

SWRE Observes 75th Year of Service

Seventy-five years ago there was no electricity in the rural areas where SWRE members live. Kerosene lanterns, ice boxes and coal or wood stoves were a way of life. Only about four percent of families in rural America had electricity.

Electricity had been available in towns and cities for decades, but the cost of building lines and providing power to rural areas was too great for any for-profit company to consider.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized a study of the electric power industry and the plight of rural areas. In April 1935 Roosevelt signed the **Emergency Relief Appropriation Act**, a measure that made rural electrification eligible for funding, and on May 11, 1935, the president signed an executive order to create the **Rural Electrification Administration (REA)**. The REA granted loans across the nation for groups of rural neighbors to band together, create their own electric cooperatives and build their own lines for service.

In 1936 and 1937, SWRE's organizers drove the dirt roads of southwest Oklahoma, signing up farm families for electricity and as members of the new co-op.

Southwest Rural Electric Cooperative was chartered by the State of Oklahoma on December 8, 1937.

Building power lines was an overwhelming job that required people working together for the good of all. Many worked together to accomplish a goal that was too difficult for a few to accomplish individually.

The first powering of SWRE's distribution lines was on December 13, 1938, when 26 miles of line in the Altus area were energized.

In the months and years that followed, more miles of line were built and more farm families received power.

In 1940, SWRE crossed the Red River and began serving members in Texas.

The original 1937 SWRE headquarters was located in a storefront building in downtown Tipton. In 1942 the current SWRE building was constructed at its present site, 700 North Broadway in

Tipton.

During this 75th anniversary year, **SWRE News** will look back at the co-op's history.

Any personal memories, personal accounts or mementoes of the cooperative's history are welcome.

Send them to SWRE, ATTN: Joe Wynn, P.O. Box 310, Tipton, OK 73570, or give Joe a call at 1-800-256-7973.

Paxton Joins SWRE Staff

Aaron Paxton has joined the SWRE staff as the co-op's manager of administrative services.

Paxton replaces John Herring who retired in early January.

Aaron is a native of Hollis and is no stranger to the co-op business. His father Charles Paxton was longtime member services director at Harmon Electric Cooperative and currently serves as Harmon's CEO.

Aaron comes to SWRE from Express Employment Professionals in Oklahoma City where he worked as corporate tax coordinator. He holds bachelors and masters degrees in business administration from the University of Central Oklahoma, and is currently pursuing CPA certification.

Paxton was hired by SWRE in June 2011 and has spent six months working with Herring to ensure a smooth transition.

"I have always known that I would like to work for an electric cooperative," Paxton says, "and I have really enjoyed being part of the SWRE staff. The folks



Aaron Paxton

are friendly and the organization is small enough to know most employees well."

He is also impressed with the SWRE Board.

"Our co-op's board members are very knowledgeable and supportive of the cooperative's employees and members," Paxton said. "That's a great situation that really enhances co-op services."

Paxton and his wife Katie have established a home in Altus.

They are parents of a two-year-old son, Jack.



by Mike R. Hagy
 Chief Executive Officer

Does SWRE Serve a Purpose?

As Southwest Rural Electric welcomes in the New Year, our cooperative begins our 75th year of operation.

SWRE has changed a lot in the last seventy-five years and is poised to usher in many more changes in the coming years.

In a meeting recently, Mike Williams, the Texas Electric Cooperatives statewide manager, posed a question for those local co-op managers who were attending to consider. “If your Cooperative ceased to exist, would anyone miss you?” In any type of business, you should never be afraid to ask yourself hard questions like this one.

Simply, our cooperative came into existence because no existing electrical company or municipal utility service was willing to provide the infrastructure to bring power to the rural areas of Southwest Oklahoma and North Texas. They looked at those long distances between farm houses and barns and decided that they could not generate enough profit to satisfy their investors. They looked at the density versus the dollars and decided rural areas would have to do without electricity.

Rural folks like those in our area decided that if they wanted the same opportunities as their kinfolks in the city, they would have to do it themselves.

They formed Southwest Rural Electric using the cooperative model to provide electricity and they formed other cooperatives to market farm products, buy seed and fertilizer, build rural water systems, build phone systems, and purchase propane. Yes, if the rural families were to have infrastructure, they would have to build it themselves – no large investor owned utility was willing to make that large of an investment.

This cooperative movement transformed rural America! Rural farm life was transformed from an isolated existence with many hardships to a highly desirable living alternative to escape the hustle and bustle of city dwelling!

The infrastructure for these dreams of today was

built by low-interest REA government loans to those early cooperatives. The cooperatives got loans – not hand outs!

Today, electrical cooperatives are still building infrastructure with RUS loans and member equity.

With that short cooperative history lesson complete, the original question was, “If Southwest Rural Electric Cooperative ceased to exist, would anyone miss us?”

Of course those members who now live closer to a city because the city limits have expanded might be able to get power from the same folks that wouldn’t serve them in the past, but for the most part, many of our members like myself would still not have electricity in 2012 if SWRE ceased to exist. No large investor-owned utility or municipal even in today’s world would be willing to build the miles of line to serve most of us.

I can live in a rural area today because of Southwest Rural Electric Cooperative, Pioneer Telephone Cooperative, the Rural Water Cooperative, Tillman Producers Cooperative – are you beginning to get the picture?

There are a lot of cooperative heroes who have laid the foundation for my personal dreams of rural independence. I could not live in a rural area if these co-ops ceased to exist!

Ultimately, however, the question of SWRE’s continued existence for another 75 years lies with our members.

