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# Texas Rattlesnake Tales (Texas Heritage Series)

*Tom Wideman*

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**Texas Rattlesnake Tales (Texas Heritage Series)** Tom Wideman
Rattlesnakes are as much a part of West Texas as cattle, oil, and beautiful sunsets.

Author Tom Wideman, a former chairman of the World's Largest Rattlesnake Roundup held every March in the West Texas town of Sweetwater, shares his collection of stories, encounters, and tips about hunting and handling rattlesnakes. He participated in the first Roundup in 1958 as a ticket-taker, then became an avid hunter, contributing his share of the 125 tons of rattlesnakes turned in at the Sweetwater Jaycees event over the years.

Wideman developed a great interest in and healthy respect for the species, leading media tours, appearing on National Geographic Television, and serving as a model for Gokey Boots. His own boots, he estimates, have been struck no less than three hundred times by rattlesnakes.

With humor and common sense, Wideman tells about celebrities and friends he has accompanied on guided snake hunts and offers words of wisdom and experience.

"If you're going to adopt rattlesnake hunting as a hobby," he writes, "the two most important hunting accessories you'll need are a cool head and a deep respect for the critters.

"If you see a rattlesnake or hear one 'rattle' a warning," he advises, "freeze in your tracks. I know that's a difficult assignment when your natural inclination is to run, but you should remain absolutely motionless until you determine the rattlesnake's location. Chances are that if you hear a snake rattle and don't move, the snake will retreat first."

Wideman said his wife, June, made her own deal with rattlesnakes years ago. "She won't hunt them," he says, "if they won't hunt her."

The fascination with rattlesnakes draws thousands of visitors to Sweetwater each spring for the Roundup, where they can sample fried rattlesnake and watch snake handlers demonstrate their techniques. The event helps control the rattlesnake population on nearby ranches and educate the public about snakes and their environment. Proceeds benefit a variety of community charities.

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