

# McLENNAN COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



P.O. Box 357 • McGregor, TX 76657 • www.mclennanelectric.com • (254) 840-2871

## KWAI BOMBARDIER



Wooden bridge over the River Kwai

**L**t. Col. Bill Henderson (ret.) of Gatesville is the WWII bombardier who bombed the original “Bridge Over the River Kwai.” He describes his exploits in his book, *From China Burma India to the Kwai*. He and his crew destroyed the original wooden bridge, which was built by POWs and impressed labor. It was then replaced by a steel bridge, which still stands to this day.

He wrote the book with the encouragement of his daughter-in-law. She told him if he didn’t record his experiences and memories, they would be lost to history. So he wrote the book independent of a large publisher. It was published in 1991 through Texian Press in Waco. He has sold 4,500 copies, mostly at veterans’ conventions and reunions.

He began his career in the Air Force by volunteering when he was 18 in October of 1942. He wanted to be a pilot but was slated to be a B-17 tail gunner instead. He earned his gunner’s wings in B-17s at Kingman, Arizona, in 1943 and his bombardier’s wings at Deming, New Mexico, in early 1944. He was a 2nd lieutenant at age 19. He trained in B-24s at Tonopah, Nevada, and went to the China Burma India (CBI) theater in September 1944. He remained there until the end of WWII. He returned stateside in October 1945 and was separated from the Air Force in February 1946. He was recalled during the Korean conflict. In 1952 he earned his triple rating as radar operator, navigator and bombardier.

Henderson is a Master Navigator who logged more than 3,000 hours in the B-36 and 2,800 hours in the B-52. He

was Bomb/Navigation Chief of the 4228th Strategic Wing, Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi, and served three years on the 8th Air Force headquarter staff at Westover Air Force Base, Massachusetts.

Henderson served combat tours in Southeast Asia in 1967 and again in 1970-71. He also commanded radar stations in St. George, Utah, and Hastings, Nebraska. He attended Oklahoma City University, Texas Christian University and the University of Alabama, and graduated from the Air Force Command and Staff College. He retired from the Air Force at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, in 1972 after 30 years of service.



Bill Henderson

He recalls the primary mission in China Burma India was to keep the Chinese in the war so the Japanese would stay busy in Asia. Once the Burma Road into China was cut, Japan controlled the coast and China’s supply chain. At that time, the Air Force played a critical role in getting food, gas and other equipment into China to sustain

troops and civilians and prevent China from surrendering. Henderson flew many prolonged missions (called “flying the hump”) over the Himalayas. Hauling gas was not a glamorous job, but a necessary one.

He has formed many ties to other veterans and has had numerous speaking engagements. In 1998, the Thai governor of the Kwai province, a three-star general and member of the legislature, invited Henderson and his wife to come to Bangkok to give a speech. During WWII, a bombing mission to Korat, Siam, inadvertently claimed the lives of civil-

ians. Henderson explained what had happened in an effort to promote understanding and goodwill.

He also received invitations to the Bridge Over the River Kwai festival to speak at the opening ceremonies. The festival lasts for seven days. For the Japanese, the bridge and the railroad it helped complete are great accomplishments. The British had previously considered building a railroad through the area, but projected that it would take at least seven years and would be too expensive. The Japanese completed the railroad in under a year using POW manual labor. Although the methods used to construct the bridge and railroad are rarely acknowledged, the accomplishment is celebrated.

Lt. Col. Henderson meets with a veterans' group every second Tuesday at Golden Corral in Temple. Visitors are always welcome.



A reunion of Henderson's crew in 1973.

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**We salute those serving our country; many are our neighbors and friends. Being part of the community is something we take seriously. MCEC salutes relatives of employees serving in the Armed Forces.**



**Jeremy Horn**

Jeremy D. Horn, son of Ken and Jan Horn of Tokio, husband of MCEC employee Ellen Horn, grandson of N.C. and Joan Horn of Littlefield. Jeremy is a specialist in the Army Reserve 369th Chemical Company Detachment-1 in Waco. He works at Texas A&M Experiment Station at McGregor and is working towards his associate's degree with the University of Phoenix online.



**Allen Tucker**

James A. Tucker, son of Charlotte Baldwin, grandson of Charles and Nina Toney, nephew of Rusty and Pam Toney and MCEC employee Patty Melancon. After serving four years with the Army, James and his wife, Mylene, moved to the community of Crawford, where he is attending MCC Police Academy and plans to get his bachelor's degree in criminal law. James is continuing his military duties by serving in the reserve unit of the Army Texas National Guard and is assigned to the Waco area.



**Kelly Simmons**

Kelly Simmons, son of MCEC employee Charles and Sophie Simmons, brother of Ashley Simmons and David Haynes. Kelly attended Valley Mills High School before joining the Army. He has served six years in the National Guard. He is 23 years old and his rank is an E5 in the Guard. He served a year and a half in Iraq and is currently serving another tour in Egypt.



