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Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

MARCH 2023

Herd Mentality

The Matagorda Bay
cattle drive is when cows
swim—across the Colorado



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March 2023



08

Gently Used, Generously Shared

A small thrift shop in the Hill Country funds scholarships for local students.

*By Kristen Pettineo
Photos by Scott Van Osdol*

10 Until the Cows Swim Home

The Matagorda cattle drive runs right through a river—as it has for 106 years.

Story and photos by Erich Schlegel

ON THE COVER

Randy Duncan, left, and Riley Rodriguez drive cattle into the Colorado River.

Photo by Erich Schlegel

ABOVE

Sally Clogston, left, founder, with April Langston, manager, of Pass It On.

Photo by Scott Van Osdol

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Antsy Onslaught

SCIENTISTS LAST YEAR came up with a global ant census, and it's unfathomable: 20 quadrillion. That's 20 followed by 15 zeroes. Think of it this way: Ants outnumber humans at least 2.5 million to 1.

And, no, most of them don't live in Texas, though more than 250 of the 14,000-plus species worldwide are native to our state.

The dreaded fire ant isn't one. They're invasive in Texas.



Bragging Rights

Sam Bennett of Madisonville became the first Texas A&M University golfer to win the U.S. Amateur Championship, last year. The title earns him a spot at the Masters Tournament; watch for him April 6–9.

The All-American's family are members of MidSouth Electric Cooperative.

TCP Contests and More

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March 6

National Dentist's Day

Did you know Texas has four dental schools? There's Texas A&M in Dallas, Texas Tech in El Paso, and University of Texas branches in Houston and San Antonio.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

IF I COULD FLY,
I WOULD ...

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.

Below are some of the responses to our January prompt: **The greatest Texan ever is ...**

Willie Nelson. Seriously, how is that even a question?

SHELLI CONWAY
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC
ANNA

Quanah Parker, who tried to do the best for his people in war and in peace.

MIKE DENEHY
PEDERNALES EC
LAGO VISTA

Lyndon B. Johnson, because he brought electricity to the rural Hill Country.

AARON DENMAN
TRINITY VALLEY EC
KEMP

George Strait.

JACKSON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
VIA FACEBOOK

U.S. Army Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez, who received a Medal of Honor for a series of daring and extremely valorous actions during the Vietnam War in 1968.

MATTHEW D. KONOPA
PEDERNALES EC
SPRING BRANCH

Visit our website to see more responses.

TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM



Women's History Month

MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO, Katherine Anne Porter survived a pandemic. At 28, she was hospitalized for months with influenza, and her hair turned white. Porter's harrowing experience informed the title story in her trilogy, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*.

Known for her precise, lyrical prose, Porter won a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award in 1966 for her *Collected Stories*.

The author's childhood home in Kyle, now the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center, hosts readings by visiting writers and was designated a national literary landmark in 2002 with a benediction from Laura Bush. "This house now stands as a living memorial to one of our most beloved, and best, storytellers," Bush said.



COURTESY CHET GARNER

Afterlife Sentence

“Does anyone else think that’s carrying a grudge a little far? Really?”

LORENA BOREN
BAILEY COUNTY EC

Distant Relative?

According to the late El Paso historian Leon Metz, John Wesley Hardin’s father was a Methodist minister named James Hardin and moved from Virginia to Tennessee to Texas [*Afterlife Sentence*, January 2023].

Perhaps I am related to John. My great-grandfather was a Methodist minister named James Hardin and moved from Virginia to Tennessee to Texas. I wish to make three things clear: I do not own a gun; I am not a lawyer; and I want to believe that I am not a sociopath.

Vincent C. Kemendo
Pedernales EC
Canyon Lake

Thoroughbreds can do anything [*Stable Futures*, January 2023]. I’ve had 50 years working with them. I love them.

NANCY KEIM
VIA FACEBOOK

Welcoming an Opossum

I have always loved nature and try to read, read, read [*Oh! Possum!*, January 2023]. You gave me a wonder person, Martha Deering, who introduced me to an opossum. What a wonder that couple is, taking such care of this animal. She describes it in such fun ways.

Brenna Quebbemann
CECA
Comanche

I, too, have an opossum for a pet—one of God’s gentle creatures that unfortunately was given a very short life span. Ours is named Jones, and he travels with us when we visit state parks and other places in Texas. We rescued Jones from a county road where his momma met her fate. Thank you for letting readers know that North America’s only marsupial is actually a pretty cool critter.

Rick Martin
Coleman County EC
Santa Anna



KIRSTEN ULVE

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.

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POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

Gently Used, Generously Shared

A small thrift shop in Comfort gives local students a boost for schooling

ASK MERCEDES ELLIS about her favorite place to shop, and her answer may surprise you.

You might expect the Texas State University student to rattle off well-known fashion brands or influencer-approved Instagram boutiques. Instead, she'll name a teeny, tiny secondhand shop in the small town of Comfort: the aptly named Pass It On.

It's not just that Ellis, 20, enjoys sifting through racks of other people's castoffs—though she does enjoy that. (In fact, she once found a pair of Gucci shoes for under \$10.) It's that more than anything, Ellis loves Pass It On because the store provides for its Hill Country community.

The shop offers a little bit of everything—clothing, furniture, books, appliances and seemingly everything between—at rock bottom prices. There's not much they won't sell. The inventory is unpredictable and priced to move. Recently there was an old leather dentist's chair for sale on the shop floor.

But here's what really makes Pass It On unique and why Ellis says she'll always be a customer: Nearly every cent of the store's proceeds funds college scholarships for students in the Comfort school district. Ellis herself received one of them.

"This shop has made so much possible for me," she says. "Being a college student, every dollar really helps. This scholarship makes a big difference for me and my family. It's a cycle of generosity, and I feel so grateful to be a small part of it."

April Langston is also part of that cycle of generosity.

