

Lusher Art Collection

This painting demonstrates the complex geographic identity of San Antonio's countryside. The title and fluffy white clouds indicate the region's proximity to the Gulf Coast. Green hills, characteristic of Central and South Texas, form the horizon. The west prong, illustrated here, is one of two main sections of the Medina River. The nearly dry river exposes the limestone bed, and there is just enough water to reflect the blue sky.

The Man With the Brush

Often called the “Father of Texas Art,” Onderdonk left an indelible mark on American impressionism with his radiant Hill Country portrayals. Born in San Antonio in 1882, he trained under his father, artist Robert Jenkins Onderdonk, and later under William Merritt Chase in New York, honing his eye for light and texture.

Returning to Texas in 1909, Onderdonk fused Chase’s plein air, or open air, philosophy of painting outdoors with the rugged splendor of his homeland.

Onderdonk’s works—vibrant with color, delicately executed and alive with natural beauty—earned acclaim during his lifetime and reverence after his death in 1922.

Today his paintings command high prices: *Blue Bonnet Field*, *Early Morning*, *San Antonio Texas* sold for \$515,000 in 2013. Two other pieces sold for \$317,000 and \$281,000 at that same auction in Dallas. His works have been on display in all



of Texas’ major art museums, and several paintings even hung in the Oval Office when George W. Bush was president.

Each of the four 1915 paintings features terrain elements that resemble areas on or near our property—with live oaks, horizon lines and familiar contours we can still observe today. While there’s no direct evidence or documentation of such an excursion, the visual similarities raise the possibility they were painted during a multiday journey by mule into this remote region.

I hiked back out to the bend in the river and took a photo. From that vantage point,

the similarities were undeniable. The limestone bluffs, the curve of the hills, the river’s arc and the distinctive limestone formations in the riverbed all aligned with striking precision—like fingerprints.

It was a match. Onderdonk’s *Gulf Clouds in the Hills on the West Prong of the Medina River* portrays the very terrain we

now call home—capturing its distinctive topography with remarkable accuracy.

Collector of the Clouds

But for this discovery to be taken seriously, it needed more than compelling visual similarities; it needed validation from people who know Onderdonk best.

Art dealer Harry Halff is the foremost authority on Onderdonk

and author of the artist’s catalogue raisonné—the definitive scholarly resource documenting the artist’s body of work.

“There is no doubt in my mind that the painting’s location is on your ranch,” Halff wrote in an email after reviewing the photographic comparisons and supporting documentation. “This may be one of the rare Onderdonk landscapes still visually tied to a named site today.”

Ted Lusher agreed with that assessment. He’s a respected collector of Texas art and history whose personal archive includes rare artifacts of Texas and Onderdonk’s original *Gulf Clouds in the Hills* itself.

“There’s no question in my mind,” he wrote of the similarities to our land. “The alignment of terrain and artistic detail is too precise to be coincidental.”

In 1915, traveling from San Antonio to Bandera County—about 50 miles away to the northwest—was challenging. With FM 337 not established until 1945, Onderdonk would have traveled over steep dirt trails and caliche paths, common in rural Texas at the time.

Automobiles like the Ford Model T had existed since 1908 but were impractical in the Hill Country’s rough conditions, especially for an artist of modest means. Instead, Onderdonk

“
For us, this land has become something rare—
a kind of living time machine. The terrain remains
so untouched, the features so distinctive, that the
gap between today and 1915 seems to vanish.
”



COURTESY DEBRA MILLARD

OPPOSITE, FROM TOP
A 1901 portrait of
Onderdonk, one of
Texas' artistic masters,
by William Merritt
Chase. Millard stands
with Daisy Jane on the
property he bought
with his wife in 2024.
He considers their
ranch a living gallery.

RIGHT Millard's research
into Onderdonk
suggests *Windmill
on Williams Ranch*
was also painted on
his property in 1915.



JULIAN ONDERDONK

likely used horse-drawn transport, such as wagons or buggies for flatter areas, and possibly mules for the steeper terrain.

Halff notes that Onderdonk was “not averse to long hikes in the country,” often walking out into the hills armed with his easel, canvas and paints.

While Halff has not found any direct references to mule travel, he considers it “entirely plausible” that Onderdonk may have ridden by mule into more remote terrain.

The Muleman Next Door

That brings us to Paul Garrison III, our neighbor and a skilled mule skinner.

Garrison's family has lived and ranched on this land for five generations, and he carries forward the family legacy as the owner of Garrison Mulemanship and Training, a program known far and wide for cultivating the unique partnership between mules and their handlers.

Garrison and I discussed how Onderdonk might have reached this rugged, steep land more than a century ago. “There's no way he got there by car,” he said. “You'd need a good mule—maybe two. This is classic mule country.”

Before the Garrison family—and long before us—the land was known as the Williams Ranch. One of its earliest first-hand accounts comes from Samuel H. Sutton, who was born in 1850 and moved here in 1876.

One memory stood out for Sutton, writing for *Frontier Times Magazine* in 1928: He and his wife were washing clothes at the confluence of Cazey Creek and the west prong of the Medina River when they were surprised by Native Americans on a bluff above them. Sutton grabbed his rifle, his heart pounding. The moment passed without violence, but the tension and terrain left a mark on him.

