



Just This Side of Coon Creek Act 2: Scene 1

WHEN THE ROLES WERE BEING CAST, everyone understood that Rosemary Chitsey, née Cox, would be the leading lady for the 1940s-era play at the schoolhouse near Center Hill. But it took an act of recruitment to cast the perfect leading man. Several were first considered, but, Rosemary says, “They just weren’t right.”

All were surprised when Rosemary’s cousin proposed Aubrey Dean Chitsey, the handsome but quiet and shy son of a dairy and cattle farmer, for consideration as the male lead. Astonishment followed when Aubrey agreed to take on the role. The play was *Bound To Marry*, and Rosemary and Aubrey didn’t know each other. After all, he’d been born on the east side of Coon Creek and she on the west. With birthplaces mere miles apart, their circles had not yet intersected.

With the casting call, life imitated art. When east met west, romance ignited on the stage. The two were destined to marry. Rosemary was 18 and Aubrey was 23 when they swapped rings. During their full lives together, Rosemary and Aubrey lived the busy and happy life of dairy and cattle farmers while raising their two children, Jill and Jack. Their marriage spanned 63 years until Aubrey’s death in 2011.

“I was devastated,” Rosemary says. “You know, we were mar-

ried 63 years. I just thought I was going to die.”

To help her through that rough time, she adds, her granddaughter Audrey told her, “‘You have just got to get back to painting.’ And I told her, ‘I know I can’t paint anymore. I just know I can’t.’ But she just kept on, and she said, ‘You are going to have to do something!’ You need something to occupy your mind.” So at 81, Rosemary picked up a paintbrush, and since that time, she has created well over 100 original oil paintings—and is still at it almost five years later.

Rosemary says she has always loved painting and other artistic pursuits such as quilting and crocheting. She also plays the piano by ear. She hasn’t had formal training in any of them, but she tells how her love of art first exhibited itself when she was a child.

“I was 9 years old when I did that,” she says, pointing to a picture above her mantel. “When I got it finished, I took it over to my grandmother’s house. I figured she would look at it and say, ‘That’s nice,’ and that would be the end of it. And the next time I went over there, my granddaddy had made the frame out of shoe molding—or ‘quarter-round,’ I believe he called it—and it was hanging over the fireplace. Then my mother kept it in her house as long as she lived, and then I have it now.” Not

the typical work of a 9-year-old, that first bit of preserved art is a fine rendering of the old family barn on manila paper. The media were simple blackboard chalk and a few watercolor paints.

“I had no formal training. I just had to figure it all out,” she says. “I’ve been reading stuff about the brain, and I think I have the right side of the brain because I love art and music and spiritual types of things. And to me, art is a spiritual type of thing.”

For a hardworking farming family, artistic pursuits are considered “playing,” Rosemary says. So for most of her married life, she spent precious little time pursuing her love of art. She said she would create a piece here or there for church or specific purposes, but she rarely had the time to create for pure enjoyment. Now, still a cattlemaster but mostly retired, she leaves most business matters to her son, son-in-law and daughter, and has turned her focus to making vibrant creations.

“What I am most interested in with art is atmosphere,” she says. “I like to figure out how I can make it look atmospheric.” Adding with a smile, “I also like to make it prettier than it really is.” And as far as technique and style of painting, she says, “I like tonalism better than any of them, although I don’t do it all of the time.”

Rosemary works with oil on canvas but also sometimes makes her own with board and gesso. Many people bring her canvases, so she uses more of those now. Sometimes, especially for miniatures, she says, she likes to make her own canvases.



Rosemary’s melded style defies description but includes tonalism and impressionism. “Landscape is really my thing,” she says. “I like to paint flowers, but I feel most comfortable painting landscape.” She also does commission work for various scenes upon request.

Most of Rosemary’s landscapes include an abundance of contrasting color and dramatic lighting effects to portray glittering and reflective water. She also masterfully bestows her heavily wooded and pastoral scenes with luminous clouds. The colors are rich and contrasting yet deliver otherworldly calm and restful scenes that are refreshing for the beholder. One could say they are heavenly patches of Earth, which might be what she intends.