Langston, a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative, never expected to run the 25-year-old nonprofit thrift shop. She spent her career working in public education, advocating for students with special needs in the Northside and Boerne school districts. But in 2014, not long after retiring, Langston's husband died in a plane crash. They were married 37 years. Her world fell apart.

"That's when all of my plans changed," Langston says. "I was retired and widowed. Suddenly I had all this time. I had to learn a different life. And it led me to Pass It On."

In processing her grief, Langston felt drawn to volunteer work and community outreach. At Pass It On, she does both.

Langston leads a small army of volunteers who do pretty much everything—process donations, organize displays, help customers—whatever it takes to keep the doors open and the lights on.

The store is only open for eight hours each week—Fridays and Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m. Despite the limited hours, Pass It On has raised big money for Comfort students seeking education beyond high school. Langston says the store provided \$65,000 in scholarships last year, up from \$50,000 the year before. In all, 191 students have received \$760,000 in aid.

"I guess it's really not that different from what I've done all my career," Langston says. "I've always worked in education, and I've always helped kids. The opportunity to go to college can change a child's life. I don't want anyone to miss out on that chance because they couldn't afford it."

"And that's why we're all here at Pass It On."

Langston doesn't like to turn anyone down. For the past two years, Pass It On provided scholarships to every student who applied—all powered by people's donations and, according to Langston, "a whole lot of Windex."

But the store isn't just a source of scholarship money. It's a legitimate shopping destination in Comfort, a town of about 3,000. Langston says there's always a line of shoppers waiting outside the door when she opens.

"When I tell you we've got something for everyone, we've *really* got something for everyone here," she says, laughing. "If you come to Pass It On and leave empty-handed, you aren't looking hard enough."

And that's one thing Langston makes clear. She isn't in the business of selling junk. Of course, they get offerings that don't make it to the shop floor, and those get donated elsewhere. But she's seen Prada purses, Coach bags, delicate glassware and fine china all come through her door. Sometimes, even she's a customer. Sure enough, Langston checks the tag on her shirt. She got it from—where else?—Pass It On.

Despite the tens of thousands of dollars in scholarship money provided over the years, Langston will tell you *she's* the one who's grateful. After the tragedy of her husband's death, she found meaning and purpose at the storefront on Front Street. And for her, that's priceless.

"I consider this my responsibility now," Langston says. "I feel God's hand over this work. And as long as I can keep up, I'll be here doing it." ■

TCP Visit Pass It On via video on our website.

YOU CAN HELP Pass It On accepts gently used items to support its scholarships. Make donations at 716 Front St., Comfort 78013.

OPPOSITE April Langston at Pass It On in Comfort.





Until the **COWS** Swim Home



STORY AND PHOTOS BY ERICH SCHLEGEL

Huebner Bros. Cattle Co. cowhands drive their cattle off Matagorda Peninsula and across the Colorado River for summer grazing near Bay City.

T'S A SCENE STRAIGHT out of a campy old Western.

After a long day of driving cattle—from 5 a.m. until dark—that ends with pushing the herd to a cattle trap by an old Army air base, full-time cowboy Stephen Weathers rendezvous with fellow cowboys finally relieved of their saddles.

“Then we’d sit around the campfire, cooking cans of pork and beans and have a great time joking around,” he says. “When we’d finally get to sleep in the bunkhouse, anyone snoring would get a cowboy boot thrown at him.”



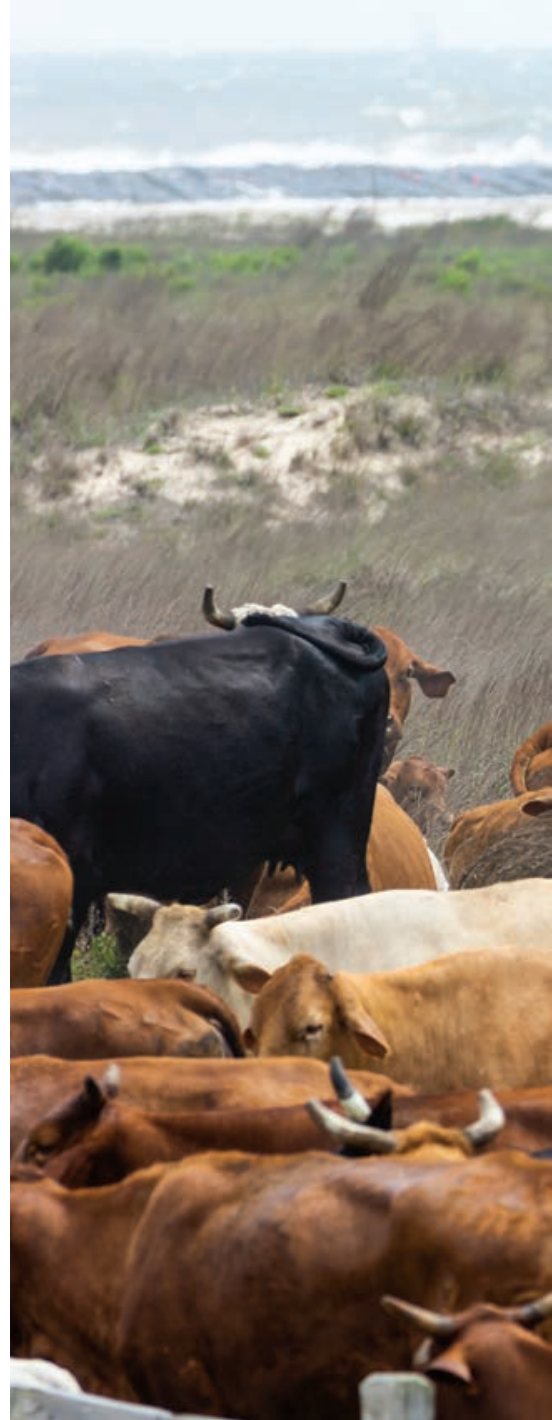
The Matagorda cattle drive runs right through a river—as it has for 106 years

Except this isn't a dusty trail to Abilene, Kansas, but a Gulf beach in Matagorda County. And instead of a marathon drive, it's more of a bovine biathlon.

