Manager's update to annual meeting attendees

The economic crisis we've been in since about 2007 is what analysts have named "The Great Recession," and it's reminding some of you of "The Great Depression" of the 1930s. In both eras, the stock market crashed, masses of people were laid off, banks closed and businesses failed. Our nation continues to experience record unemployment, which just doesn't seem to want to go away. Even the temperatures are comparable to those in the '30s. The record was broken this summer for the number of days with high temperatures in the '90s — just like the "Dust Bowl" days of the late '30s.

Larry Elkins
General Manager
Holston Electric Cooperative

Every day brings on a new challenge or, as some would say, opportunity. Sadly enough, with more than 50,000 poles and thousands of transformers across a 525-square-mile service area, something is falling, breaking, exploding or being run over by a vehicle almost hourly. Certainly on "bluebird days" like today there are fewer chances of weather-related problems, but this year we have been plagued by birds — especially in Hamblen County. "Blinks" in the good old days were not much of a problem. But today, with computers, LED clocks and VCRs, a blink causes a lot of grief. Computers lose their data, TV shows don't get taped for later viewing and when folks come in from work, the lights on all the appliances are blinking like crazy. Residents don't know if the power has been off all day or only a fraction of a second. After several days of these events, someone here at the co-op is going to get a call — and it's usually not a pleasant conversation.

Our theme for this 70th annual meeting was "Celebrate the Past, Look to the Future." We're reminded of the many employees, board members and managers throughout the years who contributed to making this electric cooperative what it is today. You have elected fine leaders from the seven districts who have represented your interests well. Their focus has been on reliable power and low rates. That's definitely worth celebrating! But we're now looking to the future and working to continue that history of reliable power and low rates in a global economy and political environment that continues to increase the cost of doing business.

You need to know about some of the changes we're making at Holston EC and how the changes will help us provide better electric service to you.

We're starting in our fourth year of a copper-replacement program — replacing the wire, poles and transformers that were set in the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

The entire service area has been mapped using global position satellite technology. All trucks are now equipped with notebook computers that update nightly.

Please understand that we have not gone to an automated telephone system. We're still your local cooperative that responds to you with a live person. However, when you call in an outage and press 1, that immediately connects you to a system that will quickly gather and evaluate outage information so we can get it restored as soon as possible. Being without electricity is inconvenient and uncomfortable, and we're working to make any outage as short as possible.

We have 8,000 radio-read meters now in use and will be increasing those installations in upcoming months. But remember that directors weigh their decisions on the good of the cooperative

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Holston Electric Cooperative
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Serving more than 30,000 customers in Hawkins and Hamblen counties.

1200 W. Main St.
P.O. Box 190
Rogersville, TN 37857
423-272-8821 • 423-235-6811
Website: www.holstonelectric.com

Church Hill office
Highway 11-W and South Central Avenue
Church Hill, TN 37642
423-357-6441

Russellville office
Highway 11-E
Russellville, TN 37860
423-581-2066

Office hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Monday-Friday

General Manager
Larry Elkins

Board of Directors
President: Otis Munsey
Vice President: William W. Bales
Secretary-Treasurer:
Danny Cockreham
Dr. David Britton
Lynn Parker
Phil Pierce
William F. Young

To report an outage or electrical emergency, call 423-272-8821 or 423-235-6811 day or night.

Gray Wilson celebrates a 95th birthday and a 70th anniversary

Not many people are able to say that they were one of the first employees hired by a company when it was originally formed and then were able to retire from that same company 40 years later. And an even smaller number of people are able to celebrate the 70th anniversary of that company and their 95th birthday in the same month. But for Holston EC retiree Gray Wilson, those experiences are among the many episodes in the cooperative's history that he still remembers and describes with amazing detail and clarity.

Gray Wilson relates stories of his years as a Holston EC employee. He retired as operating superintendent after 40 years of service.

Holston Electric Cooperative was formed in 1940 when a $440,000 loan from the Rural Electrification Administration was used to purchase an existing power system from the Tennessee Valley Authority, Holston River Electric Company and Hydro Electric Company. The co-op opened for business with eight employees; electricity sold at 2.5 cents per kilowatt-hour.

