

SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC Cooperative



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Manager's Notes - By Jack Hamblin

To Those Who Remember ... from one who doesn't.

Among my most prized possessions is a collection of aged photographs from a bygone era. They are of a young World War II Navy fighter pilot, standing in front of his F6F Hellcat fighter plane aboard the aircraft carrier he flew off in the Pacific Theater during WWII. One photograph shows him in his dress uniform alongside his beautiful, young bride. Another is of him and his two brothers, who all joined the Navy together and became fighter pilots. One of those brothers never returned from that conflict. Still another photograph shows some of the medals he won as a decorated Ace Fighter Pilot. The young pilot is my dad, and I keep those pictures "front and center" on a wall in my office, not to boast of his war exploits, but to remind me of a very significant part of American history that I am too young to remember. I keep them close and regard them often to remind myself of a former generation who sacrificed and gave much more than I can imagine so I can live the way I do now — in peace, safety and comfort.

A few of you still remember that war and everything that surrounded it. My mom passed away in 2014, at age 91, and she could tell you what it was like back then compared to how we live now. She stayed home with relatives and a young daughter while dad was away to war. I keep those photographs as a tribute to my parents, and to those of you who can remember something very important that I cannot.

Just prior to that war, President

Franklin Delano Roosevelt initiated his New Deal program that helped the country recover from the Great Depression. The programs and jobs of the New Deal helped bring pride and prosperity back to people who were struggling and had largely given up much hope of things ever becoming better. Part of President Roosevelt's program was the signing of Executive Order 7037 on May 11, 1935, which created the Rural Electric Administration. A year later, the Rural Electrification Act was signed, opening the door for the electrification of rural America. Soon, farmers and ranchers organized into co-ops, putting in their own time and money to enlist members, and to qualify for electrification loans under the REA program. Friends and neighbors, joining together in a true "co-op" spirit also provided easements across their property at no cost so power lines could be built to neighboring farms and ranches. Lights began to come on in remote corners of the country where before, electricity was considered a luxury enjoyed only by city-folks or provided sparingly by diesel-powered "light plants," which were costly to run and maintain. Within 10 years, most farms and ranches in the country had electricity. The book *The Next Greatest Thing*, that chronicles the story of the rural electrification movement, quotes a farmer giving witness in church in rural Tennessee in the 1940s. He said, "Brothers and sisters, I want to tell you this. The greatest thing on earth is to have the love of God in your heart, and

the next greatest thing is to have electricity in your house."

Again I am one generation removed from those days. I have never known a day of my life when electricity was not available at the flip of a switch. And I've spent most of my life taking for granted this precious commodity upon which we rely so heavily. Most everyone who does remember that time is now gone. But there are some of you left who were there at the time, and who still remember well. You saw the lights come on for the first time. You remember that time, and know so much better than I; better than any of us who were not there, that getting electricity is one of the greatest things to happen to rural America.

On one wall of the boardroom in our new office is a print of a painting done by Francis Hayes, a Southeast Electric Cooperative board member for 40 years. The original of this painting hangs on a wall in the office of Upper Missouri Power Cooperative in Sidney, of which Southeast Electric is a member. The painting is a sort of diorama of the rural electrification movement from its inception until now. It portrays FDR signing that order. It shows a large hydroelectric dam built to bring power to rural America. It depicts transmission lines running across the country. A particularly poignant scene is the depiction of a woman, with hunched shoulders and a heavy gait, carrying buckets of water from the water well to the house.

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Digital Devices Impact Energy Use

Ah, the Digital Age. We have gadgets galore, the ability to manage our homes in new and innovative ways, brilliant images and captivating sounds of modern entertainment options and, of course, the Internet. Clearly, digital devices reign supreme. Yet these cool new capabilities come with a couple of pitfalls; vampire loads and the issue of “technology reincarnation.”

Over the course of the Digital Age, electricity use has continued to increase. Families have multiple televisions. Computer prices have plummeted, meaning many homes now have multiple computers. Everyone in the family needs a cell phone. Gaming consoles and set-top cable/satellite boxes satisfy our desire for entertainment.

Major appliances aside, most digital devices do not use 120-volt power, which is the standard voltage of a home outlet. They actually use a lot less. So, trying to plug your brand new smart-phone directly into an outlet is going to lead to a fried device and lots of tears from someone. This is why low-voltage devices come with a power adapter. These “wall warts” as some term them, take the 120-volt electricity supplied by Southeast Electric Cooperative and convert it to say, five volts. Unfortunately,

most folks leave their adapters plugged in to make recharging easier. The problem with this approach is that the seemingly innocuous wall wart uses power even when it isn’t charging a device.

This invisible energy consumption is often called “vampire load.” Studies show that 5 to 10 percent of the average home’s energy use is from vampire loads. The only way to stop this is to unplug the power adapter when it is not in use or employ smart power strips. These look like the typical power strip but with a twist—only one socket gets power all the time. When the device or appliance connected to it turns on and starts using power, the remaining sockets receive power too. This is perfect for entertainment systems, computer set ups and a variety of other situations.

Technological advances have steadily increased energy efficiency and reduced purchase prices. On its face, this seems like a good thing. Unfortunately, when replacing a product at the end of its life, the tendency is to go bigger, or continue to use the old tech. This is the second issue I noted—technology reincarnation.

For example, flat screen television prices have plummeted as technology has evolved—and so has the amount of electricity they use. Consumers wander into the big box store and are dazzled

by walls of giant, brilliant televisions. What they used to pay for the paltry 32” model now might net them a 50” giant. And who doesn’t want to see their favorite show or sports event in near life size? But if you spring for the bigger TV, you won’t benefit from the increased energy efficiency of the newer technology. The bigger model uses as much juice as the older, smaller TV, which likely ends up in another room (reincarnated in another setting) still using power.

Refrigerators are the showpieces of the evolution of smart appliances. Many new models include touchscreens and cameras; they communicate over the internet and probably even keep food cold and make ice. Yet what often happens is the old refrigerator ends up in the basement or garage, reincarnated as a dedicated beverage unit or overflow.

So keep these tips in mind as you are shopping for Christmas. Invest in smart power strips or make a point to use outlets where you can conveniently unplug power adapters when not in use. Don’t oversize your replacement appliances and entertainment gear unless family needs dictate the larger capacities. And recycle the replaced appliances and equipment. You will enjoy the Digital Age for a lot less.

Remember

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Near the center — and the focal point of the painting — is a single light bulb, glowing brightly, illuminating the darkness with warm, bright light; darkness that was previously lit by candlelight or perhaps an oil lamp. Francis gave that print to me for the simple task of writing a caption story for the painting. It is a special gift that holds great meaning for me. I look at it every day and am proud to show it off, not to boast, but to remind myself of a very significant part of history that I am too young to remember. As with the photos of my dad, it is a continual reminder that a former generation sacrificed and gave much so I can live in the comfort I enjoy every day. I keep it as a tribute to those of you who can remember something I cannot.



REMINDER OF LIEAP

Benefits to help pay part of your winter heating costs. Homeowners and renters may apply. Contact Vicki Fix at 406-775-8762 for more information.

Scholarships Available to Students of SECO Members

Higher education is something your cooperative takes very seriously and insists on being a part of. Southeast Electric Cooperative supports three scholarships to help young individuals attain their dreams:

- MECA Memorial Scholarship - \$500
- Southeast Electric Scholarship - \$1,000
- Basin Electric Scholarship - \$1,000.

These scholarships are designed to help deliver support to our young membership. More information about all of the scholarships and the applications are available at www.seecoop.com, at Southeast Electric Cooperative office, or from your high school guidance counselor.