His description of the bluff and the wash spot corresponds closely to the same curve and elevation where *Gulf Clouds in the Hills* was likely painted. It's fascinating to think that within a few decades, this same bluff and river could have

been the setting for a settler's tense moment and an artist's quiet observation.

Preserving the View

One of the most remarkable aspects of this story is how little the land has changed, and Debra and I are determined to keep it that way. We've intentionally avoided building in areas that would disrupt the natural setting and have left existing trails undisturbed.

For us, this land has become something rare—a kind of living time machine. The terrain remains so untouched, the features so distinctive, that the gap between today and 1915 seems to vanish.

Visitors notice it, too. When we show them the digital image of the painting beside the actual view, there's often a long pause, followed by some variation of: “This place hasn't changed at all.”

In a constantly evolving world, finding proof that a landscape has stayed so consistent is unusual. The land reflects the same beauty Onderdonk captured, and now, more than a century later, we can see it just as he did.

As landowners, we're stewards of something much greater than ourselves. Our ranch is more than just acreage. It's a living gallery—one that requires no velvet ropes, no security guards and no admission fee. Just boots, curiosity and a willingness to see.

We didn't set out to uncover a hidden chapter in Texas art history. But once we realized what we were standing on, it became clear: This land belongs to history. To Onderdonk. To Sutton. To the Garrisons. And to everyone who's ever paused to marvel at the way clouds move across the hills.

Gulf Clouds in the Hills isn't just oil on canvas. It's evidence. That Onderdonk stood here. That he saw what we see. And that he found it beautiful enough to preserve forever.

We're honored to be part of that continuum. ■

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Our Bone-ified Best Blade

This knife says you're no one to mess with



"It's a beautiful knife with a great blade and a sure grip"

— William B. Wilmington, NC

My friend Sergio is a mixed martial arts fighter. His shoulders are broad. His muscles have muscles. He's not the kind of person you want to be on the wrong side of.

This manly man has a saying about being tough: You should either know how to fight or look like you do.

The message is simple enough. People spoiling for a fight usually don't pick the biggest guy in the bar. If you look like someone who shouldn't be messed with, you likely won't be. With our Blue Bone Bowie Knife on your hip, that's exactly the message you'll send.

As beautiful as it is functional, this knife is 10" overall and features a high-quality 420 surgical stainless steel blade with a serrated spine. The handle is constructed of genuine natural bone with redwood spacers. On the handle you'll find design work that's carved by hand, a testament to its craftsmanship.

This knife is stick tang, meaning it won't wimp out when you need it. This knife also features brass hand guards and brass spacers with file work, so you won't lose your grip. For easy carrying, it comes with a genuine tooled leather sheath. **CALL NOW!** If you're one of the first 700-587 callers for this ad, we'll throw in a pair of *Stauer Pocket Binoculars* — a \$99 value — **ABSOLUTELY FREE!**

Walk around with the Blue Bone Bowie Knife and you'll feel a lot safer. I know I do.

Knife Specifications:

- 10" overall length
- 420 surgical stainless steel and stick tang construction
- Genuine natural bone and redwood hand-carved handle
- Genuine leather sheath included

Blue Bone Bowie Knife

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MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER/
CEO

JOHN ED
SHINPAUGH

Home Is Where Our Heart Is

ALL OF US at Fannin Electric Cooperative want to see our community succeed because we live here too. Our board of directors and employees are local people working for local good. That's the essence of Cooperative Principle No. 7, Concern for Community.

First and foremost, we strengthen our community by doing what we do best: providing reliable electricity to our members at a reasonable cost.

We're a dynamic part of our community, and as the area grows, so does our electric distribution system. We pursue policies and projects that benefit the community because what's good for our community is good for our cooperative.

Our roots are here, and we've been in business here for more than 85 years. You can feel assured that we're not going anywhere.

We pay our employees fair wages, which helps strengthen the economy when they spend that money locally. And by providing well-paying jobs, we keep our towns healthy, ensuring employees and their families don't have to move away to make a living. The more people we have here paying taxes and patronizing local businesses, the more vibrant our community will be. Strengthening our local economy makes sound business sense.

But the benefits to the community aren't just economic. We open doors for our young people with scholarship programs and the Government-in-Action Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., each June. We teach children safety through programs in schools and online.

We help our members save money and reduce their environmental impact by recommending energy efficiency measures. We strengthen the community by supporting nonprofits. We help our members and neighbors in need by contributing to efforts like food drives and grants to local organizations.

The co-op is made up of people who care. Our employees go out of their way to better their communities. They coach youth sports teams, serve on school committees and participate in church activities. They are co-op members like you, and like you, they want to make their hometowns stronger.

Remember—when it comes to Fannin EC, our community is where our hearts are. ■



LAURI PATTERSON | ISTOCK.COM

Sloppy Joe Sandwiches

1 medium onion
1 pound ground beef
1½ tablespoons flour
¾ cup ketchup
¾ cup cola
2 tablespoons vinegar
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon honey
1 teaspoon dry mustard
(or 1 tablespoon mustard)
Salt, to taste
Ground black pepper, to taste
12 hamburger buns

1. Chop onion. Add onion and beef to a skillet. Brown beef and drain excess fat.
2. In a bowl, mix remaining ingredients well. Add mixture to skillet. Cover and simmer 40 minutes.
3. Serve on buns. These are best the next day, after all the flavors have melded.