"The day the co-op opened, all the meters had to be read in one day," Wilson remembers, adding that he drove from one end of the system to the other in a pickup truck, one of two vehicles the co-op owned at that time.

In the earliest years of the co-op, personnel weren't able to build too many additions to the original distribution system that was purchased in 1940.

"We didn't get to build many lines because the war (World War II) came along," Gray states. "We were limited to 10 pounds of copper wire per customer. The first rural line built was out toward Strahl, Webster Valley and the Sanders farm. A contract crew built the line, and then we'd connect the customers."

Those 70-year-old copper lines are the ones that are now being replaced throughout the Holston EC system with lighter, more flexible aluminum conductors.

Wilson grins and chuckles as he describes the amazing time period he's lived in, the incredible opportunities he experienced and the lively personalities he worked with in the early days. "We were setting a pole using one of the old A-frame rigs one day," he says. "A lady who was watching us came running out of the house and said she didn't want us digging a well on her property!"

Wilson remembers difficult and dangerous times, too. "The tornado that came through in 1955 took out the Yellow Store in Surgoinsville and sections of the power system," he says. "There were poles torn down that we never did find.

"And we had an awful time when the prison was being built — under protest — in the Morristown area. We'd set a pole in the area that adjoins the prison property, and then they'd start dynamiting and blasting and tear it down. They'd put tacks in the road so you couldn't even get in there!"

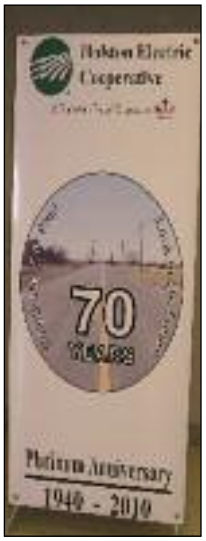
A career that spans 40 years with one company and includes being everything from a meter reader and service man to a substation maintenance crewman and operating superintendent is an amazing accomplishment. And Gray Wilson is thankful for the good life and opportunities experienced during his years at Holston Electric Cooperative.

"I was blessed with a good job," he says. "I was blessed."

Retired employee Gray Wilson, left, accepts a framed Pamela Renfro print titled "The Light Within" from Holston EC General Manager Larry Elkins. The painting depicts a Holston Electric Cooperative pickup truck parked in front of an old country store.

70th annual meeting

A large crowd packed the Holston Electric Cooperative headquarters in Rogersville for the cooperative's 70th annual meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 12. A total of 450 members registered, and we served 1,500 barbecue meals to them and their families. Member-owners enjoyed bluegrass music provided by Hurd and Company and a variety of new and old favorites performed by JB and the Honey Beans from Greeneville. A slide show of "Then and Now" images projected on giant screens compared the lifestyle, cost of living, fashions and personalities of 1940 to 2010.



In the uncontested races for two seats on the board of directors, Phil Pierce and Lynn Parker retained their positions as directors from Districts 6 and 7, respectively.

General Manager Larry Elkins recognized special guests at the meeting: Rev. Andy Willis, pastor of First Baptist Church, Rogersville; Joe Jackson, director of youth and member relations, Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association; State Rep. Mike Harrison; Kim Greene, Tennessee Valley Authority group president of strategy and external relations; 2010 Washington Youth Tour participants Tosha Edens, Cambren Gibson and Becky McBee; and Youth Leadership Summit delegate Logan Delph.

Members register for the annual meeting in the auditorium.

Greene spoke to Holston EC members about electric rates in the Tennessee Valley being about 20 percent lower than the national average, the record-setting heat this summer and about the need for everyone to make efforts to lower their use of electricity.

In his annual report to the members, Elkins emphasized the 70 years of cooperative history being celebrated at the annual meeting. He recognized Gray Wilson, one of four original employees who came to work at Holston EC when the cooperative was first organized in 1940. Elkins also pointed out similarities in the recent economic downturn, dubbed "The Great Recession," to "The Great Depression" of the late 1930s and '40s. Both were marked by stock market crashes, high unemployment, closing banks and failed businesses. Even the record-setting heat of our recent summer paralleled the "Dust Bowl" days of the '30s.

Attorney Jim Point closes the final minutes of the business meeting.

