

MAGAZINE

[Current Issue](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[Cover Story](#)

[Features](#)

[View](#)

[Gleanings](#)

[Back Issues](#)

[Classifieds](#)

[Web Watch](#)

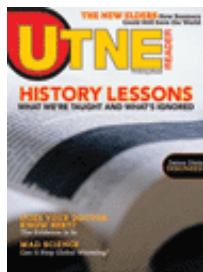
[Web Specials](#)

[Browse Archives](#)

[Search Archives](#)

[RSS Syndication](#)

Current Issue



SUBSCRIBE NOW!

[Your Account](#)

[Magazine Account](#)

Best Little Sleeping Porch in Texas What Granddad taught me about creative loafing

—By William Jack Sibley, *Texas Co-op Power*

January / February 2004 Issue

For many Texans, a screened sleeping porch is an essential part of small town and rural home life. All that's really necessary to hasten a quick porch nap is the numbing rasp of the cicada bugs and the rhythmic panting of a yard dog sprawled out under the front steps. Call it rural Prozac.

Growing up, I spent a lot of time with my maternal grandparents in the town of George West, Texas. My grandfather was a diehard porch napper. During the hottest days of the summer, long after the whole house had been air-conditioned to near-Minnesota extremes, you could always find him after lunch stretched out on the little twin bed on the screen porch. I'd stare out at him from inside the house and shake my head in dismay. Who in their right mind would prefer "natural" Texas heat over the cool blasts from a window unit the size of a washing machine? When I'd ask my grandmother why he didn't just stay inside, she'd shrug nonchalantly and smile, "I 'spect he just likes it that way."

One day after lunch, I decided to study Granddad during his siesta. At first, he lay there motionless; then after a time he picked up the front page of the *San Antonio Express* off the floor. Gazing at the paper for a moment or two, he quickly tossed it aside -- nothing of interest. He lay there a bit longer, then suddenly jumped with a start and scooted over to the far side of the porch to assess the sky. After some deep scrutiny, he returned to bed, exhaling sharply.

A minute or two later, he went to the screen door and spit. Back to bed. Several minutes later he looked up to see what the fat grackle on the lawn was complaining about. Back to bed. Soon after that he reached into his khakis, pulled out his pocketknife, and began trying to dislodge a thorn in his toe. Job done, back to bed. And on and on it went for the next half hour or so.

What I began to realize about Granddad's desire for open-air napping was that for him, even when you're resting outdoors, you're doing something! You're never out of touch with your surroundings. A neighbor drives by in a new car; you make a note. Smell smoke coming from somewhere; log it in. Cat and dog fighting next door; mental memo. Pyracantha bushes need watering; tell Grandmother.

Granddad was an old cowboy who dropped out of school in the seventh grade to work on the big ranches gathering wild horses. I suspect that as he got older, sleeping on the porch became the next best thing to lying on a bedroll by a campfire. It connected him to his past.

Come next August, I'm not sure you'll find me lounging through sweltering afternoons on any gabled porticoes. Heat and me stopped being agreeable years ago. I must confess, however, that I have

 [E-Mail This Article](#)

 [Printer-Friendly Version](#)

Related Links:

[Texas Co-op Power](#)

**BUY BOOK MENTIONED
IN THIS ARTICLE**
(for sale from Powell's Books)

[Any Kind of Luck](#)



given serious thought to dragging the bed out on the lawn some night so I can look up at the stars, smell the moon vines, and gaze at the bats zinging off the satellite dish. If you happen to see me out there, be sure and honk. I'll make a note of it.

William Jack Sibley's first novel, Any Kind of Luck, was a finalist for the 2002 John Bloom Humor Award given by the Texas Institute of Letters. From Texas Co-op Power (June 2003), a magazine about Texas living -- its people, history, travel, and food -- that has been delivered for six decades to member-owners of Texas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. Subscriptions: \$15/yr. (12 issues) from Subscription Dept., 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704; www.texas-ec.org