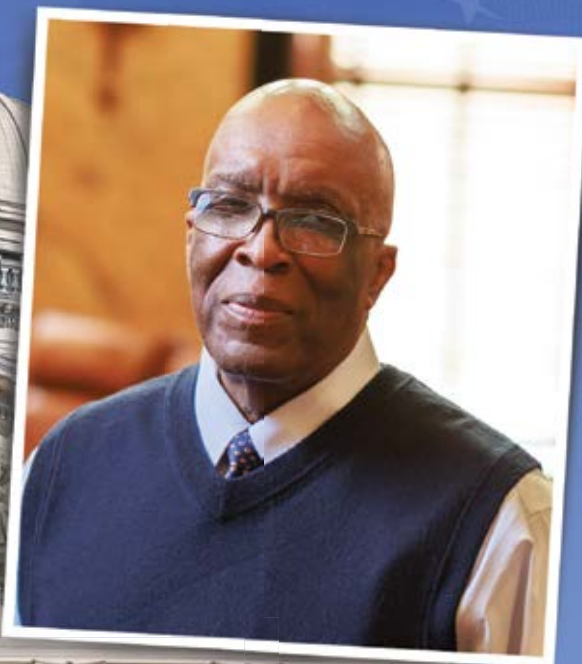


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TODAY IN MISSISSIPPI



Elder Statesmen

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Dedication and a willingness to serve

We did it. We made it to a new year.
We also made it through a presidential election.

So, it's a time for new beginnings.
One of those beginnings is the opportunity for our elected state leaders to do the business of the people.

Our January 2025 issue of the magazine is our annual legislative issue.

Readers can find the senators and representatives who represent our members in Jackson on the local pages of our publication.

The inclusion of the legislative pages is a public service we take seriously each year.

For our cover story this month, we decided to visit with two of our longest serving Mississippi lawmakers.

State Sen. Dean Kirby (R-Pearl) and State Rep. Percy Watson (D-Hattiesburg) have been serving their constituents for decades.

That kind of public service takes dedication, commitment, and a robust desire to aid Mississippi's residents.

Watson has been a state representative for 45 years while Kirby will mark 34 years on the job this year.

Not only do these two legislative veterans call each other friend, they have a special

relationship with the state's electric cooperatives.

Watson has constituents that are members of Pearl River Valley Electric and Dixie Electric. Kirby counts members of Southern Pine Electric as constituents. Kirby also serves as a board member for Southern Pine.

Kirby and Watson serve as sincere examples of the best in state leadership — an assertion proven by their continued re-elections over the years.

We hope the new legislative session that kicks off this month is one of hard work, compromise, and aligned visions designed to move Mississippi forward.

Happy New Year from the Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi.

We hope you enjoy this issue. 



by Michael Callahan

*Executive Vice President/CEO
Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi*



Next in Picture This:

Sweet Treats



Send us a photo of a favorite homemade dessert. The photos must be high-resolution JPG files of at least 1 MB in size. Please send the photo as an attachment to an email to news@ecm.coop.

Each entry must be accompanied by photographer or sender's name, address, and co-op.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

Feb. 28. Select photos will appear in the April 2025 issue.

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TODAY IN MISSISSIPPI

The Official Publication of the Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi

Vol. 78 No. 01

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On the cover

State Sen. Dean Kirby (left) and State Rep. Percy Watson.

Photos by Chad Calcote and Joe Ellis.

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TEACHING STUDENTS ABOUT THE POWER OF CO-OPS

Mississippi's electric co-ops make a point to educate students in community schools about their mission to provide safe, reliable, and affordable power. Co-ops also like to visit schools to expose students to the different careers in the world of electric cooperatives.

Recently, Singing River Electric Director of Engineering Tom Davis talked all things electricity with a George County High School physics class.

Davis also discussed choosing a career and how Singing River Electric and Singing River Connect employees work together to

provide electric and fiber internet service for the betterment of their local communities.

The Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi and the state's electric co-ops also sponsor The Cooperative Youth Leaders program. The program provides an opportunity for students across the state to learn, grow, and experience. The students learn about the cooperative business model, grow in their leadership qualities, and experience the democratic process at the state and federal levels by visiting the Mississippi and U.S. capital cities.



Extreme winter weather could cause energy shortfalls

Many U.S. regions are at elevated risk of electricity supply shortfalls in the event of extreme weather this winter, reflecting growing challenges for the power grid as substantial always-available generation is retired, the North American Electric Reliability Corp. said in a new report.

In its Winter Reliability Assessment, NERC said all assessed areas should have adequate resources for normal peak winter load. But much of the Midwest, Mid-Atlantic and Northeast — as well as Texas — are at risk of energy shortfalls or natural gas pipeline capacity constraints if there is a prolonged cold snap.