MAKES 12 SANDWICHES

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

Celebrating Old Glory

FLAG DAY IS June 14. This lesser-known and lesser-celebrated holiday, established by Congress in 1949, pays tribute to a great and meaningful symbol.

Most of us know that the 13 red and white stripes and the field of 50 stars represent the original 13 colonies and the current 50 states. But there's much more to learn about Old Glory.

Recognizing that a new nation needed a new flag, Congress passed the country's first flag law June 14, 1777: "Resolved, that the flag of the United States be 13 stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be 13 stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson paved the way for the observance with a proclamation addressing his concerns about "forces within and forces without that seemed likely to draw us away from the happy traditions of united purpose and action of which we have been so proud." The proclamation urged Americans to "give significant expression to our thoughtful love of America."

The red on the flag represents valor and bravery; white symbolizes innocence and purity; and vigilance, justice and perseverance are represented by blue. The stripes are symbolic of rays of sunlight, and the stars reference the heavens.



The oft-told story of President George Washington asking Betsy Ross to create the first flag unfortunately can't be substantiated. The Betsy Ross House, a museum in her honor, promotes her story but encourages visitors to decide whether it's historical fact or well-loved fiction.

As originally written in 1892, the Pledge of Allegiance read: "I pledge alle-

giance to my flag and the republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Congress added the phrase "under God" to the pledge in 1954.

While only Pennsylvania recognizes Flag Day as a state holiday, we wish you a happy Flag Day and encourage you to take time to acknowledge the significance as America celebrates its 250th birthday this year. ■

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Cycle 2 Dates

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Cycle 4 Dates

BILLING June 23
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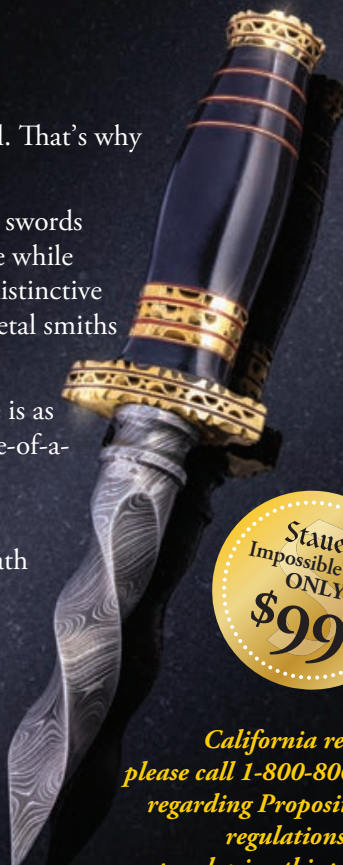
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The Cowboy Life

Charles Siringo's writing bears witness to a life on the trail of cattle and outlaws

BY DAVID MCCORMICK

IF YOU MET CHARLES SIRINGO in 1927 Los Angeles, you couldn't have guessed that he was a legend of the Old West. That year, Neil Clark, writing for *The American Magazine*, described Siringo as "a small man, weighing barely a hundred and thirty pounds, but wire-tough, brown of face, and keen of eye, with humor still invincible in spite of his seventy-two years, and a mind razor-sharp for accuracy and pertinent detail."

Yet Siringo had written a handful of books about his incredible adventures—as a trail-driving cowboy, detective, businessman and writer who had chased outlaws and infiltrated criminal networks—making him well-known among the cowboys who held his stories dear.

He was born February 7, 1855, in Matagorda County, and a year later his father died. Antonio Siringo had sailed from southern Italy and settled on Matagorda Peninsula with his wife, Bridgit, an Irish immigrant.

Charles Siringo made the name proud—riding, roping and writing his way to Hollywood over several decades. But he started out as a simple cowboy on Texas' coastal plains. In his autobiography *A Lone Star Cowboy*, he writes that he was 11 years old in 1867, when he "became a full-fledged cowboy, wearing broad sombrero, high-heeled boots, Mexican spurs, and the dignity of a full-grown man."

In another book—the first of his seven—*A Texas Cow Boy or Fifteen Years on the Hurricane Deck of a Spanish Pony*, Siringo described his first job on the Chisholm Trail, in the spring of 1876, driving a herd of 2,500 "mossy-horn steers" to Kansas for \$30 a month. "Everything went on lovely with the exception of swimming swollen streams, fighting ... among ourselves and a stampede every stormy night."

For years, he steered longhorns along the dusty trail and labored under windswept downpours. Trailing into New Mexico atop his horse, Whiskey-Peet, and armed with a Sharps rifle, he prowled for outlaws and cattle rustlers along the way.

In 1884, Siringo married and briefly settled down in Caldwell, Kansas, where he became a restaurateur. In his off-hours, the honest-to-goodness cowpuncher began writing about his adventures as a way to earn some extra cash.

A Texas Cow Boy was published in 1885 to wide

acclaim. Historian J. Frank Dobie called it one of the most important books on cowboy life. Will Rogers later wrote Siringo that this was the first book he had read and that it was the bible for cowboys.

