

In Thanks



A NOTE FROM CEO/GENERAL MANAGER DEBBIE ROBINSON

November is such a wonderful month, typically bringing in the cooler weather we have all longed for. There is crispness in the air that harkens our holiday season. And, our heart-warming Thanksgiving celebrations will pull us closer to Christmas, and then into the New Year. This month carries a sense of a year coming to a close while leading us to anticipate the newness of things to come. Furthermore, I can't help but think that there is not a more appropriate month for Veterans Day.

Every year on November 11, all Americans are called to honor those men and women who have performed in our armed services. Because of their selfless acts of courage, heroism and much sacrifice (by them and their family members, too) all Americans enjoy the freedoms of worshipping, working, playing and just plain living exactly as we wish.

I want to take this opportunity to thank every U.S. veteran, past or present, for each of their individual strengths that they have employed on behalf of our nation. Together, they have earned and protected our country's unmatched sovereignty.

As we reflect on this, there are service members on foreign soil in harm's way. There are others, newly back in our country, getting reacquainted with families who have missed them. And there are still others who are recovering from wounds and scars that run deep.

On behalf of all of the employees and directors of Wood County EC, I offer our profound and grateful appreciation to each military member, past and present. We owe our heritage and our future to the freedoms you've earned. Thank you.

—DEBBIE L. ROBINSON



Join the directors and employees of Wood County Electric Cooperative on Veterans Day in recognizing current and past members of the U.S. military and the sacrifices they have made to protect our freedoms.



Use Space Heaters Wisely

As the weather gets a little bit chillier—but perhaps not cold enough to run the central heat—space heaters in the rooms you use most might be all you need.

While most models are perfectly safe to operate, how you use them can mean the difference between a convenient appliance and a house fire. Here are a few simple precautions:

- ▶ If your space heater is old, check the cord for fraying or cracking and notice if it overheats.
- ▶ Consider replacing an older model with a new space heater. Most modern space heaters come with an automatic shutoff switch in case they tip over.
- ▶ Check the news and the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website, cpsc.gov, to keep up to date with recalls.
- ▶ Even if your model is rated for safety, keep it at least 3 feet away from combustible materials such as furniture, drapes, and beds.
- ▶ It is preferable not to use an extension cord with a space heater; however, if necessary, choose a heavy-duty cord with least 14-gauge wire.
- ▶ Keep the heater's cord in plain sight. Tucked under a rug or behind furniture, cords can overheat or become damaged.
- ▶ To avoid overloading a circuit, don't plug two space heaters (or other high energy-use appliances) into the same outlet.

Cooperatives Acting To Preserve Affordable Electricity

Recently President Obama’s administration announced a broad new federal mandate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In this plan, the Environmental Protection Agency will set carbon pollution standards for both new and existing power plants. Nonprofit electric cooperatives are especially concerned about this proposal because it could have implications for power costs and our mission and our promise to keep rates affordable.

That’s why cooperatives are working together to promote technologies, including a smart grid that enables efficient energy management, and studying the feasibility of employing multipollutant control technologies for cleaner energy manufacturing. Also, cooperatives are working hard to increase sensible, practical and affordable renewable and greener sources of power such as WCEC’s adoption (through generation and transmission associations) of power generation from a biomass plant and hydropower plants.

The best approach to a clean energy future entails a long-term multipronged strategy and not one that just raises costs for electricity consumers. Therefore, through our involvement with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, we are closely watching the outcome of the president’s directive. Recent speculation by analysts surmises the end result will include some type of carbon credit trading that would likely raise electricity prices. However, nothing is clear yet.

It’s important to us that our members know that Wood County EC is monitoring this and is actively engaged in discussions to help shape regulations so that the results don’t drastically increase member rates.

We believe that our energy future can incorporate a balanced approach that takes into consideration: reliability, affordability and environmental responsibility.

Members who would like to learn more can visit the NRECA’s Action Network at nreca.coop/political-action/cooperative-action-network.



Wood County Electric Cooperative

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

CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Debbie Robinson

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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
- SmartGuard surge protection 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*



Fall Back

Wood County Electric Cooperative reminds you to set clocks back an hour on Sunday, November 3, when Daylight Standard Time takes effect.

While you are “falling back,” take this opportunity to change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

Contact Us

CALL US
(903) 763-2203

EMAIL
info@wcec.org

OUTAGE HOTLINE
1-866-415-2951

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wcec.org



TO WAR AND BACK:

The Life of Farmer Brown

Along the road that leads to Farmer Brown's, a sign in front of a vegetable stand advertises, "Pay What Ya Think is Fair." It's not uncommon on the country paths of East Texas to find all manner of produce stands operated on the honor system. Granted, it is less common for shoppers to name their own fair price. Yet this attitude fits the bucolic Pleasant Grove community, where E. Ottis Brown and wife Bobby Nell live.