The biannual Matagorda Bay cattle drive is one of the most historic and unique drives in the U.S. For more than 100 years, the Huebner Bros. Cattle Co. has been moving its herd back and forth between winter grazing pastures on the 30-mile-long Matagorda Peninsula and the summer pastures on the family's ranch south of Bay City. The operation involves

swimming the cattle across the 15-foot-deep Colorado River close to where it empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

Keith Meyer, Huebner Bros. ranch manager, is the fifth generation of cattlemen in his family to organize and run these drives. "Our family has been moving and swimming cattle on and off Matagorda Peninsula consecutively since 1917," says Meyer, who's been involved since he was 6 or 7. "I've grown up working this cattle drive alongside my father and grandfather."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Logan Meyer, 14, awaits the cattle as they reach Matagorda Bay Nature Park. Lauren Spanihel-Wahlberg and Randy Duncan keep watch over the spring herd of some 800 cattle.

he drives move the cattle to the peninsula for the winter months, then move them inland in the spring, just before hurricane season begins and storms threaten their safety. The cowboys time the crossings to occur during periods of slack current, when tidal motion is minimal.

Every November, just before Thanksgiving, about 550 head of cattle are moved in two-story 18-wheeler cattle trucks from the Huebner ranch to a holding pen near the beach. This area is part of the Lower Colorado River Authority's 1,333-acre Matagorda Bay Nature Park. After passing the coastal fishing town of Matagorda, the cattle are hauled down FM 2031, past homes on stilts along the Colorado River to the west and past 934 acres of protected Matagorda Bay wetlands to the east.

Once the cattle have been delivered to the holding pen and the road is blocked, Meyer and his team of 10–12 drovers lead



"Our family has been moving and swimming cattle on and off Matagorda Peninsula consecutively since 1917. I've grown up working this cattle drive alongside my father and grandfather."

the herd toward the water. Some of them are local youngsters on horseback who are learning from the more seasoned veterans.

At Matagorda Bay Nature Park, the cattle drive takes a right-hand turn at the miniature golf course to the river's edge, and the 100-yard swim to the peninsula begins. A small flotilla of cowboys on motorboats ensures the cattle don't stray, and in about 15 minutes, all are across.

By the return trip in spring, the herd of 550 grows to about 800 bulls, cows and calves.

"I used to love the cattle drive," says Weathers, a member of Jackson Electric Cooperative, which serves this corner of Matagorda County. He worked the drive for about 15 years. "We'd get on the peninsula early the first morning and start riding west down the beach. We'd split up our team. Some riders picking up cattle along the beach, some in the dunes covered in salt grass."

Even though this Beefmaster breed of cattle is known for hardiness in harsh, humid coastal climates, the mosquitoes and biting flies on Matagorda Peninsula can be too much



"It's straight out of the Old West but with a 21st-century spin."

for the herd to handle as the weather warms. The seasonal change challenges the cowboys too.

"The warmer temperatures have brought the rattlesnakes out of hibernation," Weathers says. "You'll find rattlesnakes sunning themselves on top of the salt grass, perched about leg high as we ride. The snakes and the biting flies are enough to force some cattle to swim across the river on their own."

Thus begins the trek back to the Huebner ranch.

"Our ranch pastures have had time to rest over the winter, and the cattle and calves are ready to get going inland," Meyer says.

Jeralyn Novak, communications coordinator for Beefmaster Breeders United, calls the Matagorda Bay cattle drive a modern-day *Lonesome Dove*. It's "straight out of the Old West but with a 21st-century spin," she writes.

Jeff Crosby, executive director of the Colorado River Land Trust, a nonprofit that works to protect land and water in the Colorado River watershed, witnessed a spring cattle swim firsthand. "This is an important part of our historical Texas heritage," he says.

The cowboys don't set or share dates for the spring or fall drives, so lucky onlookers have only the weather and tides to go by. After more than a century of trial and error, these efficient workers have the drive down to a science.

"Cattle drives are still done the same way," Crosby says, "because moving cattle from one location to another was perfected long ago." ■



TOP The Matagorda drive includes moving the Beefmaster cattle along sidewalks. ABOVE Jacie Wahlberg, 7, helps with the roundup.

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FROM
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At Houston County Electric Cooperative, we are focused on providing world-class, reliable service. Our dedication to serving you drives our maintenance efforts. We have dedicated employees and



contractors working across our territory to ensure that your power stays on and that your investment in Houston County EC is protected.

We make deliberate, prudent efforts to maintain a reliable system for our entire membership. You may not always see all that we are doing, but we do act in the best interest of all as we systematically address maintenance.

Below is a list of some of the current maintenance activities we are tackling this year, along with the names of some businesses we've contracted with to provide services.

Right-of-Way Clearing

We strive to maintain clear easements, which helps prevent outages during storm and wind events.

With the amount of timber growing near Houston County EC lines, trees are one of our biggest contributors to outages, and these contractors assist with clearing easements.

- ▶ Tree Xperts—Middleton/Leona areas
- ▶ Clear View—Oakwood/Flo areas
- ▶ Arbor Resources—Kennard area

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- ▶ Osmose—Oakwood/Flo areas

Hazard Tree Removal

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- ▶ HCEC and Arbor Resources—Will respond to member requests throughout the service area.

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- ▶ Davey Resource Group—Trinity County, eastern Houston County, moving to northern Houston County and Anderson County

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Tune Up Your Air Conditioner

REALLY HOT WEATHER is still a couple of months away, but it's never too early to think about whether your central air conditioning system can make it through one more summer. Spring is the perfect time to call a qualified service technician to give your system a once-over.