The book tells of Siringo's years on the LX Ranch in the Panhandle, during which he met and later pursued outlaw Billy the Kid. He warmly writes about the Kid's compassionate side, relating a story of the outlaw coming to the aid of a sick man and personally paying for a team to haul him off to Las Vegas for treatment.

In 1886, Siringo joined the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, and for the next two decades lived by his wits on the road.

His work took him to Mexico City, Alaska and all points in between, and he is credited with making more than 100 arrests. And though he had a reputation as a fine shot, Siringo was proud that he made most of his arrests without violence.

In 1907, he quit the Pinkerton Agency and moved to his Sunny Slope Ranch in Santa Fe, New Mexico. There he wrote his second book, *A Cowboy Detective*, including his role in Idaho's Coeur D'Alene miners' strike of 1892. His task was to infiltrate the labor union and acquire proof of criminal acts.

"I had to take an iron-clad 'Molly Maguire' oath that I would never turn traitor to the union cause," he wrote. "If I did, death would be my reward." This was no idle threat on the part of the strikers, as they were guilty of blowing up mines and murdering workers. Siringo's testimony put 18 union leaders behind bars.

In the 1920s, Siringo moved to LA, where his friendship with William S. Hart earned him a view into the world of Hollywood as a consultant to the movie studios. Because of his prowess as a cowboy and Pinkerton detective, he established a rapport with famous Western figures, among them Rogers, Bat Masterson and Clarence Darrow.

When Siringo died October 18, 1928, at 73, Hart and Rogers sent a joint telegram expressing their sentiments; it read in part, "Another American plainsman has taken the long trail." ■

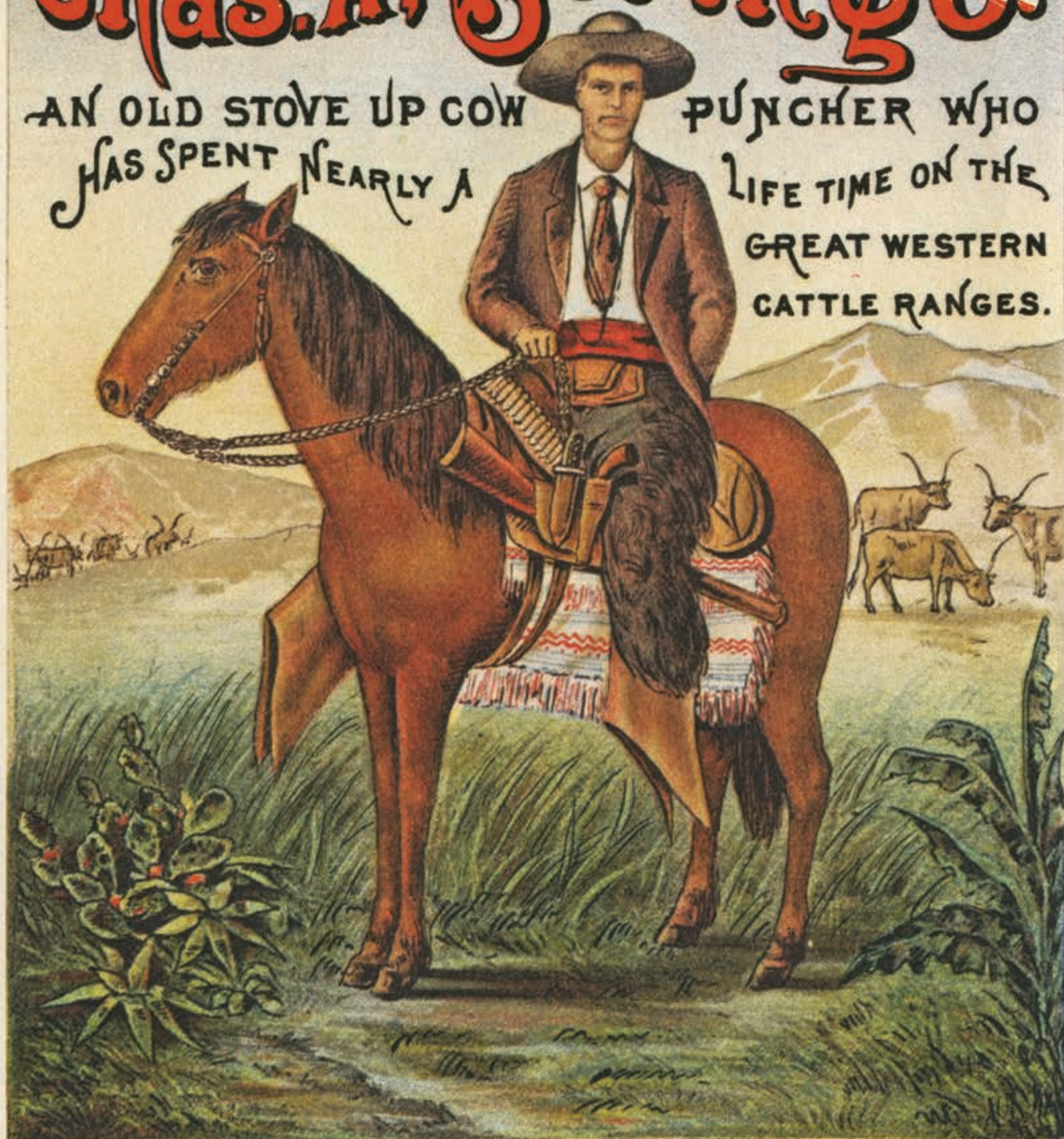
Artwork from Charles Siringo's 1885 book, *A Texas Cow Boy*.