Theirs is an American story of a couple making a good life through hard work despite challenges that could have changed their trajectory. This story is also a patriot's story of selfless acts, sacrifice, courage and blood spilled for the purpose of allowing others the freedom to earn their own American dream.

Born at home in Pickton in the summer of 1922, Ottis was one of six children. Almost from the time that he could walk, he joined his siblings working on their parents' farm. Like most Depression-era children, he was schooled until eighth grade and then went to work full time. Eventually, his skills led him to farmwork in Mount Vernon, and then he gained employment at the Kraft cheese plant as a helper to a cheese maker.

Like most young men coming of age in the 1940s, Ottis was drafted, and it was just a matter of time before he was conscripted. So he moved back home to get his affairs in order, which included applying for a birth certificate. He did not have one because he was born at home.

While waiting for his birth certificate and his final draft notice, Ottis worked on the home farm. He also found a little time to enjoy some frivolities, including a trip to the 1942 Old Settlers Reunion and Carnival. With the smell of popcorn and the sound of carnival music, romance was in the air. Atop the Ferris wheel, Ottis fell in love with Bobby Nell Attaway. There might even have been a little kiss that sealed their fate.

Because of his impending enlistment, Ottis and Bobby Nell decided it would be a good idea to hurry life along and get married. They eloped in Pine Hill, a community where they thought no one would recognize them and "turn them in." That was probably a good idea because she was just 14, and he was 19.

Soon after, Ottis was shipped out to basic training, and then he landed in Fort Lewis, Washington, where he was stationed with the 96th Infantry Division, 381st Regiment, Company C, as a machine gunner. There his division, known as "The Dead-eyes," practiced maneuvers.

Bobby Nell joined him. She spent her days waitressing in a restaurant (she might have told a white lie about her age), while Ottis spent his time on maneuvers. Eventually, the Army ordered all soldiers to visit home before being shipped overseas. Ottis says he really didn't want to go because Bobby Nell was already there with him, and they didn't want to spend the extra money for the trip. But orders are orders, and Ottis sent Bobby Nell ahead. "Putting her on that train by herself, to this day, is still one of the hardest things I've had to do," he says.

Ottis later arrived and spent 15 days in East Texas. Before reporting to Oregon, he sent a telegram to his brother, a military policeman stationed in California, to meet for a visit. Ottis says his brother could hardly enjoy the visit when he found out Ottis would be late reporting to Oregon. His brother was worried about him getting caught for being absent without leave. But Ottis says he was sure that the Army would just be happy

to see him when he showed up because they were shipping him off to war.

From Oregon, the regiment was deployed to the Pacific theater, where Ottis did his first fighting. "We went off the ships and landed in the PT boats," he says. "I was in charge of 32 men and I did not lose a one of them there."

The 96th Division acquired their nickname, "The Dead-eyes," from Brig. Gen. Claudius Easley who was an exceptional marksman. The soldiers of the 96th lived up to the name well. They were credited by the U.S. Army historians with killing more of the enemy in the Philippines and Okinawa in one day than any other division in U.S. Army history.

Back home, Bobby Nell's parents must have forgiven Ottis for eloping with their daughter. "My daddy thought he was all of it! He thought Ottis was winning the war all by himself," Bobby Nell recalls.

Ottis spent most of 1944 in the Philippines. In 1945, his division went to Okinawa. He remembers unloading onto the beach on Easter morning. He and his men were engaged in many heated battles, and he saw a lot of losses. On the 21st day amid heavy fighting, he says, "We were just fixing to go over a hill, and I was hit. My men saw what happened, and they immediately put me on a litter." He'd been shot in the leg; and to add insult to injury, it was actually "friendly fire" that had wounded him in the confusion of battle. A mortar also exploded right then, just underneath the litter, injuring him even more gravely.

He was carried to the beach to await a transport ship. He passed out from the pain and doesn't remember much until the tide started coming in, and the water hitting him woke him up. Eventually, he was put onto a ship that took him to a large Army hospital in Guam. The hospital was really just a very large tent with rows and rows of cots holding wounded men. There, he says, the surgeons got as much shrapnel out of him as they could, and they sewed up the biggest hole in his leg. The wound abscessed.

