

Horry Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Horry Electric Cooperative, Inc. is a non-profit, member-owned organization providing information and energy-related services on a fair and equitable basis.



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Your team rocks

MY MOTHER HAS ALWAYS TOLD ME, "It's a poor frog who doesn't praise its own pond." In my own defense, sometimes it's hard to see the forest for the trees, or in the case of the frogs, the lily pads for the pond algae. You address one challenge and get to work on the next one.



On the map

Horry Electric is one of 20 electric cooperatives in South Carolina, and we're one of 738 Touchstone Energy Cooperatives in the country. Not to take anything away from the other 19 in South Carolina or the other 737 in the country, but your management team at Horry Electric is, in my opinion, second to none. They rock. What they've accomplished for you and our fellow members has gained statewide and national recognition for Horry Electric Cooperative. We are often looked at as a resource for ideas, expertise and experience.

It's not me, it's them

I have the pleasure of leading the team at Horry Electric, but it's our five members of staff, their talents and the teams they lead at your co-op that deserve praise. This group of five includes W.I. Jones, manager of operations; Reed Cooper, manager of engineering; Danny Shelley, chief financial officer; Chris Teems, manager of special services; and Penelope Hinson, manager of public relations, marketing and energy management. They and the employees who work in their different departments, are, without a doubt, among the most dedicated and

caring team a chief executive officer or members of an electric cooperative could ever hope to have on board.

National recognition

The efforts we've been making to reduce costs while maintaining reliability is information we've been sharing with you for a few years now in a variety of ways. What we haven't shared with you are the tangible results and the national recognition it has gained for your co-op.

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives maintains a Best Practices Knowledge Base. Based on our Balanced Performance Scorecard, which enables co-ops to benchmark performance in mission-critical areas, Horry Electric was tapped as a best-in-class performer for earning top rank among cooperatives that participate in the reliability and cost metrics offered by the program.

"By leaving no stone unturned, Horry Electric achieves best-in-class financial performance while maintaining high levels of power quality," reads the conclusion of the case study summary of our successful efforts that is available for sister cooperatives in the Best Practices Knowledge Base. "Still, the work is never done. Nearly every area of Horry Electric's budget is expected to be under budget due to the efforts and sacrifices made by its dedicated staff, management, board and employees."

Your team rocks. Ribbit.

James P. "Pat" Howle

Executive Vice President and CEO

HEC event highlights Honor Flight success

New flight announced for Sept. 26

BY WALTER ALLREAD

HONORING THE GREATEST Generation took center stage June 19 at Horry Electric Cooperative's annual Member Service Dinner. Addressing a large crowd, Mike Couick, CEO of the state association of electric co-ops, related his experiences on the Honor Flight comprised of South Carolina World War II veterans in April—a trip made possible by co-op member support and benefiting mostly co-op veterans.

That flight was so successful, Couick said, that another flight is now scheduled for Sept. 26—and it's nearly full. Couick recounted various veterans' stories from their profiles in a commemorative book published by the state's electric co-ops. He also recognized HEC member Aubrey Anderson of Conway, who was both on the flight and in attendance.

Couick said the most moving thing he experienced on the flight was watching a South Carolina Honor Flight veteran at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier who was approached



HEC member Aubrey Anderson of Conway, who was on the April 11 Honor Flight, stands for recognition at the Member Service Dinner.

by a middle school teacher from Utah with a group of curious eighth graders and adults in tow.

"The teacher told the veteran they had seen memorials and monuments but wanted to hear from a veteran what it was like being in World War II," Couick said. "He said he was at Iwo Jima, and he told them about the price they paid for that island. The kids were just spellbound.

"Then he said something I'll never

forget. He said, 'I want you to know I appreciate your thanks for what we did, but what you need to understand is we won it for *you*.'

You've inherited this world, now go and do something with it.' Every adult in that group was crying, all the kids were paying attention, because this was a genuine hero who didn't want the focus on him but on the opportunity for the future.

"That's what these Honor Flights are all about. We're losing 700 WWII vets a day in this country; the youngest vet we had on the flight was 83, and the oldest was 98. And what was so great was that the co-op didn't send him and the others ... co-op members sent them. That's something co-op members everywhere ought to be very proud of, and something that we're so excited we get to do again."