A TEXAS COW BOY
OR
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PUNCHER WHO
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Hoodie and tote feature a silver-tone Texas charm



2. Heart of Texas Quilted Tote



Denim Jacket Personalized FREE with your name or initials

1. Heart of Texas Women's Hoodie

This cozy ivory hoodie is expertly crafted of an easy-care cotton blend knit and features a detailed image of a cowgirl boot and hat next to the embroidered saying, "You Can Take The Girl Out Of Texas, But You Can't Take The Texas Out Of The Girl." Additional details include fun embroidered accents, soft contrasting taupe jersey knit-lined hood, front hip pockets, full front zipper, knit cuffs and a straight hem for an extra comfortable fit. A silver-tone zipper pull shaped like the State of Texas with a heart cutout completes this classic country girl design. Imported. Available in women's sizes S-3X. *Item price: \$99.99, payable in 3 easy installments of \$33.33 each (plus a total of \$19.99 s + s*) Add \$10 for sizes 1X-3X*

2. Heart of Texas Quilted Tote

This Texas-inspired quilted tote features classic country styling with a sentiment every Texas girl knows by heart. Framed in a bold red bandana print, the front and back feature a cowgirl boot and hat alongside the saying, "You Can Take The Girl Out Of Texas, But You Can't Take The Texas Out Of The Girl." Crafted of soft yet durable high-quality quilted fabric, this tote features a roomy interior with one zippered pocket and two slip pockets, along with a zippered closure. A silver-tone charm showcasing the silhouette of Texas with a heart cutout adds a perfect finishing touch to this versatile dual-handle tote. Imported. *Item price: \$79.99, payable in 3 easy installments of \$26.66 each (plus a total of \$19.99 s + s*)*

3. Personalized Heart of Texas Women's Denim Jacket

Beautifully crafted of durable, medium-wash cotton-blend stretch denim, this jacket features a bold outline of the Lone Star State with bandana-inspired accents beneath a classic Western yoke—finished with the sentiment, "Forever a Texas Girl." A gold embroidered heart and white embroidered accents add to the look. The front of the jacket is personalized FREE with your monogram or full name (max 12 characters). Additional design details for this flattering and roomy jacket include two flap chest pockets with silver-tone button closures, two hip pockets, an adjustable hem and cuffs and a full button-front closure. Imported. Available in women's sizes S-3X. *Item price: \$149.99, payable in 4 easy installments of \$37.50 each (plus a total of \$19.99 s + s*) Add \$10 for sizes 1X-3X*

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



Go the Other Way

Eastern Central Texas' hill country also has plenty of wildflowers, rolling hills and history

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS WORMELL

A GREAT MANY TEXANS set off for the Hill Country to enjoy the splendor of the wildflowers over the past couple of months. The blooms light up the hills and roadsides with carpets of vibrant color.

But I want to suggest that you consider the other hill country, composed of a gentler, less dramatic topography—one that also offers wildflowers galore and winding roads but has the advantage of being far less traveled.

You start in the small eastern Central Texas hamlet of Clay, between Brenham and Bryan, on FM 50, heading south. Here, you will encounter the first hill rising off the flatlands into a changing ecosystem. You can see the gentle rise sweep across

the land like a stationary wave, from left to right.

Once you get into Independence, which changed its name from Cole's Settlement around 1836 to honor Texas' freedom from Mexico, take a right on FM 390 and stay on that road almost all the way to Burton.

This is a famous scenic drive that passes through the old ghost town of Gay Hill. Wildflowers are often bountiful here. From Burton, continue on U.S. Highway 290 for a few miles and pick up State Highway 237 to Round Top.

Round Top was part of Stephen F. Austin's original colony. The town took its name from an octagonal tower

constructed there in stagecoach days. Since the 1960s it's been known as a mecca for antique lovers. What I appreciate most about the road from Round Top to La Grange are the white fences that curve along emerald green pastures.

Once you get into La Grange on State Highway 159, you'll take a left on U.S. Highway 77, climb the big hill and head south out of town, crossing the Colorado River. La Grange is probably best known for the Chicken Ranch brothel, which ZZ Top and reporter Marvin Zindler made famous in the 1970s—or perhaps infamous. It's long gone, of course.

Just 4 miles down that road, you'll take a right on County Road 2436. Look to your left and, quite soon, you'll see the largest lawn mower graveyard you've ever seen. That's Keith's Lawnmower Repair. I'm not sure it's a good advertisement for Keith's skills, but maybe it's an endorsement of his genius as a seller of new mowers.

This road dead-ends into FM 609, where you'll take a left. Here, the hills get bigger and the wildflowers more robust.

Watch for a shed painted in the colors of the Texas flag, off to the left. It's magnificently situated among wildflowers—as if the shed is posing for you.