Rosemary herself is a kind, humble and gracious lady who probably has never met a stranger. In sharing her philosophy toward her art and what she is trying to accomplish, she says, “I am just a spiritual-minded person. I can feel God’s hand in my work. I pray a lot that He will show me, guide my hand, give me a vision of what to paint—stuff like that, which is ridiculous to most people!” She laughs. Then, serious again, she confesses, “But that’s the way I feel about it. It’s always been a spiritual thing to me. I just don’t think I could paint if I didn’t have spiritual help; I’ll put it that way.” She continues with a giggle, “And why the Lord would help me, I have no idea! But I think he does, even though I don’t deserve His time.”

Rosemary’s work has been gaining recognition of late, and





collectors are making special trips to visit her at Coon Creek, where the front rooms of her house are stacked high with paintings waiting for their owners. About a recent sale, she said, “I sold one at the art center recently that turned out pretty well. And those people collect art, so I was flattered when they bought my painting.”

About price, she says, “I get \$100 for my commissions and my

16-by-20 [-inch paintings]. I think they are worth at least that, and so far nobody has complained.” Smaller paintings go for somewhere in the range of \$50 to \$35, and miniatures for less—with the frames that she has collected and matched them with. Of the price, she says, “I would like to sell them for a good price, but you can’t in a small town, especially if you are not one of renown or if you haven’t won a lot of awards or something.”

On her future plans for her art, she says, “I guess as long as I am able, I will keep doing similar to what I’m doing.” And then she jokes, “As far as I know, I’m not sick anywhere—either mentally or physically. So I would just say ... sell a few and give a few away. That is about what I’m doing now.” She also says, “And be thankful to be able to do what I do because I’ll be 86.”

To visit Rosemary at her gallery—don’t worry, you won’t have to cross Coon Creek, since her house and studio are just this side of it. But you better hurry because she’s certainly also just this side of becoming an artist of some renown.

Seekers of fine art can call (903) 860-2751 to make an appointment to visit Rosemary Chitsey’s Coon Creek Art, which is a few miles outside of Winnsboro. Or they can visit her new website at www.cooncreek.gallery and get a good introduction to the beauty that abounds there.

Rosemary, a Wood County EC member, cattleguard, dairymaid, mother of two, grandmother of five and great-grandmother of six, is a lifelong Texan and an accomplished artist.