You see, our members created us to provide their electrical needs some 75 years ago, and we will continue to do our best to meet those evolving needs until our members tell us differently!

We are Southwest Rural Electric and we will continue to exist through our vision of safety, service, and satisfaction – one member at a time!

Mike R Hagy

Service Awards Presented

SWRE Board and Staff Cited for Service

A number of SWRE staff and board members have been recognized for years of service to the co-op.

Awards for five, 10, 15, and other service increments of five years are traditionally given annually in December.

This year's awards were presented at an employee luncheon that was held at co-op headquarters in Tipton on December 7.

The honorees and their years of service are as follows:

SWRE Staff

Jordan Marsh, journeyman lineman, 10 years; Jonnie Partida, cashier, 10 years; Sue Patterson, assistant to the CEO, 15 years; Joe Wynn, communications specialist, 5 years.

SWRE Board of Trustees

Carl Brockriede, 30 years; Fred Stowe, 45 years.



Fred Stowe (right) was recognized for 45 years of service on SWRE's board of trustees with a plaque presentation by board president Dan White (left). Stowe has served for 24 years as president of the SWRE Board.



Jordan Marsh Jonnie Partida Sue Patterson Joe Wynn



Carl Brockriede

Avoid Downed Power Lines

Never approach a downed power line. Always assume that any line is energized. Touching or approaching an energized line can be deadly!

SWRE News

Mike R. Hagy, Chief Exec. Officer
Joe Wynn, *SWRE News* editor

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Southwest Rural Electric Association

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Payment Sites

Payments can be made at
SWRE
700 North Broadway
Tipton, OK 73570

Online payments can be made at
www.swre.com

NOTE: E-mail address must be on file with SWRE.

Payments may also be made at the following area banking institutions:

- Altus** – First National Bank, National Bank of Commerce
- Blair** – Peoples State Bank
- Crowell** – State Bank
- Electra** – Waggoner National Bank
- Frederick** – BancFirst, First National Bank
- Mt. Park** – First National Bank
- Snyder** – Bank of the Wichitas
- Tipton** – First National Bank
- Vernon** – Herring Bank, Waggoner Bank, Bank of the West

What's Cookin' in the SWRE Kitchen...

Make this easy soup in the slow cooker for cold winter evenings.

Slow Cooker Taco Soup

- 1 lb. lean ground beef, browned and drained
- 2 pkgs taco seasoning
- 1 can, tomatoes w/ green chilies, undrained
- 1 can, black beans, undrained
- 1 can, corn, undrained
- 1 can, black olives, chopped or sliced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 bell pepper, chopped



1. Place everything in a large crockpot, add water, if necessary, to fill.
2. Cook on LOW for five hours until flavors are blended.
3. Top each bowl with shredded cheddar cheese. Serve with sour cream, taco chips, and salsa on the side.



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 P.O. Box 310
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SWRE Trading Post

Ads are online for 45 days & updated daily at www.swre.com

For Sale: 2002 Honda Sportrax 300ex 4-wheel ATV. Asking \$1,700, negotiable. Call 940-552-2372 (leave message) or 940-839-5704, Vernon

For Sale: Concrete roof tile. Skandia USA brand. Approximately 2,000 tiles available. Asking \$6 per tile. Call 580-305-5534

For Sale: Iver Johnson Cadet pistol, Series 55-A, 22-caliber, 8-shot revolver. Pistol is in near-perfect condition. Forty-plus years old. In original box w/ instructions. Photos available. Call 940-535-5511

For Sale: Thirteen heavy-duty commercial-type dog kennels/ crates. These are all heavy-duty solid aluminum with slide-out floor trays, stainless steel latches and sliding doors. All come with built-in brackets to make stationary or could be used as mobile units. Want to sell all together for \$3,500. These came out of a large dog grooming business. Call 580-471-0807. Ask for Robert.

For Sale: Brand new refrigerator. Available mid-January. Call 940-552-4533 days or 940-886-6529 evenings for details. Best offer.

For Sale: Bernina Bernette Deco 600 embroidery machine w/ all attachments, books, two hoops, extended base and three cards. Good condition. Asking \$400. Call 580-738-5783

For Sale: 1984 Redman double-wide mobile home. 28' x 80'. Three bedroom, two bath. To be moved. Can be seen in

Vernon. Price reduced. \$20,000 OBO. Call 580-471-2976

Want to Buy: John Deere 455 30-ft 7.5-in spacing wheat drill, OR Great Plains 3S 3000 7.5-in spacing wheat drill. Call 405-880-2615 (cell) or 580-639-2490

For Sale: Single hay bale hauler. Two years old. \$500. Call 580-706-0051

For Sale: 10" Craftsman Table Saw w/ cast iron extensions, link belt and quick shut-off switch. Saw is in excellent working order and has a mobile base to move the saw around. Call 580-471-6452 or 580-482-6452

For Sale: Will make University of Texas Longhorn plaques. Constructed of beautiful yellow pine with burnt orange and white UT colors. 54" in length. Can make a variety of styles. Great gift for the UT graduate. Cost is \$100 each. Call 940-886-6243

For Sale: 2007 Fisher 20-ft pontoon boat w/ 90-hp Mercury motor. \$13,500. Call 580-471-5850

For Sale: Old but nice house with about one acre in Odell, TX. Three bedroom, two bath, kitchen w/ open dining room, living room, large carport, water well, and storage building. Window AC in all rooms. Ceiling fans throughout. School bus runs in front. Needs some repair on outside. \$39,000. Call 817-235-1756 or 817-237-6178