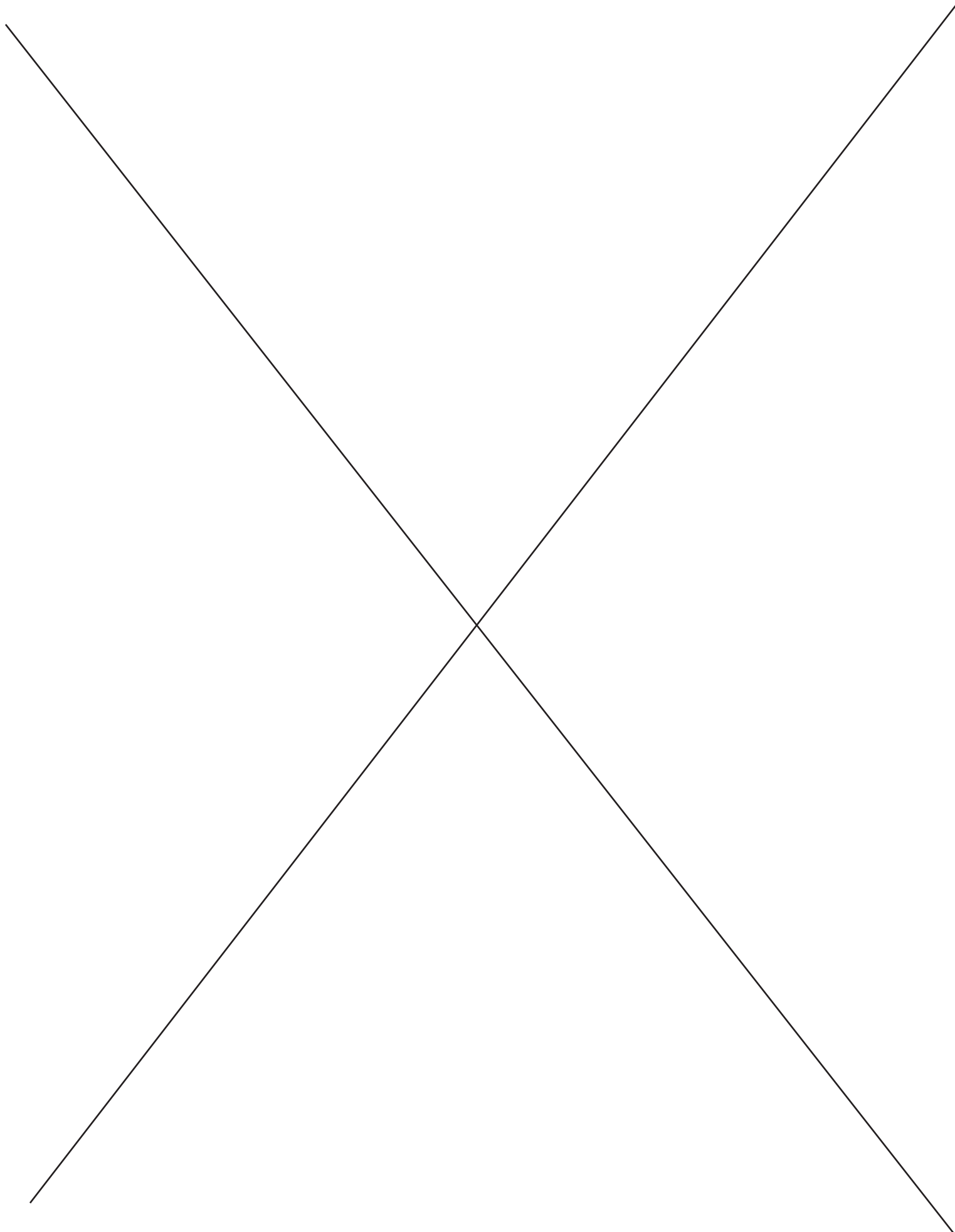
Mike Couick, CEO of the state association of electric co-ops, says HEC members can be proud of the Honor Flight they helped sponsor. Behind him is a photo of one of the SC WWII veterans on the Honor Flight, Victor B. John Jr.



Order a copy of the commemorative book about the 100 World War II veterans who participated in the April 11 Honor Flight at scliving.coop/souvenirbook.aspx



WALTER ALLREAD



Closing a chapter

Longtime HEC employee
Theresa Blum retires

BY WALTER ALLREAD

THERESA BLUM PROMISED herself she wasn't going to cry.

On June 19, at the conclusion of a memorable and fulfilling 35-year career with Horry Electric Cooperative, the outgoing Accounts Receivable Supervisor almost lived up to her optimistic pledge.

"I honestly did not think I was going to get emotional, but when I turned my key in, when I laid it on the desk and started walking down the hall I said to myself, 'Gosh, this is really over,'" says Blum, a resident of the Pleasant View community and graduate of Floyds High School and Horry-Georgetown Technical College. "Such a large part of my life—35 years—was really over. There were so many memories that I couldn't help getting emotional.

"I collected myself, but it was a few miles down the road before I did."

It was April of 1977 when Blum first went to work for Horry Electric, and she's had a first-hand seat for



Theresa Blum in HEC's lobby June 20, a day after she retired. "I made so many great friends and got to know so many employees and members over the years as the co-op has grown," she says.

all the changes and growth that have taken place since that summer both at the co-op and in her personal life.