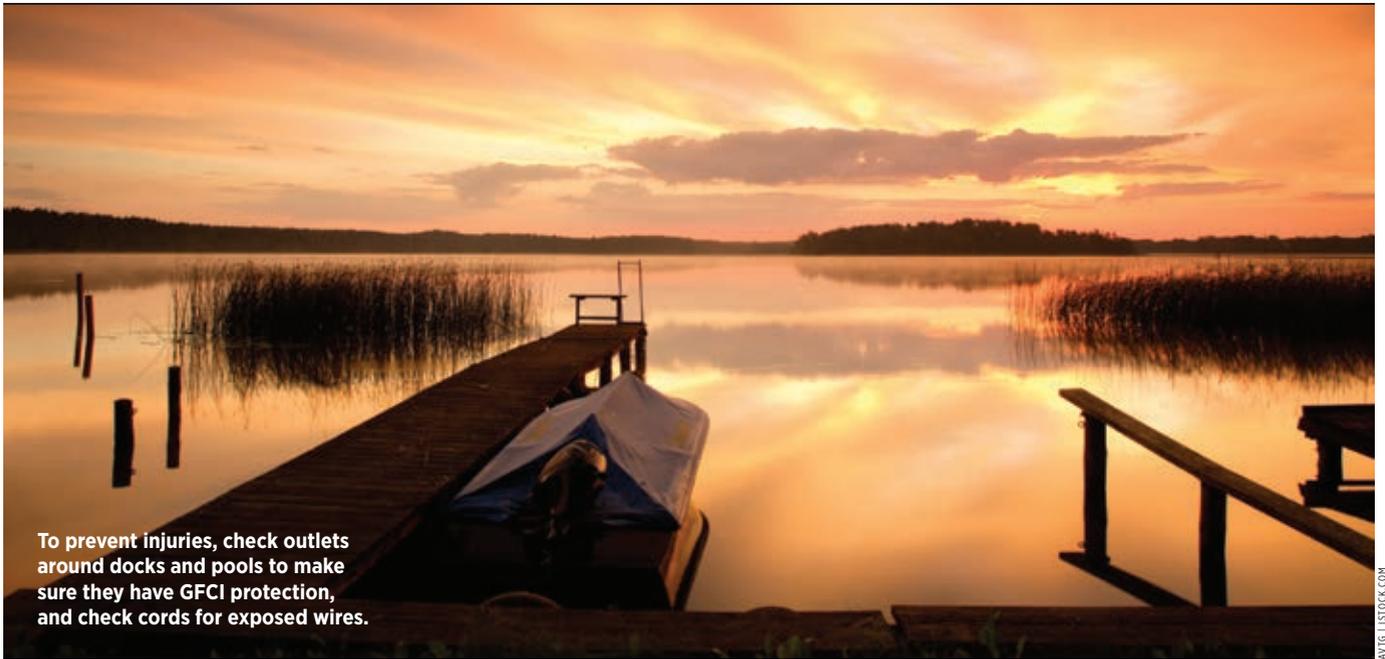


Closing blinds will keep your home cooler and prevent prying eyes from peeking in.

Before You Go ...

YOU CAN'T WAIT for summer vacation. But is your house ready? Follow these suggestions before you hit the road for the long July Fourth weekend:

- ▶ **If you're not leaving any pets in the house, crank up your thermostat to about 85 degrees.** Don't worry about re-cooling your house when you get home; the energy you save while you're away will exceed the energy it takes to cool the place off when you get home. **A caution:** Don't turn the AC completely off. A home that gets too hot during the summer can invite mold and mildew.
- ▶ **Close all of the windows, for safety's sake.** Draw the curtains, shades and blinds. They will block sunlight and heat from getting into your rooms and making your empty house hotter.
- ▶ **Unplug the TV, computers, phone chargers and countertop appliances.** Even appliances that are turned off use energy if they're still plugged in.
- ▶ **Leave a few lights on for safety but turn off the rest.** Check ceiling fans, alarm clocks, coffee makers and other auto-on devices to make sure they're out of commission while you're away from home.



To prevent injuries, check outlets around docks and pools to make sure they have GFCI protection, and check cords for exposed wires.

PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM

Lifesaving Lessons To Be Learned

WHETHER IT'S SWIMMING, boating or fishing, summertime is water recreation time for millions. Wood County Electric Cooperative reminds everyone to avoid electrical hazards during water recreation.

Electricity is essential—it keeps us cool in the summer, lights our houses, keeps the refrigerator cold and runs the TV, stereo and computers. Electricity also can be dangerous. It doesn't take much electricity to hurt someone. The power that runs through most circuits is enough to kill an adult.

Ground-fault circuit interrupters are one form of protection from electrical hazards. GFCIs detect dangerous situations in which a shock might occur and cut off power immediately to prevent it. Anywhere electricity is used in close proximity to water, there is a shock hazard. You should have GFCI protection on underwater lighting circuits, lighting around pools, and on hot tubs and spas.

Heed these tips to stay safe in or around swimming pools:

Do not put any electrical appliances within 5 feet of a swimming pool. Use battery-operated, rather than electrical, appliances near swimming pools.

Any electrical outlets within 20 feet of a pool should be equipped with a GFCI. Pools and decks should be built at least 5 feet away from all underground electrical lines and at least 25 feet away from overhead electrical lines.

Never swim during a thunderstorm.

If a swimmer is electrocuted or shocked, don't dive in yourself because you could be electrocuted, too. Turn off the power, and then use a fiberglass shepherd's hook to pull the victim out of the water. Call emergency services immediately.

When you leave the pool, don't change the radio station or

touch any electrical appliances until you are dry. Never touch any electrical appliances when you are wet or standing in water.

If children wish to play with sprinklers or hoses, emphasize that they should be set up well away from any electrical outlets or appliances.

In most instances, if potential safety hazards are taken into consideration and handled proactively, accidents and deaths can be avoided.

If you plan to go boating or fishing this summer, be aware of your surroundings and potential electrical hazards. Electricity is also dangerous around larger bodies of water.