It won't be long before you will arrive in Flatonia, which isn't particularly flat (it was named for pioneer settler F.W. Flato). In Flatonia, pick up State Highway 95 headed south toward Shiner. On this stretch, you'll enjoy more rural roads, gentle hills and wildflowers, including panoramic views off to the west.

End your drive with a Shiner Bock at the oldest independent brewery in Texas. After a two-hour drive through wildflower country, you've earned a bock or two. ■

The Art of the Sandwich

Warm your heart with a meal dressed in layers

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

All my favorite things—brisket, butter, Texas toast and cheese—together in perfectly delicious harmony makes for one happy señorita. Whenever my husband cooks up a brisket, I always tuck away some in the freezer to whip up these sandwiches. Pair this sandwich with a glass of wine, an icy cold beer or a frozen margarita.

Brisket Grilled Cheese Sandwich

4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter, softened

4 slices thick-sliced white bread (often labeled Texas toast)

8 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, grated or sliced

16 ounces diced, cooked brisket, room temperature

1. Butter one side of each slice of bread.
2. On the unbuttered side of 2 bread slices, layer half the cheddar, brisket and other half of cheddar. Top with two remaining bread slices, butter side out, to make sandwiches.
3. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook sandwiches 3–4 minutes on each side, or until both sides are golden brown.
4. Remove sandwiches from skillet, slice in half and serve warm.

SERVES 2

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Mini Chorizo con Papa y Huevo Breakfast Sandwiches.





Grilled Strawnana Hazelnut Sandwich

LISA CASIMIR
COSERV

Grab a few napkins and get ready to sink your teeth into the sweetest twist on the classic PB&J. I love a peanut butter sammy, but the combination of berries and banana with chocolate hazelnut is everything I didn't know I needed!

- 1/3 cup chocolate hazelnut spread, such as Nutella**
- 4 slices sourdough bread**
- 1 cup strawberries, thinly sliced**
- 2 bananas, thinly sliced**
- 2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter**

1. Spread hazelnut spread on one side of each slice of sourdough. Top two slices with strawberries. Top the other two slices with bananas.
2. Stack bread to make two sandwiches, pairing one strawberry-topped slice with one banana-topped slice, and evenly spread butter on each side of sandwiches.
3. Heat a skillet over medium-high heat. Cook sandwiches, covered, 3 minutes on each side, or until bread is lightly toasted.
4. Slice in half and serve warm.

SERVES 2



\$500 WINNER

Muffuletta

BETTY HERZIK
FAYETTE EC



A briny olive spread combines with a smorgasbord of cold cuts and cheese to create a mouth-watering BIG bite of a sandwich, and I am in love. The food processor does all the heavy lifting in this recipe, then the sandwich gets wrapped in foil and baked until warm. I cannot wait to make this sandwich again and again.

- 1 jar giardiniera (16 ounces), drained**
- 1/2 of 10-ounce jar pimiento-stuffed Spanish queen olives, drained**
- 1/2 of 10-ounce jar sliced Kalamata olives, drained**

- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 loaf ciabatta bread, sliced horizontally**
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar**
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano**
- 8 ounces sliced Black Forest ham**
- 4 ounces sliced hard salami**
- 4 ounces sliced mortadella**
- 8 ounces sliced provolone cheese**

COOK'S TIP: The sandwich may be refrigerated overnight (wrapped in aluminum foil). If doing this, take it out of the refrigerator about 45 minutes before baking. Increase the baking time to 20–22 minutes.

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a food processor, combine giardiniera, olives and oil and pulse until a uniform mixture forms. Brush both cut sides of bread with vinegar and sprinkle with oregano.
2. Place bottom half of the loaf on a piece of aluminum foil large enough to wrap around the entire sandwich. Layer meats and provolone on bread. Top with olive mixture. Place top half of bread on sandwich and wrap foil around sandwich.
3. Place wrapped sandwich on a baking sheet and bake 15–17 minutes, until thoroughly heated. Remove foil, slice into individual portions and serve.

SERVES 6

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

CRANBERRY HARVEST DUE JUN 10

Cranberries can add a tart fall touch to pastries, salads, drinks and desserts. Come November we'll share the best from Co-op Country and award \$500 for the top recipe.

UPCOMING: HOLIDAY TRADITIONS DUE JUL 10



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CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >

Bridget's Sandwiches

LYNNETT RATCHFORD
BLUEBONNET EC

These easy sandwiches have it all: sweet slices of ham, gooey Swiss cheese, and rolls that stay soft and fluffy on the inside with a perfectly toasted top. The secret is marinating them overnight in a savory butter sauce. They are delicious and a great dish for making in advance.

24 Hawaiian sweet rolls
16 ounces sliced ham
16 ounces sliced Swiss cheese
½ cup (1 stick) butter
½ teaspoon poppy seeds
1 tablespoon minced onion
½ teaspoon steak sauce
½ tablespoon yellow mustard

1. Slice rolls in half and arrange bottom halves in a baking dish. Layer with ham and Swiss. Place top halves of the rolls over cheese.

2. In a saucepan over medium-high heat,



melt butter. Add poppy seeds, onion, steak sauce and mustard and cook 1 minute. Pour mixture over sandwiches, spreading evenly.

3. Cover baking dish with aluminum foil and refrigerate overnight.

4. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and bake sandwiches, still covered by foil, 10 minutes. Remove foil and cook 10 minutes uncovered. Serve warm.

