

Meet Your Cooperative Directors

We continue the series that encourages you to learn more about each of the nine members who serve on the Woodruff Electric Cooperative Board of Directors. The Board of Directors represents the cooperative member-owners and acts on their behalf. This month's feature is on the Board member that represents District 6, Joseph W. Whittenton, III.

MEET YOUR DIRECTOR

Representing District 6, Joe Whittenton of Forrest City has served on the Woodruff Electric Board of Directors since 2006. During his tenure, Joe has served as Chairman and secretary-treasurer of the WECC Board of Directors.

Joe is a resident of St. Francis County. He attended college at Mississippi State University and obtained a bachelor's degree in General Agriculture. He returned home after graduation and began farming on his own in 1981, raising soybeans, wheat, and cotton near Forrest City. Recently, Joe has added peanuts to his agricultural farming mix.

Joe and his wife, Wanda, were married in 1985 and have three children. They were recognized as the St. Francis County Farm Family of the Year in 1994. Joe enjoys the outdoors and spending time with his family. He is a member of the St. Francis County Farm Bureau, serves on the board of the St. Francis County Conservation District, and the Arkansas Peanut Growers' Association Board. He also enjoys serving his community in various other agricultural and community organizations. Joe and Wanda are active members of Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Palestine.



Three long-time employees retire from Woodruff Electric



Tommy Shirley retires after more than 45 years with Woodruff Electric

In 1974, Tommy Shirley began his career working for Woodruff Electric. He was hired as a Key Punch Operator in the Data Processing Department. Soon, he was promoted to Control Clerk where he worked in the front office with members in numerous capacities. Tommy would continue to work for the co-op and receive job promotions throughout the years. He retired in June of 2020 as Consumer Accounts Manager in the Office Services Department after over 45 years of service.

When asked about his career and working with members over the years, Tommy had quite a bit to share. "Having a personal touch is important, even if it's just the simple things," mentioned Tommy. He said he would reach out to members after getting comments, notes or messages about their electric service or questions about their bill. He said, "I would just pick up the phone and call them – members seemed to appreciate that." Tommy expressed how the direct communication to members makes the co-op what it is. "I try to treat people the way I want to be treated," said Tommy.

Tommy witnessed many changes over the years while working at WECC. One of the more obvious changes is the way

employees communicate with members. Tommy stated, “Back when I started, you were lucky to get ahold of the person you were trying to reach, but now you can leave voicemails and directly call cell phones when a farmer may be working in the field.” He went on to say, “People would always call wanting answers. I would try to get back with them as soon as possible, but it was hard to reach people.”

In retirement, Tommy plans to work on building a new house with his wife, Pam, and work more in the family garden with his brother-in-law and sister. When asked about plans of deer hunting, he was quick to respond with a big smile, “Absolutely!” Tommy also hopes to do more fishing in the spring. “It is hard to fit in extra stuff between work and church,” Tommy said. He shared that a retired Woodruff Electric Manager once told him, “Every day is a Saturday during retirement!” Tommy is beginning to agree with that statement and looks forward to all his “Saturdays” in his retirement.



Darrell Martin retires after more than 39 years with Woodruff Electric

Darrell Martin began his career at Woodruff Electric in 1979. He was hired as the Material Clerk in District III at the Moro office. In August of 1980, Darrell was promoted to Apprentice Lineman and began training for a career as a Journeyman Lineman. Darrell mentioned that former CEO/Manager, Glynn Carpenter, stated “You wear a lot of hats at Woodruff Electric.” Darrell agreed with that statement and found it to be very true over his career working in different positions and helping others as well.

Darrell mentioned how much he enjoyed working for Woodruff Electric and how he had learned so much over the years. “I was able to see a lot of different things and witness many changes,” he said. Specific changes he noted were advancements in construction equipment, metering technology, bill collections and pole accessibility with the use of bucket trucks.