Those risks stem partly from growing power demand and the loss of capacity from retired coal-fired and older gas-fired plants, according to the report.

Challenges tied to higher demand are compounded by “flawed public policies” that are shutting down always-available power generation, NRECA CEO Jim Matheson said.

“This growing threat to reliable electricity jeopardizes the health of local communities and undermines the American economy,” Matheson said. “This report clearly highlights the need to swiftly implement a

pro-energy policy agenda with a focus on affordability and reliability for American families and businesses. Smart energy policies that keep the lights on are more important than ever.”

Ongoing industry efforts to bolster winter reliability have made the grid better prepared for the coming months, according to NERC.

But demand is growing from new data centers and increased electrification of home heating and transportation. Meeting that demand has become “more challenging and complex as coal-fired and older natural gas-fired generators retire and are replaced by variable and energy-limited resources,” NERC said.

Severe arctic storms have extended across much of North America in three of the past five winters.

NERC recommended ways that grid operators, generation owners and government authorities can prevent energy emergencies and minimize potential power shutoffs. Those actions include preparing for high electricity demand and low wind conditions, winterizing generation units, and increasing operational coordination around generation fuels. — **NRECA**





Use cool-season for fall and

Cool-season hanging baskets are one of my favorite ways to bring vibrant color and texture to my outdoor space when temperatures start to drop.

Unlike summer baskets that bask in the heat, these arrangements thrive in cooler weather, brightening up my patio, porch or balcony when most plants are winding down for the season. These baskets keep my garden alive with color well into winter and early spring, offering a refreshing contrast when the rest of the landscape seems dormant.

I choose frost-tolerant plants like pansies, violas, ornamental kale and snapdragons, which are known for their hardiness and ability to thrive in cooler conditions. They form a beautiful display, providing long-lasting blooms and stunning foliage that withstands chilly nights.

One of my favorites is the Wave Petunias, particularly the Easy Wave Series.

These are perfect for cool-season hanging baskets because of their cold-hardiness (down to 40 degrees), vigorous growth, cascading habit and prolific blooms. They provide a burst of color wherever they are used.

The Red Velour variety has deep, velvety red flowers. Another standout is the Easy Wave Violet with purple blooms that practically glow. Together, these varieties create an eye-catching combination.



Cool-season hanging baskets are a great way to keep gardens alive with color well into winter and early spring. This basket has Candy Showers snapdragons with Cool Wave Golden Yellow pansies.



Cool-season hanging baskets need plenty of light to flourish and benefit from regular fertilizer application. This basket contains Easy Wave Violet and Red Velour pansies.

son baskets

winter color

Another stunning arrangement is a pairing of Cool Wave Golden Yellow pansies with Candy Showers snapdragons.

Cool Wave Golden Yellow pansies are known for their vigorous, spreading growth and bright golden blooms. The trailing habit of Candy Showers snapdragons — with their mix of pink, red, yellow, purple and orange blooms — adds a lively cascade of color. When combined, the result is a dynamic, cheerful display that's perfect for the cooler months.

Cool-season hanging baskets need plenty of light to flourish. Ideally, you should place them in a location that gets at least 4 to 6 hours of sunlight daily, though some plants like ornamental kale can handle partial shade.

Cool-season plants grow slower than their summer counterparts, but they still benefit from regular feeding. I like to use a slow-release fertilizer when I first plant my baskets, providing them with a steady supply of nutrients.

For an extra boost, use a water-soluble fertilizer every few weeks to help maintain colorful blooms and healthy foliage.

Petunias, especially varieties from the Wave series, are heavy feeders, so they appreciate a bit more attention to fertilizer application. This will help them to maintain their vigorous growth and abundant blooms.

Regular maintenance, including pruning and deadheading, keeps the baskets looking fresh and encourages new blooms. Pansies and snapdragons respond well to deadheading, which prevents them from going to seed and prolongs their blooming period.

For Wave petunias, their self-cleaning nature means they require less deadheading, but occasional pruning helps control their size and keep their trailing habit neat and full.

While many of these plants can handle light frosts, it's still wise to keep an eye on the forecast, especially during periods of hard frost or freezing temperatures.

If a particularly cold night is expected, I protect my baskets by covering them with a frost cloth or moving them to a more sheltered area like a garage or covered porch. This extra care can make a huge difference in extending the life of the plants.

There are endless possibilities for cool-season hanging basket combinations. I love experimenting with different plants to bring color to my garden from fall through spring. ❁



by Dr. Eddie Smith

Southern Gardening columnist Dr. Eddie Smith, a gardening specialist and Pearl River County coordinator with the Mississippi State University Extension Service, is an internationally certified arborist, Produce Safety Alliance certified trainer, and one of the developers of the Mississippi Smart Landscapes program that encourages the use of native plants in the landscape.