SERVES 6

Hacks for Your Stacks

Great sandwiches are all about high-quality ingredients and technique. Here are some secrets from my kitchen.

USE THOSE LEFTOVERS

Last night's shredded or roasted chicken or pork loin transform into a tasty lunch.

NO MAYO, NO PROBLEM

Pesto, ranch dip, hummus or sour cream with hot sauce can easily fill in for mayonnaise.

SEASON YOUR TOMATOES

Please! A little salt and pepper go a long way. And slice them with a serrated knife for the cleanest cut.

DON'T HOLD THE HERBS

Make your sandwich pop with a sprinkle of fresh dill, thyme or basil.

—Vianney Rodriguez



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COURTESY CASEY CHAPMAN ROSS

Play Time on the Prairie

The 'Fort Griffin Fandangle' is a spectacle like no other

BY CHET GARNER

I ARRIVED IN ALBANY, northeast of Abilene, just as the summer heat began to loosen its grip and the sky softened to a dusty pastel. I took my seat in the open-air Prairie Theater with 1,000 other folks who had all made the pilgrimage to witness the oldest outdoor musical in the state: the *Fort Griffin Fandangle*. The place was buzzing with anticipation, and I could see hundreds of costumed performers waiting in the ranks as saddled horses trotted offstage.

This was Albany's Super Bowl, and it was almost game time. Every year, a cast of 250 performers, horses, longhorns and a robotic snake rehearse for months in preparation for the last two weeks in June, when *Fandangle* takes the stage. The shows are June 19–20 and 26–27 this year.

The tradition goes back to 1938, when Robert Nail Jr., a high school teacher and amateur playwright, penned a musical about the history of Shackelford County. Nearly 90 years later, it's still going strong.

For the next few hours, I watched neighbors become pioneers, soldiers, ranchers and Comanche warriors, telling their collective story through songs, dance and a few gunfights. The narration carried us through settlement, struggle and celebration, but the real magic came from the sheer number of people involved—kids, parents, grandparents—sometimes three generations sharing the same spotlight.

There's something incredibly charming about knowing the singing cowboy or cancan dancer could be the local custodian, lawyer or barista. It was meaningful when it needed to be and at times completely ridiculous.

As the last song rang out across the prairie and the cast took their final bows, I felt like I had witnessed something deeply personal for Albany but also important for everyone. To quote its creator, Mr. Nail, "You can never be who you're supposed to be until you know who you've been." ■

ABOVE A cast of 200-plus stages the *Fort Griffin Fandangle* in Albany, continuing a tradition that goes back to 1938.

TCP Watch the video on our website and see all of Chet's Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details, and check our website for many more upcoming events.

JUNE

10

Snyder [10–13] West Texas Western Swing Festival, (325) 573-3558, snyderchamber.org

11

Abilene [11–14] Children's Art + Literacy Festival, (325) 677-1161, abilenecalf.com

13

Fredericksburg Luckenbach School Open House, (830) 685-3321, historicschools.org

Jacksonville Tomato Fest, (903) 586-2217, jacksonvilletexas.com

Mason Hot Dog & Hot Rod Night, (325) 347-5758, masontx.org

Seguin [13–July 10] Red, White and Blue Art Show, (830) 305-0472, seguinartleague.com

Grapevine [13–August 30] Dinosaur Quest, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

17

Fairfield Tea With Miss Texas, (903) 389-5792, fairfieldtexaschamber.com

18

Corsicana [18–21, 25–28] The Drowning Girls, (903) 872-5421, thewlac.com

20

Dallas Showtime Saturday: Hot Toast Music Company, (972) 702-7100, galleriadallas.com

Garland Juneteenth Celebration, (972) 205-2749, visitgarlandtx.com

23

Sherman Juneteenth Celebration, (469) 715-7471, bit.ly/shermanjuneteenth

25

Levelland [25-27] Golden Spread Classic, (806) 759-1102, goldenspreadclassic.com

27

Van Freedom Boom, (903) 963-7216, vantx.gov

JULY

3

Eagle Lake Freedom Festival, (979) 234-2640, coeltx.net

Fairfield Fireworks at the Fairgrounds, (903) 389-5792, fairfieldtexaschamber.com

Palestine [3-4] America 250: A Star-Spangled Jubilee, 1-800-659-3484, visitpalestine.com

Snyder [3-4] July 4th Celebration, (325) 573-3558, snyderchamber.org

4

Corsicana Freedom Fest, (903) 654-4850, visitorscorsicana.com

Giddings Firemen's July 4th Celebration, (979) 542-3455, giddingstx.com

Lakehills Independence Day Parade, (830) 612-1034, bit.ly/post0410bbq

Point Blank America 250, (281) 757-0682, usa250-pb.com

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



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Upper Antelope Canyon, fine art giclée print, 2025, 12" x 19", Bobby Greeson