Giving your AC system an annual tuneup can:

Reduce unexpected repairs. Even if your service tech recommends a repair during the process, it's still a repair you can make on your terms, rather than when it becomes necessary in the middle of summer.

Lower utility bills. A clean AC system is going to run more efficiently than a dirty one.

Extend the life of your system. AC systems that are regularly maintained can last 15 years or more. Systems that aren't maintained won't last longer than 10.

Provide greater comfort during the summer. Just one tuneup a year is enough to ensure your AC system can provide reliable cooling throughout the entire home.

Keep parts warranties valid. Most AC manufacturers void your warranty if system maintenance isn't performed annually by a professional. ■



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Add an Energy Review to Yearly Spring Checklist

WARM WEATHER HAS A way of making things grow: flowers, grass and your to-do list. So what's one more task? While you're scrubbing and inspecting your home this spring, check for opportunities to increase energy efficiency around the house. Making a few energy-related repairs could help lower your electric bill all year long.

While you're cleaning the windows, check for loose or missing caulk and weatherstripping. These energy no-no's allow cool air to escape from your home during the summer and steal heated air during the winter. That can raise your energy bill no matter the season. A tube of caulk and a little elbow grease can tighten things up.

Lightbulbs looking dim? Wipe them down to remove excess dust, and trash those incandescent bulbs. LED bulbs come in almost every size and mimic the glow of incandescents while using less energy. They last up to 10 times longer than compact fluorescent lightbulbs and 5,000 times longer than incandescent bulbs.

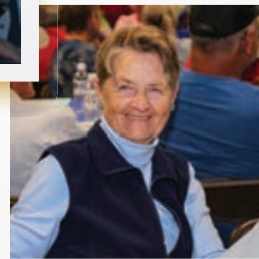
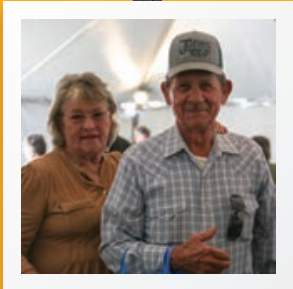
Replace dirty air filters, which make your air conditioning system work harder.

Open the windows. If it's not warm enough yet to turn off the heat and enjoy the fresh air, install a programmable thermostat, which automatically adjusts the temperature so you use less energy to heat your home when no one is there. The device can save you up to \$100 a year on heating and cooling bills.

Vacuum under and behind the refrigerator to remove dust buildup that decreases efficiency. If you use an extra fridge or freezer in the garage, turn it off when not in use. If you use it year-round, keep it stocked or fill gaps with extra jugs of water or trays of ice so it will operate more efficiently.

Before you scrub major appliances like refrigerators, ovens and washing machines, check to see if the model is Energy Star certified. If not, consider upgrading—Energy Star models use loads less energy and are worth the purchase price, even if your older, less-efficient appliance is still getting the job done. ■

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Find members with unique stories to share



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Do you know an HCEC member willing to share what sets them apart?
Email kbond@houstoncountyelec.com with details.



MIKIMAD | ISTOCK.COM

Breaking Down Energy-Saving Claims

WHEN IT COMES TO saving energy, it can be confusing to figure out what works and what doesn't. There are many wild claims out there, like adding devices to your meter, that are pure rubbish. But some claims have been repeated so many times that they start to ring true—even though they aren't. Let's set the record straight on a few of those.

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

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

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

A: No. While replacing inefficient windows with new, energy-efficient windows can cut heat loss through windows in half (or more), windows typically account for only about 25%–30% of your home's heating costs. The amount of energy you use for heating and cooling is likely one-third to one-half of your total energy use, so replacing your old windows might only reduce your total energy costs by about 10%.

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

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

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

A: Most experts advise against this because closing supply registers forces your heater or air conditioner to work harder. If your system supplies too much cold or heat to some rooms and too little to others, talk to a professional about modifying your ductwork.

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

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

Corned Beef Hash

3–4 strips bacon
2 tablespoons finely chopped onion
2 cups cooked corned beef, finely chopped
2 cups cooked potatoes, grated and unpeeled
Salt or garlic salt
Pepper

1. Fry bacon until crisp. Remove bacon from the pan.
2. Add onion to pan. Sauté until clear.
3. Combine beef and potatoes in hot drippings in pan. Crumble bacon and add it to the mixture.
4. Stir thoroughly while heating.
5. Add salt and pepper to taste.

SERVES 4

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

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You Know Newbury

Even if the Texan's name doesn't ring a bell, his soaring folk, rock and country songs should

BY PETER BLACKSTOCK

NOT MANY PEOPLE knew Mickey Newbury's name when he made his first and only appearance on Billboard's Hot 100 pop chart in 1972—but they probably knew the songs he stitched together on *An American Trilogy*, one of the most unlikely hit singles ever.

Written 100 years before Newbury combined them, the folk songs *Dixie* and *Battle Hymn of the Republic* presented contrasting views of the American South. The former became an unofficial anthem of the Confederacy; the latter was written during the Civil War by a well-known abolitionist. Newbury added *All My Trials*, a traditional folk song popularized during the mid-20th century folk revival by artists such as Joan Baez.

His dramatic arrangement and recording of the three songs hit No. 26 on the Hot 100 in 1972. It also caught the attention of Elvis Presley, who made *An American Trilogy* a staple of his live repertoire. All of this might have made Newbury a one-hit-wonder footnote, but in fact his music offered a much deeper well for those willing to dive in.

Newbury had been on the charts before but as a writer—and with a similarly unlikely single. Fellow native Houstonian Kenny Rogers' first hit came from Newbury's pen. Rogers' 1960s band the First Edition had a top-five smash with *Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)*, a psychedelic rock song steeped in the counterculture of the era.

Rogers wasn't actually the first artist to record *Just Dropped In*. That was Jerry Lee Lewis, who subsequently took Newbury's *She Even Woke Me Up To Say Goodbye* to No. 2 on the country charts in 1969. By that time, Newbury's career as a writer had taken off, with artists ranging from Don Gibson to Solomon Burke to Eddy Arnold scoring hits with his tunes.

