

When my grandmother visits, telenovelas whisper from the television at night, and my daughter's lunchbox often features quesadillas—tortillas and cheese sealed with butter—instead of grilled cheese.

But these are cultural Band-Aids on a missing limb. As our family steps forward into the future, I worry about how much of our inheritance we've washed away in the rushing waters of acculturation. These are waters I've been bathed in all my life, waters that widen the border well beyond its riverbank.

I find a shirt and skirt my sister brought back from her trip to Mexico City, and Sierra runs around in her costume, dancing into the sunshine of the living room. The embroidery spells out MEXICO in stiff block letters, and I wonder whether I should pull her hair back into a tight ponytail and rub some blush on her cheek.

As my children stretch our family history into a future where borders split political parties, will I give her something more culturally substantial to carry with her than a few Tex-Mex phrases and an embroidered dress?

That night, I give my daughter one end of the colorful ribbon I find in my heart. I tell her stories of her grandfather, who raised cotton after his family had picked it on farms for years. I share the stories of the long trips her great-great-grandfather took to gather salt, a four-day ride away by wagon. I tell her about her great-grandmother, who had never even eaten in a restaurant, taking over ownership of a busy café during World War II, serving tacos to soldiers on leave.

Oye, *mija*. Listen, my daughter. Your inheritance is in these words. It will not be washed away. You come from a hard-working, loving people, people who were not purely Mexican, not purely Texan, but a powerful melding of history, geography and pride. These are their stories. Take them and weave them into your future.

Winter Prosapio is a Hill Country writer and humor columnist. She wrote "Walking With Grandfather" in the March issue.



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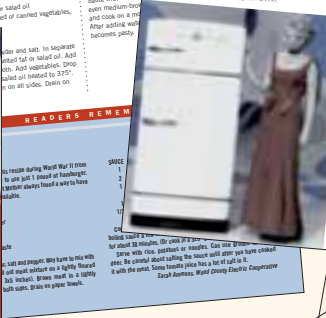
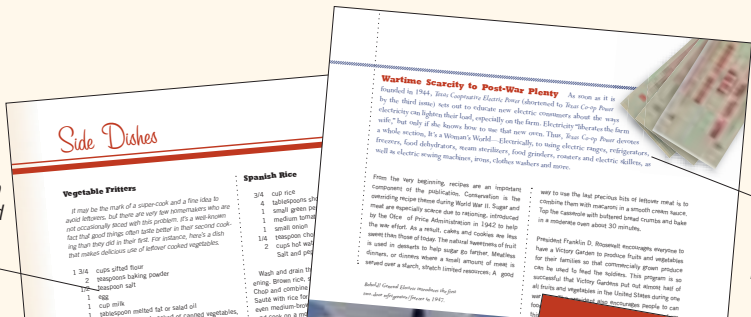
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