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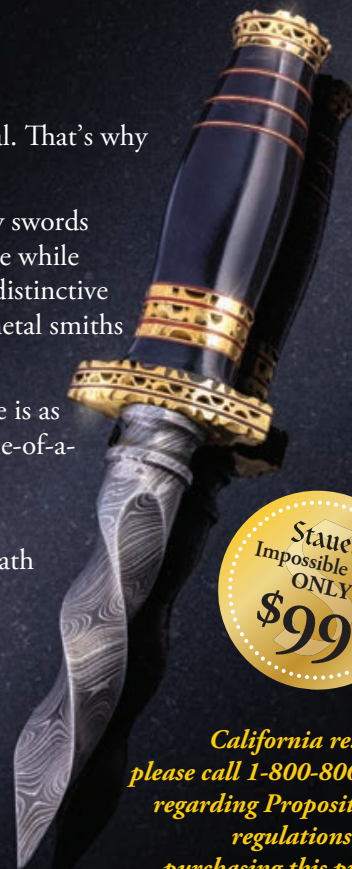
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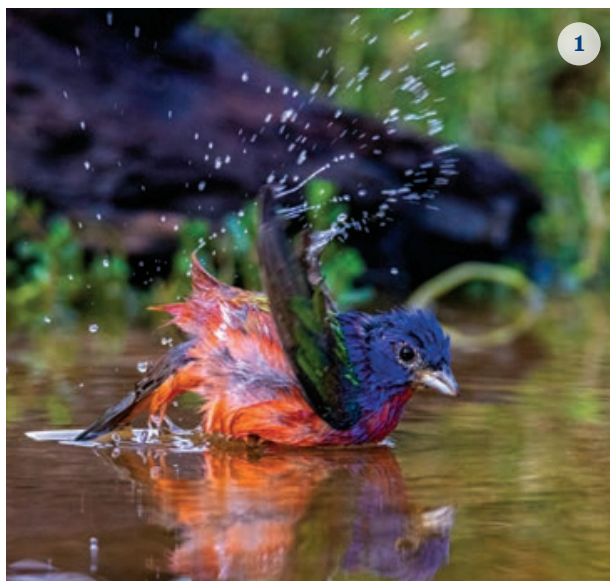
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A painted bunting bathing.

2 FRANKI SALDIVAR
J-A-C EC

"I was able to photograph bears in Alaska in the fall of 2022."

3 LAUREN MCCLAIN
PENTEX ENERGY

"Wild and free, this 4-year-old lives life to the fullest."

4 PAUL GARCIA
MEDINA EC

"I just happened to catch this cardinal taking a bath in my home's birdbath."



Upcoming Contests

TAILGATING DUE JUN 10
RIDE THE RAILS DUE JUL 10
CHRISTMAS FAILS DUE AUG 10



ENTER
ONLINE

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Making a Splash photos from readers.



Papa Hits His Stride

Fatherhood becomes grand when you get a second go

BY MARK TROTH

ILLUSTRATION BY
URAN DUO

GENERATION GAPS CAN BE measured in years but also in opinions and outlooks.

And as parents continue a decades-long trend of having children later in life, I wonder what will become of the growing gap between grandchildren and their grandparents. After all, a 60-year age difference between a Baby Boomer and his grandkids (I was a child of the 1960s) is bound to create more difficulty in finding common ground.

My dad was a hardworking, principled man of few words and a strong code of ethics. I didn't challenge him often. Serious father-son conversations usually assured a quiet peace. Though as he aged, Dad mellowed, especially with my children. And now that I'm the next generational Papa, it all makes perfect sense to me.

After retiring in 2023, my wife, Mary, and I relocated to Washington County—just an hour commute to the grandkids. We touch base daily and get together often, but the most special times are when they visit us in Chappell Hill for holidays or long weekends.

With these extended stays, I can play the grandfather role 24/7 and share my pearls of wisdom, old jokes and timeless stories that are, of course, always new to them. My son and daughter just roll their eyes.

Not unlike my dad, I bring a renewed patience and tolerance to my grandkids that may have been a bit lacking with my own children. As a father, work pressure, financial obligations and just plain life often got in the way.

Now, we are second in line with regard to child-raising responsibility. Mary and I assist, advise, support, nourish, teach and console—but rarely mandate.

Ten years now into full grandparent mode, my elder wisdom serves me well. I'm the peacemaker between siblings and cousins, the answerer to boundless questions, the blocks and puzzles play partner on the floor (getting back up is the hard part), the safety foot on the Kubota pedal while they steer, the fishing partner who takes the perch off the hook, the positive "get 'em next time" coach, a second—perhaps more seasoned and sympathetic—ear when they're troubled, and any other role that needs filling.

Yet I must be cautious to always support and respect my son's and daughter's parental initiatives.

If there is a generational gap with our grandchildren, Mary and I have bridged it with a circle of life and love. It is a second chance for Papa and Mimi to get it right.

It's been said, "Dearer than our children are the children of our children." Is there anything more grand than that? ■



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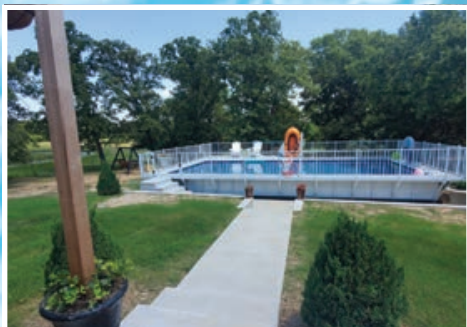
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