Suddenly, major record labels had reason to bet on Newbury's solo career. He responded with a magnificent string of solo albums from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s that rival the works of such masters as Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell.

His albums weren't big sellers, but fellow Texas songwriters took note. My first exposure to Newbury came many years later, when as a music writer I informed Townes Van Zandt in a 1992 phone interview that Newbury had been booked to open a show for Van Zandt and Guy Clark in Seattle. Van Zandt was thrilled at the news, then explained that Newbury

had been a mentor to both when they were getting their starts in Houston's folk clubs.

Newbury's influence on other writers ran deep enough that he gets name-checked in one of the most famous country songs of all time. Songwriters Chips Moman and Bobby Emmons wrote *Luckenbach, Texas (Back to the Basics of Love)*, which topped the country charts in 1977 when Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson recorded it. In the chorus, they sang about "Hank Williams' pain songs and Newbury's train songs."

Newbury had a few train songs—*Frisco Depot* and *The Future's Not What It Used To Be* from 1971's *Frisco Mabel Joy* come to mind. But he had plenty of pain songs, too. The title track to 1973's *Heaven Help the Child* is almost epic in its grandeur of heartbreak, with Newbury's booming tenor soaring above a majestic orchestral arrangement.

Along with trains and pain, rain figured prominently in Newbury's music. It was more than just a lyrical metaphor: Newbury sometimes used rain sounds as bridges between tracks on his albums.

Newbury, who'd moved from Houston to Nashville when his career caught fire, eventually settled in the Pacific Northwest. He didn't record much in the 1980s and 1990s, but a late-career resurgence resulted in one of his finest albums, 2002's *A Long Road Home*, just a few months before his death. Lung-related ailments had left him mostly unable to sing in his final years; I caught his final public performance in November 1999 at a bar on the Florida-Alabama border, bravely delivered while he was hooked up to an oxygen tank.

That performance helped motivate me to assemble *Frisco Mabel Joy Revisited: For Mickey Newbury*, a 2000 tribute album featuring Kris Kristofferson, Dave Alvin, Bill Frisell, Chuck Prophet and others.

In his liner notes for *Frisco Mabel Joy Revisited*, the late, great Texas art critic Dave Hickey wrote about the Newbury album that inspired the tribute. He described Newbury's compositions as "tiny, perfect songs, perfectly played, perfectly sung and perfectly recorded in perfect time, with perfect intonation." ■

OPPOSITE Mickey Newbury, a songwriter's songwriter, influenced many fellow Texas artists.





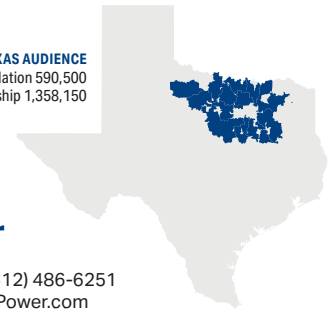
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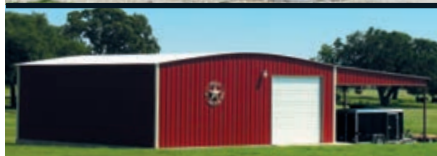
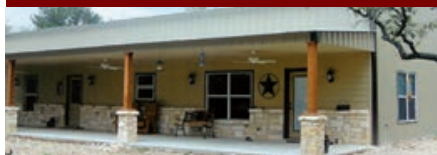
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Quinta Mazatlan is an urban sanctuary for pollinators and native plants.

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



hill that overlooked the vast and sunny Rio Grande delta to the south. The 10,000-square-foot mansion was believed to be the largest adobe house in Texas at that time, 1935. It was built in a Spanish Revival style with imported Talavera tile, red clay tiles for the roof, wrought-iron gates and huge carved doors. The couple wanted their home to look like the elegantly appointed homes they had seen in the finer districts of Mexico.

After the Matthews died, the house was sold to a grapefruit millionaire, Frank Schultz, who added features like stone balustrades. Eventually the home was sold again and began to suffer from neglect.

The city of McAllen stepped in and saved it in 1998, and today Quinta Mazatlan and its 20 acres are a crown jewel of the city, described as a “mansion with a mission.” The world-class educational facility located in a Tamaulipan thorn forest is part of the World Birding Center and hosts the annual Monarch Fest to support the struggling monarch butterfly population.

Quinta Mazatlan’s grounds are teeming with native plants and serve as a rejuvenating garden for migrating exotic birds and pollinators. The property’s magical ambiance has made it a sought-after venue for couples wanting to say “I do” in a place they’ll always treasure remembering.

The Matthews were honored to know that the dream they had for their beloved home has been magnificently surpassed. ■

Of Birds, Butterflies and Brides

Quinta Mazatlan and its massive adobe mansion remain a McAllen jewel

BY W.F. STRONG

THE ROMAN PHILOSOPHER Cicero said, “If you have a library and a garden, you have all that you need.” Enter the gates of Quinta Mazatlan, and you’ll understand that wisdom.

This inviting refuge is seemingly a world away from the hustle and bustle of McAllen right outside the gates. Jason Chilton Matthews, who built the mansion in the 1930s, wanted it that way.

In every corner, there are Old World influences. There’s a tiled Roman bathtub, 9 feet long and 3 feet deep, and a tiled mural that has the words “*Labor Omnia Vincit*,” Latin for “work conquers

all,” which is Virgil’s praise for the life of the farmer in his poem *Georgics*.

Matthews was a renaissance man—a publisher, writer, composer, poet, scientist, soldier and pilot. He fought in 11 battles in World War I.