“With all of us pulling together and being able to work with each other, we could get the job done. It was always a great learning experience,” said Darrell. He told of the great

camaraderie among employees and said, “You depend on them, and they depend on you.” He expressed how much he enjoyed the variation and lack of repetitiveness in his career and how every construction site was different in its own way.

Darrell laughed when asked about his plans for retirement. He said, “I have been doing quite a bit of metal work from making signs, fire pits and door hangers – it has kept me busy since I retired.” He went on to say that he plans to slow down and do some leisure travel. He plans to include a trip out west toward Colorado. He would like to revisit Washington D.C. with his wife, Kathi, and spend more time visiting different historical sites and monuments. “I really like seeing different things from history and having a chance to see all the buildings and monuments I have read about over time,” he said. Darrell also plans to restore a 1937 Plymouth, but hasn’t decided on a color choice for the car just yet!



Danny Huskey retires after 23 years with Woodruff Electric

Danny Huskey began his 23-year career at Woodruff Electric in 1996 when he was hired as a General Records Clerk Trainee at the District III Office In Moro, Arkansas. He continued working at the Moro Office throughout his entire career, serving the community and members of Lee, Phillips and Monroe counties.

Danny remembers how things got hectic and tough during big storms. He mentioned, “The 2000 ice storm was rough, really rough, with truckloads of material coming in every day and lots of extra crews working to help restore power.” Employees from all departments would step up and assist in any way possible to get power restored as quickly and safely as possible during storms. Danny went on to say that the warehouse work could get tough at times, but he thoroughly enjoyed it and stated it was “the best job” he ever had.

When asked about his retirement thus far, Danny said, “Well, I have not felt retired yet, but I still feel like I am a part of Woodruff and always will. Woodruff is like family to me.”

Danny spoke about his retirement plans that include relaxing and spending time with his family, going on a few camping trips, and just enjoying his time off. Danny concluded by saying, “I am going to miss rambling around in the warehouse and seeing all of my co-workers!” He always worked closely with office personnel and had a great working relationship with his co-workers.

See more from Woodruff Electric on page 26

SAFETY Enlightenment

Lightning MYTHS & Shocking FACTS:

MYTH

If it's not raining or cloudy, you're safe from lightning.

FACT

If you can hear thunder, lightning is nearby. Lightning often strikes over **10 miles** from the center of a thunderstorm.

MYTH

In the event of a lightning strike, the rubber in a car's tires protect occupants from being harmed.

FACT

Lightning travels at about 220,000,000 mph and will have exited the body by the time you approach. Check for a pulse and render first aid if possible. **Call 911 immediately.**

MYTH

A lightning strike victim carries a charge and should not be touched.

FACT

If struck, it is the **metal frame** of the car that provides protection. The charge travels through the frame and into the ground without harming occupants if they avoid touching anything that conducts a charge.

PROTECT YOURSELF



Use the **30/30 rule**: When you see lightning, count until you hear thunder. If that time is **30 seconds** or less, the thunderstorm is within six miles of you and is dangerous. Immediately seek shelter indoors or in a hardtop vehicle and remain until you have not heard thunder for **30 minutes**.



Don't touch concrete surfaces, including those in a basement or garage. Lightning can travel through the metal wires in concrete walls and flooring.



Stay off corded phones and plugged in electronics.



Avoid plumbing and water, including bathing or doing laundry.



Never seek shelter under trees, poles or other tall structures as they are more likely to be struck by lightning.

PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY



Unplug appliances and other electrical items, such as computers and televisions, to prevent damage from surges caused by lightning strikes.

Surge protection can help prevent damage to your electronics. There are two types of surge protection:



Point-Of-Use Surge Protection:

Protects only the items that are directly plugged into the device from most electrical surges.



"Whole Home" Surge Protection:

Located at your main electrical panel or the base of the electric meter, this device provides protection for your entire electrical system.

However, neither type can safeguard against a direct lightning strike. If you live in an area prone to lightning, consider a lightning protection system.



For additional severe weather resources please visit www.esfi.org.



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