**Ernest Willich**

Ernest "Scooter" Willich, son of Brenda Heath of McGregor, brother of MCEC employee Brandon Young. Ernest joined the Air Force at the age of 18. He is currently 21 and has attained the rank of staff sergeant. Ernest is part of the Air Force Security Forces. He is currently attending Northwest Vista of San Antonio in hopes of obtaining a bachelor's degree in criminal justice.



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1111 S. Johnson Dr. • McGregor, Texas 76657  
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# Services and Products Provided by Your Co-op

## SURGE PROTECTION

**I**s your electronic equipment protected against lightning?

We have surge protection equipment available for purchase that will offer peace of mind when those storms roll in. Call the MCEC office at (254) 840-2871 and ask for Ron Poston.



## WATER HEATERS

**Y**our co-op handles quality A.O. Smith water heaters. We carry various sizes in stock and offer a \$50 rebate on these heaters. Offering very competitive prices along with friendly, courteous service, we are here to help you. Call or come by for more information on these water heaters.

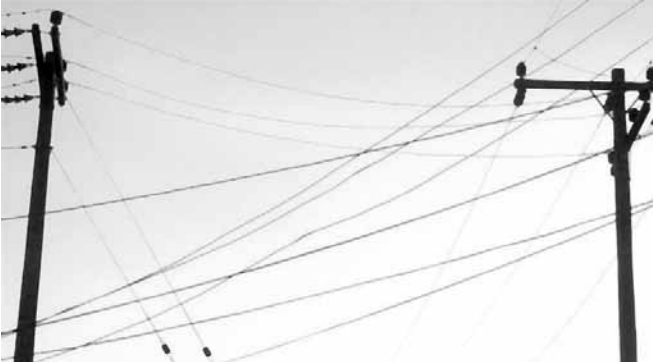


## REMINDER HOLIDAY CLOSING

**M**clennan County Electric Cooperative will be closed May 29 for Memorial Day. We hope you and your family enjoy a safe holiday together.



## OVERHEAD LINE PRECAUTIONS



**T**reat every overhead line as if it were a "live" line and dangerous; none are insulated.

Report any broken poles, trees on lines, or fallen lines to the cooperative or to the police immediately.

Stay away from the area near where a tree has fallen on power lines, and warn others to stay away.

If a power line falls on a car or truck, do NOT touch the vehicle. Warn anyone inside the vehicle NOT to try to get out. Report the incident to the cooperative or the police immediately.

## BEFORE YOU DIG

### CONSTRUCTION PRECAUTIONS

**I**f you plan to dig on your property, be sure to inquire about the presence of any buried power, telephone or water lines which may not be apparent. Digging, even with a shovel, can damage the lines, create a service outage or cause serious personal injury.

If you need assistance in locating buried lines, call before you dig. To avoid costly damages or even loss of life, MCEC urges you to call the cooperative at least three days before you plan to dig. For information about MCEC underground lines, call our Staking Department at (254) 840-2871 or the Dig-Tess Center at 1-800-344-8377 before you dig.



## Electricity Is Still a Good Value

**E**lectricity. We use it every day, and we could barely function without it. While the price of everything, including your electric bill, seems to be increasing, electric power is still a great value for the money.

Did you know that through the years, the price of electricity has remained relatively stable compared to the rising prices of related commodities? Prior to last year's hurricanes, the cost of 500 kilowatt-hours of electricity had increased just 5 percent over 12 months, far less than the cost of natural gas and other fuels.

We work diligently to provide for your power needs at the lowest possible costs. Because we are a nonprofit electric cooperative, we sell electricity with no markup to our members. Though factors—such as rising fuel costs—are often beyond our control, we work to manage costs to keep our members' bills low.

We are keeping down costs to distribute electricity from the cooperative to your home or business. Those are the costs we manage here at the cooperative. The costs we have little or no control over are the costs of producing electricity. These costs include the price of fuels, transportation and construction, among others. Those costs make up about 70 percent of your electric bill.

### Why are fuel costs rising?

Natural gas and coal are fuels used to produce electricity here in Texas. High overseas demand, hurricane damage and fluctuating futures markets have escalated the costs of these fuels significantly in the last two years.

Increased demand coupled with recent disruption in supply due to hurricanes in the Gulf States are the main factors associated with increases in natural gas prices. Such tightening of the supply/demand balance has resulted in dramatic price volatility. Additionally, a significant amount of natural gas is bought on the commodities market where emotions have run high, increasing speculation about shortages, which has driven up short-term pricing.

Last summer's hurricanes dealt an injuring blow to the U.S. natural gas supply. First, Hurricane Katrina reduced natural gas supplies significantly. Less than a month later, Hurricane Rita further hampered natural gas production and refining.

At McLennan County Electric Cooperative, we work each and every day to keep electricity a great value, even as the costs of other commodities continue to increase. As always, we strive to keep rates as low as possible through sound, accountable and careful management of your cooperative's assets. McLennan County Electric Cooperative is here to ensure that our members get the best value for your dollar—reliable, affordable and environmentally sound electric energy.