"I made so many great friends and got to know so many employees and members over the years as the co-op has grown," Blum says. "I have a lot of great memories, though it's kind of bittersweet; I buried both my parents while working here, but I also gave birth to my two children while

working here. A lot of life happened."

Blum says in her retirement she intends to spend more time with her grandchildren but mostly is eager to continue volunteering and serving at Pleasant View Baptist Church, where she has been the pianist since she was only 12 years old.

Blum says, "I love my church and my community. It's a little small church, a close-knit community, and I really look forward to helping with the elderly more now that I'm retired.

"I'm getting ready to open a new chapter, and I'm very much looking forward to it." ☺

Lay follows Blum as Accounts Receivable Supervisor

Smart decisions characterized Theresa Blum's 35-year career with Horry Electric Cooperative, so it should have been no surprise that she made one more before retiring.

Knowing the types of challenges her successor, Gordon Lay, would face once she was long gone, Blum made sure Lay got the experience and guidance he needed well before her last day June 19.

In the weeks leading up to that day, Blum advised her staff to take any and all questions and problems to Lay and that she would be there only to guide and advise him through them so that when the fateful day came, he wouldn't feel as if he were operating without a net.

"That way, he was able to learn the kind of issues he'd have to deal with when I was gone," Blum says. "I have every confidence

he can handle everything that comes his way because he already has been handling it since before I left. He has done a wonderful job, and I know he'll continue to do so."

Lay, who this month completes his eighth year at HEC, began at the Socastee district office as a cashier/customer service representative. After two years, he moved to Accounts Receivable. He's served as accounts receivable supervisor since January.

Lay, who earned a B.A. in business economics from Wofford College in 2003, is a member of Buck Creek Baptist Church in Longs, where he has served as a deacon for three years. He and his wife, Beth, have been married five years and have a 16-month-old son, Grant.

Lay says, "Theresa has been instrumental in my growth and understanding of my role as supervisor. She remains one of the most



Gordon Lay with his wife, Beth, and son, Grant.

approachable people I have ever worked with. I found that to be one of her greatest qualities, always open for discussion and willing to assist in any capacity.

"I look forward to many more years at HEC while continuing to do my best to provide our members with quality service."

More than a name on The Wall

Youth Tour reveals Vietnam connections for HEC's Gore

BY WALTER ALLREAD

TONI GORE wondered.

Might the name of the deceased soldier—Leland M. Chestnut—she'd been given to find on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall be related to someone she worked with at Horry Electric Cooperative? The last name was distinctive enough for Gore to think there may be a connection to HEC Safety Coordinator Brian Chestnut, especially since both men called the Shell community outside Conway home.

Finding a local Vietnam veteran's name is a task given to students and chaperones, which included Gore this year, during the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina's annual Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. When Gore, a marketing and public relations assistant with the co-op, returned from the June trip she gave Brian a call. Sure enough, the fallen hero whose name she found was his aunt's brother, and before long Gore, Chestnut and his aunt, Sonya Chestnut, got together to visit and pay respects at the grave of Sgt. Chestnut at Bethlehem Baptist Church outside Conway on Hwy. 905.

For Sonya, the memories of her younger brother's service and loss still



COURTESY SONYA CHESTNUT

WALTER ALLREAD



COURTESY SONYA CHESTNUT

are powerful.

"I was 23 or so at the time when he died in May of 1970," Sonya says. "It really did hurt because it took a week for him to get home, and that was a long week. At first we prayed it was a mistake, but then realized that

HEC's Brian Chestnut and Lane Chestnut's sister, Sonya, pay their respects at the grave of Sgt. Chestnut at Bethlehem Baptist Church outside Conway.

if it was, that meant someone else was going to have that pain, so we dealt with it."

Known to friends and loved ones

as Lane, Chestnut left behind a wife, Dianne, and a daughter, Jodi, who was born two months prior to his death and whom he never got to see. Memories of his affection for his family, however, remain strong.

"He was just such a good person," Sonya says. "We had our arguments like most brothers and sisters, but he'd do anything he could for you, and when myself and our older brother got married and had children, he fell in love with them and treated them like his own. He was a very loving uncle."

Chestnut died from injuries received from ground fire while on a mission inside the border of Cambodia three months before he was scheduled to return home. Excursions into Cambodia were a controversial aspect of the war and reached their height in mid-1970, when Chestnut was mortally wounded. Chestnut served as a helicopter gunner, an extremely dangerous duty as helicopters were constant targets and rarely could see where enemy fire was coming from.

One of five cousins who served and the only one not to survive, Chestnut earned the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Air Medal, Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal for Heroism, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal and more.