Always check the location of nearby power lines before boating or fishing. Contact between your boat and a power line could be devastating. Maintain a distance of at least 10 feet between your boat and nearby power lines to be safe. Your boat's wiring should be in compliance with American Yacht Club Standards. If you are not qualified to work on your boat's electrical system, hire a professional.

If your boat does come into contact with a power line, never jump out of the boat into the water because the water could be energized. Instead, stay in the boat and avoid touching anything metal until help arrives or until your boat is no longer in contact with the line.

Be sure dockside outlets have GFCI protection, and check cords that are plugged into them to make sure there are no broken casings or exposed wires.

Check for the location of power lines before fishing. Make sure you are casting the line away from power lines to avoid contact.

Summer Conservation Tips

IN THE HEAT OF A TEXAS SUMMER, we all want to keep cool in the air conditioning and grab a cold drink from the fridge. But remember that summer is the peak season of demand for electricity, and the appliances that help make summer bearable can also drive up your electric bill.

Keep Your Refrigerator Cool

Summer especially puts pressure on your refrigerator. In the season's high temperatures, you're more likely to open the door frequently for cool drinks. Here are some tips to keep refrigerator energy use to a minimum:

- ▶ Locate the refrigerator away from heat sources—the oven, the dishwasher and direct sunlight.
- ▶ Keep at least a 1-inch space all around the outside to allow air circulation.
- ▶ Clean the condenser coils at least once a year.
- ▶ Check the tightness of the door seals.
- ▶ Keep the fridge's power on the energy-saving setting.
- ▶ Use a thermometer to set the inside temperatures: Set the fridge at 36–38 degrees and the freezer at 0–5 degrees.

Make Friends With Your Freezer

- ▶ Keep the freezer as full as possible.
- ▶ Mark items for quicker identification to reduce door-opening time.
- ▶ Clean the condenser coils and check the seals.

Allow Your AC To Work Optimally

Your air conditioner works hard all summer long. Follow these tips to keep it from heating up your electric bill:

- ▶ You save 3–5 percent for each degree you raise the thermostat. Try setting the thermostat at 78 degrees.
- ▶ Use ceiling fans in conjunction with the AC to increase your comfort level.
- ▶ Don't cool unused rooms in summer. If the kids are off at summer camp, close off the vents to their rooms until they return.
- ▶ When you set your system to bring in fresh, outside air, you use much more electricity. Unless you need to bring fresh air into your home, set your HVAC system to recirculate (already cooled) air within your home.
- ▶ Keep humidity levels as low as possible by always using an exhaust fan, if you have one, when taking a shower.
- ▶ Maintenance is important. Clean or change AC filters regularly, and have units professionally cleaned, inspected and tuned every season to keep them running at peak efficiency.

For more information and ideas on how to lower your summer electric bill, please contact us at Wood County Electric Cooperative. We will be happy to provide you with more energy-saving tips that make the summer days even brighter.



Check the tightness of your refrigerator's seals by closing a dollar bill in the door. If the bill slides out easily, you may need to replace the seals.



Wood County Electric Cooperative

501 S. Main St. • P.O. Box 1827
Quitman, TX 75783

CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Debbie Robinson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Pat B. Lindley, President, *District 1*
Dennis Wright, Vice President, *District 3*
Lewis D. Young, Secretary-Treasurer, *District 7*
Burke Bullock, *District 2*
Brent Glenn, *District 4*
Jane Roberson, *District 6*
Cathy S. Roberts, *District 5*



Contact Us

CALL US

(903) 763-2203

EMAIL

info@wcec.org

OUTAGE HOTLINE

1-866-415-2951

FIND US ON THE WEB

wcec.org

MEMBER BENEFITS AND SERVICES

- Online account access and bill payment
- Paperless E-Bill services
- Free bill-paying app
- Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover accepted
- SmartPower prepay electric system
- Scholarships and youth programs
- Safety and energy conservation programs

MOBILE CONVENIENCE CENTER

Monday, First Methodist Church, *Van*
Tuesday, Family Dollar, *Mount Vernon*
Wednesday, City National Bank, *Hawkins*
Thursday, Brookshire's, *Winnsboro*
Friday, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*