One thing that helped sustain him was a picture of Bobby Nell over his bunk. "All of the men thought she was beautiful, and they wanted to know if all of the girls in Texas were as pretty," he says. "I'd tell them they were, but I got the pick of the crop!"

In good spirits but poor shape, with pieces of shrapnel still embedded, infection rampant and a case of pneumonia to boot, Ottis was eventually put on a protracted course of sulfa drugs and penicillin and put on a transport ship bound for the United States. On July 4, 1945, he arrived at the Veteran's Hospital in Waco, one of the Army's largest hospitals with the peak number of patients totaling more than 5,000. For reconditioning, he was then sent to McCloskey in Temple, where Bobby Nell joined him to help with his recovery.

Neither Ottis nor Bobby Nell dwell on his time at war or in

recovery, which were both probably incredibly painful ordeals. “The doctors weren’t really sure I’d ever walk, and then they told me I’d always walk with a limp,” he says. “I told them I did not go into the Army with a limp, and I wasn’t leaving with one.”

“I’ve never seen anybody who could stand such pain,” Bobby Nell says, adding that without penicillin, he would have died. “His recovery was sheer determination.”

Once discharged on November 21, 1945, Ottis walked out on

As life for the Browns returned to normal, they started their family, and memories (good and bad) of the war would surface from time to time. Ottis reminisces about some of his Army buddies and says he’s talked to many of them over the years. His friend, the “Missouri Mule,” who was shot in the back, called after the war to ask if Ottis could walk because he did not think it would have been possible. Another friend, Clyde Ingalls from Toledo, Ohio, even came to visit several times



his own accord. He and Bobby Nell returned to East Texas and moved into a two-room house that Bobby Nell had prepared for them. “I have been farming ever since,” he says.

Bobby Nell, not with a little pride, says, “He was the best farmer in this whole area. He raised cotton and corn, and other things. And, he had a dairy.” First, he and Bobby Nell milked by hand, and then they went to machines and eventually increased their dairy herd to about 60 cows. Even with the machine, dairy work in those days was labor-intensive, and the Browns had to “pour the milk up” by hand.

with his wife, staying overnight with the Browns.

Over the years, some of the unsavory evidence of war continued to surface—the remaining shrapnel. The doctors had told him it would do more harm than good for them to try to take the pieces out and that gristle would cover them. Yet over the years, bits of that metal moved as his body tried to eject them. Once, more than a decade after the war, Ottis had to go to the VA hospital in Dallas to have a particularly large and disruptive piece removed from his face.

Ottis tells his story of war unvarnished and unaffected. He

does not complain. He's not bitter. He's not boastful. He's simply a man who did his job and what he considered his duty. Today he lives with a quiet pride that conveys no ego.

When asked how he'd sum up his World War II experiences and whether he had any advice for current military personnel, he says, "There will never ever be another war like that today." But then he adds about any enemy of our country, "I'd rather fight them over there than for them to come over here."

Today the Browns' farm adjoins what was once Bobby Nell's parents' land and the same property where she grew up. Just down the way live their now-grown children:



Tommy, a cattleman; Sharlett Brown Lovelady, a vice president at First National Bank of Winnsboro; and Tony, who served as a Winnsboro police officer for 10 years before joining WCEC as a meter tester and field security. They laughingly call their little corner of the world Brown Town, and there is even a sign.

In addition to spending his life farming, Ottis also served as a board member for WCEC from 1968 to 1992. He says he very much enjoyed his time, but stepped down when he was 70. "I wanted to do what I wanted to do," he says.

After all, he has certainly earned that right. He's paid well beyond what is fair, not only for himself, but the rest of us. He paid on the honor system too—with valor, courage and bravery.



Writing the date you change the filter on the filter can help you keep up with this important energy-efficiency task.

Filters Need Changing in Cool Weather, Too

You dutifully changed your air conditioning system's filter every month or two over the summer—right? And now that the weather is cooling off, you might think that job is finished until next summer.

It's not.

Your central heating system also relies on a filter to catch dust, dirt, pet hair and other airborne particles that can clog the system, slow it down and even make it blow that stuff back into your indoor air.

A clogged filter restricts airflow, and that can force the system's blower to work harder. This can shorten the life of the equipment, causing it to overheat, break down or unnecessarily increase your heating bill.

It's important to change the filter frequently during the seasons when you use your system either for heating or cooling. Most HVAC manufacturers recommend monthly changes.

Especially if you have pets, if you live in a dusty climate, or if someone in your home smokes or suffers from allergies, regular filter changes are critical to keeping your heating and cooling system in good shape.

A tip: Replace the filter on the same day that you pay your bills every month.