For Gore, the chance to honor a fallen South Carolina hero and pay respects to him both at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington and at home was especially meaningful since her father, Sgt. First Class Buster Shelley, earned a Purple Heart while serving in Vietnam.

"It's something I'll never forget and am extremely grateful for," Gore says. 🙏



COURTESY SONYA CHESTNUT

Lane in a high school yearbook photo from his sister Sonya's scrapbook.



WALTER ALLREAD

Sonya Chestnut and Toni Gore hold a newspaper, *The Field and Herald of Conway*, from August 5, 1970, featuring a story about Lane Chestnut's war experience and death a few months earlier. The story includes a photo from his final Cambodian mission that came from a damaged camera containing exposed film. It was returned to Lane's family with his personal effects.



JODI CHESTNUT
Never Saw Father



TONI GORE

Toni Gore snapped this photo of Sgt. Chestnut's name on The Wall.

A shocking surprise—almost!

HEC member's blooming plant becomes unexpected hazard



BY WALTER ALLREAD

WHEN HORRY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE member Barbara Yourko picked up an agave, or century plant, for \$3 at a yard sale 15 years ago and planted it in her yard, she figured she was getting a steal.

What she got was a visit from an HEC crew and a reminder of the dangers involved when horticulture and electricity become too closely acquainted. The plant produces an enormous stalk at the end of its long life, although the “century” part of the name is an exaggeration. It shot up 25 feet in a single month directly into a three-phase power line.

Most people know that

when planting flowers, trees and shrubs around homes, care should be taken to avoid placing them too close to power lines, transformers and other sources of electricity, and Barbara and her husband, Gene, were no exceptions.

“I knew not to plant a tree under a line,” Barbara says. “But this plant, I just never gave it the slightest thought. We’ve been here 22 years, the plant has been here 15 years, and it never occurred to me that this was a possibility.”

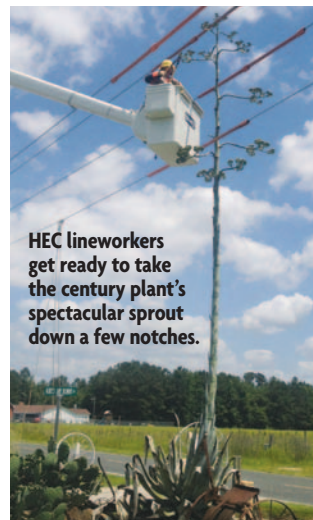
The century plant, a species native to the deserts of the Southwestern United States and parts of Mexico, produces a gigantic flowering stalk just before it dies in a dramatic feat of biologic engineering.

When the Yourkos’ plant made its spectacular climb, it drew the attention first of neighbors and passersby, then a local newspaper. It was a picture of the plant in the *Horry Independent*, in fact, that was called to the attention of Reed Cooper, manager of engineering for HEC, by a fellow staff member. Immediately recognizing and confirming the potential for danger, Yourko was contacted.

“When you think of trees, they’re made up of a lot of water, and water and electricity don’t mix,” Cooper told the *Independent*. “If someone had grabbed the tree trunk and it hit the power lines, they could have been killed.”

The Yourkos know well the dangers of electricity—Barbara’s son Danny works for Santee Cooper and, while working as a lineman three years ago, suffered bad electrical burns to both hands. Realizing the gravity of the potential hazard, the decision to trim it back to a safe distance was an easy one.

“I’d rather have electricity than the plant,” Barbara says. “There was no way I wanted to risk anyone getting hurt.” ☺



S.C. fathers watch sons die after accidental power-line contacts

Two accidental electrocutions by contact with power lines occurred in South Carolina this spring. In both cases, a father watched a son die:

- ▶ In May, a 31-year-old Rock Hill man died after being electrocuted while working on his family farm. His father also received serious burn wounds. The men were moving a heavy piece of farm equipment when it hit power lines and shocked them both.
- ▶ In early June, a Lee County man’s son died from electrical-contact injuries received during a farm maintenance project. The son, 26, was changing a tire on an irrigation system at a farm. The power was not shut off on the system, the county coroner said, and the young man pinched a wire with 480 volts passing through it. His father attempted to perform CPR at the scene but was unsuccessful.

“Our condolences to these families,” says Brian Chestnut, Horry Electric’s safety coordinator. “The farm environment presents many dangers. Be sure your loved ones are safe. Teach them to stay alert for the presence of overhead and underground lines and to practice good lockout/tagout procedures with any powered equipment. Electricity is a friend when used safely, a killer when not.”

Safety Coordinator Brian Chestnut and other HEC employees present electrical safety demonstrations for schools, churches and civic groups. Call 369-6415 to schedule a demonstration.