After Matthews traveled the world extensively, involved in various business enterprises with Marcia, his oil heiress wife from Pennsylvania, they settled in McAllen because he said it was the “crossroads of the Western Hemisphere.” He wanted to build a home that would be a showplace to entertain friends, and he found the highest point in McAllen: a

Cast Iron

Trusted cookware provides timeless value, indoors and out

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

There's no tool more cherished in a home kitchen than a well-seasoned cast-iron pan. Whether your skillet has been passed down for generations or is just starting to see its full potential, it's a go-to for many dishes. This tart lemon pie, from Fredericksburg Cast Iron Co., uses your pan in a somewhat unexpected way.

Lemon Skillet Pie

PIE

½ cup (1 stick) butter, melted,
plus more for the pan
1½ cups crushed graham crackers
½ cup sugar
3 cups sweetened condensed milk
3 egg yolks
¾ cup lemon juice
Pinch salt

TOPPING

1 cup heavy cream
3 tablespoons powdered sugar
½ teaspoon vanilla extract

GARNISH

Sliced lemons
Lemon zest
Fresh mint leaves

1. **PIE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and lightly coat a 12-inch cast-iron skillet with butter.
2. In a bowl, combine graham crackers and sugar. Stir in melted butter until well blended. Press the crumb mixture into the bottom and sides of the prepared pan. Bake until firm, about 8 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, combine the sweetened condensed milk, egg yolks, lemon juice and salt and beat with a mixer for 4 minutes.
4. Pour mixture into baked pie crust and return the pan to the oven. Bake until the center is set, about 10 minutes.
5. Let the pie cool at room temperature for 30 minutes. Cover and then transfer to the refrigerator to chill until set, at least 1 hour.
6. **TOPPING** When ready to serve, make the topping. In a large bowl or using a stand mixer, beat the cream, powdered sugar and vanilla until fluffy. Spread onto pie and garnish as desired.

SERVES 8-10

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Texas Tater Tot Casserole.



Creamy Salsa Verde Pasta

JAZMIN ROMO
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

Creamy and herbal with just the right amount of heat, this salsa verde pasta features an easy-to-make sauce. Romo recommends using the extra sauce as a dip or spread on a toasted bagel.

- 3 teaspoons salt, divided use**
- 8 ounces linguine**
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened**
- 1 cup cilantro**
- ½ cup sour cream**
- ½ cup water**
- 3 green tomatoes, quartered**
- ¼ cup basil leaves**
- 2 serrano peppers, deseeded**
- 3 cloves garlic**
- 1 cube chicken bouillon**
- ¼ teaspoon pepper**
- 1 onion, divided use**
- 3 tablespoons butter**
- 1 cup shredded pepper jack cheese**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add 2 teaspoons salt and linguine. Cook pasta to al dente according to package directions.
- 2.** Meanwhile, in a blender combine cream cheese, cilantro, sour cream, water, tomatoes, basil, serranos, garlic, bouillon cube, pepper and remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Quarter the onion and add 1 quarter to the blender. Dice the remaining onion to yield ¾ cup and set aside. Blend sauce until smooth, taste, and add more salt or pepper to taste.
- 3.** Heat a 9- or 10-inch cast-iron pan over medium. Add butter. Once melted, add reserved diced onions and sauté until soft. Pour in blended sauce (you might

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

Henry's Heavenly Chili

HELEN SANDERS
UNITED COOPERATIVE
SERVICES



Sanders' late husband, Henry, above, created this chili for the annual family reunion, where he would cook it over an open flame in a cast-iron wash kettle. If you prefer, leave out the alcohol.

SERVES 4-6

- 2 tablespoons bacon grease or vegetable oil**
- 1 pound ground beef**
- 1 pound ground pork**
- 1 onion, chopped**
- 2 jalapeño peppers, deseeded and chopped**
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped**
- 1 can diced tomatoes (14.5 ounces)**
- 1 can diced Hatch chiles (4 ounces)**
- 2 tablespoons diced chipotle in adobo sauce**
- ¼ cup chili powder**
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano leaves**
- 2 teaspoons cumin**
- 2 teaspoons salt**
- 1-2 teaspoons pepper**
- 2 cups beef stock**
- 2 ounces beer**
- 1 ounce reposado tequila**

- 1.** Heat a cast-iron Dutch oven over medium-high and add bacon grease. Once melted, add beef and pork and cook about 10 minutes, until no pink remains.
- 2.** Add the onion, jalapeños and garlic and cook until vegetables are soft. Stir in tomatoes, chiles and chipotle. Add chili powder, oregano, cumin, salt and pepper and mix well, then add beef stock, beer and tequila and stir again. Reduce heat to medium. Cook 20 minutes, stirring often.
- 3.** Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

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RECIPES CONTINUED

not use it all) and stir slowly to mix. Bring to a boil for 1 minute, then remove from heat.

4. Drain pasta and add to the cast-iron pan, carefully tossing with tongs to coat with sauce. Sprinkle with cheese and bake 15 minutes. Broil 2 minutes to brown the cheese. Garnish with more cilantro and basil, if desired.

SERVES 2-3

Dutch Apple Pancakes

GWEN JONES
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

Oven-baked pancakes are impressive with their highly puffed sides. This Dutch apple version is wonderfully spiced and makes for a great breakfast or dessert.

4 eggs

½ cup flour

½ cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar, divided use



½ teaspoon baking powder

Pinch salt

1 cup milk

2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, melted

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 teaspoon ground nutmeg, divided use

4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 large tart apple, peeled, cored and thinly sliced

1. In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, flour, 1 tablespoon sugar, baking powder

and salt. Gradually whisk in milk until smooth, then whisk in melted butter, vanilla and ½ teaspoon nutmeg. Let batter rest at least 30 minutes and up to overnight.

2. When ready to bake, preheat oven to 425 degrees.

3. Heat a 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium and add 4 tablespoons butter. Once melted, brush butter up sides of pan and remove from heat.