Elkins also described ongoing changes at the cooperative that are being implemented to improve service. Those changes include the copper-replacement program, global positioning satellite mapping of the system, notebook computer maps in trucks, a new telephone system, an outage management system that utilizes interactive voice response and the changeover to radio-read meters.

In closing, Elkins pledged to continue the efforts of past cooperative leaders to provide reliable power and low rates.

After the business meeting adjourned, the members enjoyed door prize drawings.

In their annual reorganizational session, Holston EC directors re-elected Otis Munsey to the position of president, Bill Bales as vice-president and Danny Cockreham as secretary-treasurer.

Door prize tickets are selected by young volunteers.

1. Youngsters, fresh from the face-painting tent, enjoy balloon art fashioned by Star the Clown.

2. As folks listen to the excellent bluegrass music of Hurd and Company, they enjoy a slide show, "Then and Now," on the stage screens.

3. Kim Greene, Tennessee Valley Authority group president of strategy and external relations, addresses Holston EC members on international factors that influence their electric rates and the need to use electricity efficiently.

4. and 5. Chrysanthemums were presented to 18 members in attendance who had celebrated the most birthdays. The winners, ages 81 to 92, are Douglas Lawson, George Blackstock Jr., Edith Lawson, Pleas Lawson, Mary L. Bell, Betty Gross, Myron Regnier, Eldridge Gilliam, Minnie Ruth McGinnis, Bob Edens, Kenneth Henderson, Arnold Livesay, Robie Larmer, Dorine Dixon, Nancy Wood, Frances Harrell, Pauline Price and Mary W. Wright.

6. From left, TVA employee Tom Brooks, Dr. Mark Dalle-Ave and Hawkins County Commissioner Gary Hicks enjoy the pleasant fall weather and the entertainment prior to the business meeting.

7. Board Chairman Otis Munsey welcomes the Holston EC members and calls the 70th annual meeting to order.

8. CFL Charlie is happy to pause for a photo with a youngster who's armed with balloons.

9. Folks eagerly line up for the barbecue dinners served by Hawkins County 4-H members and leaders.

Merry Christmas and Happy New New Year *from* Holston Electric Cooperative

All Holston Electric Cooperative offices will be closed Friday, Dec. 24, and Friday, Dec. 31.

Interactive voice response update

The interactive voice response (IVR) system installed at Holston EC utilizes caller identification to quickly alert employees to power outages. It is a valuable tool for improving your electric service. If you call the cooperative to report a power problem, you will bypass the normal telephone receptionist and be routed to the IVR, which quickly gathers and logs outage information. It's the quickest way to get assistance when your power is out.

If your current home and mobile telephone numbers are not included in your account information, please supply the telephone numbers to any customer service representative so your account will be updated.

Project Child Find

Local school systsems provide services for children and young adults — ages 3 to 21 — with special needs who reside within each system's district. If you have or know children who are currently not being served, please contact:

Rogersville City Schools
Joy Rhea, coordinator
423-272-7651

Hamblen County Schools
Leann Mills, coordinator
423-586-7700

Hawkins County Schools
Melissa Reed, coordinator
423-272-7629, ext. 139

Manager's update
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members, and any changes implemented must be for your benefit.

The cost of electricity will continue to increase and fluctuate, depending on the cost to produce that electricity. There's not a whole lot we can do about the cost of fuel, transportation, construction of new power plants and so on. But we can all benefit if we learn to reduce the amount of electricity we use and work to conserve our resources. When the price of gasoline went to $5 a gallon a couple of years ago, it didn't take long for us to come up with ways to use less gasoline! We bought smaller cars, consolidated errands into fewer trips and car-pooled with other folks. Well, this is a time to focus on reducing energy use.

The handout you received when you registered this evening has information about the In-Home Energy Evaluation Program. I urge you to take advantage of the program and let an energy expert come into your home and evaluate what needs to be done to improve its efficiency. A home that is well insulated and sealed uses less energy and has lower power bills. The In-Home Energy Evaluation Program is an excellent way to find out how to make your home more efficient and more comfortable. And you might need to educate your families on the value of turning off and unplugging appliances, changing thermostat settings and switching to compact fluorescent lightbulbs.

As we all become more aware of how we waste energy, we can then identify ways to reduce our use. And Holston Electric Cooperative will continue to offer energy-saving information and programs to assist you with the process.