4. In a small bowl, combine ¼ cup sugar, cinnamon and remaining ½ teaspoon nutmeg, then sprinkle evenly over the melted butter. Arrange the apple slices over the sugar mixture, then sprinkle the remaining ¼ cup sugar over the apples.

5. Place the pan over medium-high heat and cook just until the liquid starts to bubble. Remove from heat and evenly pour the batter over the apples.

6. Bake 15 minutes, then reduce heat to 375 and bake 10 minutes more. Serve immediately.

SERVES 4



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A.



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Old Pete was a retired stuntman bursting with stories. There was the time he stared down a grizzly bear. There was the time he won a competition and got to kiss a Hollywood starlet as the prize. And there was the time he got into a fistfight with the Duke. Many stories. Some were probably even true. I know two things for sure: that he had an excellent collection of turquoise and that he owed me for a poker game he lost. The last time I saw him, he opened a drawer and pulled out a collection of beautiful Navajo turquoise jewelry to repay his debt. Pete's jewelry inspired our Tucson Sun Turquoise Collection.

This jewelry set features turquoise that's been gently enhanced to bring out its finest shades in a Southwestern motif. Finished with oxidized silver, this jewelry set captures the beauty and mystery of the Arizona desert. The rarest and most valuable turquoise is found right here in the American Southwest, but the future of the blue beauty is unclear. I recently spoke with turquoise traders who explained that less than 5% of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry. Once thriving, many Southwest mines have closed.

But Stauer saw this coming and is now one of the largest owners of gem-grade turquoise in the U.S. Don't miss your chance to own the diamond of the desert. Act now. This is one of our fastest sellers, and we only have a limited supply of Arizona turquoise available for this ad. See why Stauer remains the best bang for your buck!

Jewelry Specifications:

- Arizona turquoise. Oxidized silver finish. Ring: whole sizes 5-10. Pendant: 1 ¾" drop. Cuff: fits wrist to 7 ¼".

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18" Sterling Silver Rope Chain		\$59 + S&P	
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

'Lonesome' in a Library

Texas State University houses memorabilia from the TV miniseries

BY CHET GARNER

WHEN I THINK OF the Wild West and the grit it took to be a cowboy, I don't think of yodeling Roy Rogers or Hollywood-perfect John Wayne. I think of Woodrow Call and Gus McCrae, covered in sweat and driving cattle in *Lonesome Dove*. I remember watching the 1989 miniseries with my parents and thinking, "Now these are real cowboys."

Every year thousands of faithful fans like me make a pilgrimage to San Marcos to visit a permanent exhibit dedicated to the classic production.

I rolled onto the campus of Texas State University and wandered past students to the seventh floor of the Alkek Library, which houses the Wittliff Collections. Screenwriter Bill Wittliff and his wife, Sally, collected writers' papers for years and decided to open them to the public. There are priceless papers from writers like Cormac McCarthy and Sam Shepard, but most come to see the work of Wittliff himself. He was the screenwriter who adapted Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* novel into the award-winning miniseries.

Inside the exhibit, you'll find the cowboy outfits worn by Robert Duvall (McCrae) and Tommy Lee Jones (Call). There are arrows shot by Comanches as well as hats, guns and the wooden sign for the Hat Creek Cattle Co. that hung outside the fictional headquarters. They even have the deceased body of Gus that Call dragged back to Texas as a final act of friendship. Most amazing to me was the script used by Wittliff on set, with his tweaks and changes to lines to tell the best story possible.

I left inspired to tell more stories about the West—but only after I had properly binge-watched all six-plus hours of *Lonesome Dove* one more time. ■

ABOVE Chet alongside the cowboy garb worn by Tommy Lee Jones as the character Woodrow Call.

TCP Chet visits the mementos of real TV cowboys. Check out 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.

MARCH

08

Elgin S.H.E.: Women in Business, (512) 285-4515, elgintxchamber.com

09

Abilene All That Jazz, (325) 676-9620, paramountabilene.com

Denton [9–12] Texas Storytelling Festival, (940) 380-9320, tejasstorytelling.com

Irving [9–12] Texas Steel Guitar Association Jam-boree, (817) 558-3481, texassteelguitar.org

10

Lindale Keeton Coffman, (430) 235-2100, outhousetickets.com

Round Rock Destination: Hope, (512) 868-2822, casawilco.org

Amarillo [10–12] Western Antiques and Collectibles Show, (806) 378-3096, amarillociviccenter.com

Mansfield [10–13] Arts Week, (817) 728-3383, visitmansfieldtexas.com

Bastrop [10–12, 17–19, 24–26] The Addams Family: A New Musical Comedy, (512) 200-3826, bastropoperahouse.org

11

Beaumont Bee Gees Gold: The Tribute, (409) 838-3435, beaumonteventstx.com

Burton Texas Ranger Day, (979) 803-0393, burtonheritagesociety.org

Corpus Christi Wine Festival, (361) 779-7326, corpuschristiwinefestival.com

Livingston Pioneer and Settler Day, (936) 365-2201, tpwd.texas.gov

Lufkin Gene Watson, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

13

Fredericksburg [13-18] Spring Break at the Pioneer Museum, (830) 990-8441, pioneermuseum.org

16

Canton [16-18] Van Zandt County Bluegrass Festival, (214) 802-5999, krlivemusic.com

17

Bryan [17-18] Watercolor Batik Workshop, (979) 704-3090, degallery.us

Denton [17-18] The Muse Invitational Motorcycle Show, (512) 522-5445, ridetexas.com

Tolar [17-18] Ceramic Expo and Handcrafted Items, (254) 716-5227, westceramicshow.com

Fredericksburg [17-19] Trade Days, (210) 846-4094, fbgtradedays.com

Tyler [17-19] Vintage Market Days of East Texas, vintagemarketdays.com

18

Brenham The Celtic Angels, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Del Rio Texas State Parks Centennial Dark Skies Celebration, (830) 395-2133, tpwd.texas.gov

Fredericksburg Hill Country Indian Artifact Show, (830) 329-2636, hillcountryindianartifacts.com

MORE EVENTS >

Submit Your Event

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



Spring break starts
here.

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Pick of the Month

Herb Festival at the Wynne Home
Huntsville, March 25
(936) 891-5024
texasthymeunit.org

Jump-start your spring by celebrating fragrant herbs and healthy veggies. Expect vendors, speakers, music, children's activities and plenty of plants at this free festival.

MARCH EVENTS CONTINUED

18 **Lewisville St. Paddy's Texas Style**, (972) 219-3401, cityoflewisville.com

Angleton [18-19] Market Days, (979) 849-4364, angleton.tx.us

19 **The Colony Luck of the Irish Triathlon**, (214) 370-9010, playtri.com

24 **Georgetown [24-25] Quilt Show**, (512) 869-1812, handcraftsunlimited.com

Hallettsville [24-26] South Texas Polka and Sausage Fest, (361) 798-2311, hallettsville.com

Burton [24-April 1] LaBahia Antiques Show, (979) 289-2684, labahiaantiques.com

25 **Bandera Ranching Heritage Day**, (830) 796-4413, banderatex.com

The Colony Mother and Son Adventure Day, (972) 625-1106, visitthecolonytx.com

Sabinal [25-26] Wild Hog Festival and Craft Fair, sabinalwildhogfestival.com

College Station [28-29] Anastasia, (979) 845-1234, opastickets.org

Kerrville Napoleon Dynamite: A Conversation With Jon Heder, Efrén Ramirez and Jon Gries; (830) 315-5483; thearcadialive.org

Abilene [31-April 1] Outlaws and Legends Music Festival, outlawsandlegends.com

Victoria [31-April 1] Friends of Flint Rifle Invitational Scholarship Shoot and State Cookoff, (210) 439-4191, friendsofflint.com

28

31

APRIL

01

Brenham Southern Raised, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

Bryan Starlight Affair, (979) 485-5473, rmhc-ctx.org

Mason Spring Art & Wine Fest, (325) 347-5758, masontxcoc.com

Port Arthur Cajun Heritage Fest, (409) 985-7822, cajunheritagefest.com

Bellville [1-2] Texas Select Custom Cutlery Event, (713) 724-6813, texasselectevent.com

San Antonio [1-2] Fiesta of Gems, (830) 387-1766, swgms.org

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1 MARK HOLLY
BANDERA EC

"Little did we know that a major hurricane was about to impact Port Aransas. It was so sad to see the city devastated shortly after we left."

2 CASEY BRUNO
PEDERNALES EC

Sunset over Waterford Harbor Marina in Kemah.

3 PAIGE KILLIAN
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

"Please don't touch me!"

4 LARRY SELMAN
TRI-COUNTY EC

"This was taken by my wife, Gigi Selman. While driving down the road, she saw this hidden scene."



Upcoming Contests

- DUE MAR 10** Waterfalls
- DUE APR 10** Hoof and Horn
- DUE MAY 10** Night Sky



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more Land, Sea or Sky photos from readers.



A Pet Project

An ailing feline finds her place at the head of the table

BY JESSICA RIDGE
ILLUSTRATION BY
STEPHANIE SINGLETON

I SET THE DELICATE china saucer before her, a tiny calico queen curled up on a quilt. On the dish is a dainty portion of cat food, heated to make it more enticing. The plate was a wedding gift a decade ago, shortly before my husband and I brought our little feline gourmand home.

Only the best for miss priss. She gives this morning's delicacy, whitefish and tuna, an imperious sniff, then looks up at me. *Is that the best you can do, lady?* Next up, canned salmon.

Isobel is 12 now, and she is dying.

Her green eyes gaze with the same peaceful focus, and she still flops over for belly rubs and purrs contentedly, but her decline, which had been happening in fits and starts, has gained momentum. And my husband, Jon, and I find ourselves vested with the worst, most

painful power—deciding when to let her go. It's a desperate sort of daily divination. *How much has she eaten today? Three bites earlier? Fantastic.* As she grows thinner.

And yet as best we can tell, she isn't suffering. So with our vet's blessing, we persist. I imagine Isobel as a discerning diner at a Michelin-starred restaurant for which I'm the hapless chef, subject to the mercy of her palate's whims. No thank you to tuna in oil today; yes please to catnip-laced crunchy treats.

Her haughtiness has hung on in other ways, too. She still emits an irritated squeak when our dog, Brienne, gets too close for her liking. She's never been a big fan of our coltish pup. Too friendly, too in her face.

But Isobel warmed up to us quickly. The day we brought her home, a volunteer at the animal shelter had asked if we'd like to meet the sweetest kitty in the whole place. Sure, we said. Almost as soon as Isobel emerged from her little metal crate, she settled into my arms. More like a puppy than a 2-year-old cat, really. The sad din of the shelter faded into the background as she stared up at me. Sold.

That night, she hid under the sofa in our apartment until I got home from work, when she finally ventured out from beneath her chenille hideout, to our soft-spoken jubilation.

We go back to the vet tomorrow, where I know the news won't be good. I've begun the steps to volunteer at the shelter where we found Isobel; I hope to guide another family to a cat as sweet as ours.

Until then, I've got plenty to keep me busy—a finicky, affectionate Isobel, as likely to snuggle up close as she is to turn up her nose. ■



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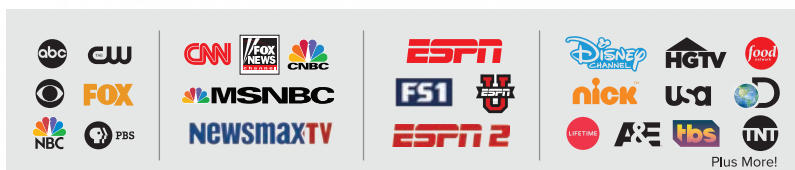


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