STRUGGLING GAME BIRDS

*Bobwhite quail numbers plunged
in recent decades*

Once the most popular game bird in the southeastern United States, bobwhite quail suffered hard times in the past few decades, but sportsmen can still find pockets of birds occupying parcels of good habitat across Mississippi.

“Quail in Mississippi have seen a very similar trend as most other southeastern states,” laments Rick Hamrick, a game biologist for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks. “Although somewhat stable, wild quail populations are low. Quail are generally found in too few numbers to provide or otherwise sustain much hunting opportunity.”

With fewer people trapping furbearers, many people blame an increasing predator population for the diminishing bobwhite

numbers. Raccoons, opossums, and even some other animals, such as housecats, armadillos, hawks, snakes, wild hogs, and fire ants eat quail or their eggs. Even whitetail deer occasionally eat quail eggs.

“Predators certainly have an impact on any prey species,” Hamrick confirms. “We probably have more predators in the state now than we did years ago. Land use changes that are less beneficial to quail are more favorable to many predators. Mississippi didn’t have many coyotes 50 years ago, but coyotes are not big quail predators. A coyote will grab a quail and eat it if it can catch it, but they are less a factor than other animals like foxes and nest predators, like raccoons and opossums. Hawks are major quail predators in the winter, especially smaller ones like Cooper’s and sharp-shinned hawks.”



Because so many things eat quail or their eggs, quail reproduce prolifically. With good habitat management, quail quickly rebuild their numbers. The state does habitat enhancement on some wildlife management areas. Such practices as prescribed fire and selective thinning of trees benefit quail and other species.

“On some of our state lands, we’re not necessarily doing work specifically to improve quail habitat, but many species with similar habitat requirements will benefit from our practices,” Hamrick said. “For instance, on Charles Ray Nix WMA in Panola County, we focus on old fields and grassland habitat. We lean heavily on prescribed burning there to improve the habitat for grassland species.”



On some of our state lands, we’re not necessarily doing work specifically to improve quail habitat, but many species with similar habitat requirements will benefit from our practices.



Marion County WMA near Columbia and the extensive pine savanna habitats on some national forests in southern Mississippi hold some wild quail. Anywhere, sportsmen might need to cover considerable ground to bag a bird limit.

“Marion County WMA has habitat management favorable to quail,” Hamrick said. “It’s predominately longleaf pine savanna habitat. Relatively frequently, we do prescribed burning on the property to manage that longleaf pine habitat.”

In the absence of wild birds, many sportsmen visit well-managed private hunting preserves. Private landowners who wish to create or enhance quail habitat on their properties could consult with state biologists through the Private Lands Program.

See mdwfp.com/privatelands for more information.

The 2024-25 Mississippi quail season runs from Nov. 28 through March 1, 2025, with a daily limit of eight per person. Season dates and regulations could vary on public properties and private preserves, so always check the regulations before hunting anywhere. 🦋

**FOR PUBLIC HUNTING PROPERTIES, SEE
mdwfp.com/wildlife-hunting/wildlife-management-areas.**



by John N. Felsher

John N. Felsher is a professional freelance writer, broadcaster, photographer, and editor who lives in Alabama. An avid sportsman, he’s written more than 3,300 articles for more than 170 different magazines on a wide variety of outdoors topics. Contact him at j.felsher@hotmail.com.

Gulfport to celebrate iconic Gulf Coast cuisine

by John N. Felsher

Originally scheduled for November 2024, the third annual Gulfport Gumbo Fest will be held Jan. 25 at Centennial Plaza.

"We've always held it either the second or third week of November," says Kristen Garriga, executive director of the hosting Gulfport Main Street Association. "We had a potential storm threat when the event was to take place in November, so we decided to move it to January. It's always a great impact event and a very successful festival, but I think moving it to January is going to make it an even bigger event than it was already planning to be."

The festival opens at 10:30 a.m. and runs until 4 p.m. with free admission. It will feature live entertainment, arts and crafts vendors, food, and refreshments. About 3,500 people attended the 2023 event.

"We will have a lot of local and out-of-state vendors and art vendors,"

Garriga said. "All the vendors will be wrapped around the center fountains in Centennial Plaza. People can see artists from all over the Gulf Coast and other states. For entertainment, we'll have a couple local two-man bands. Our headliner is a very well-known zydeco band from New Orleans called the DayWalkers."

When it comes to food, visitors won't be disappointed. People can buy different foods from festival vendors, but highlighting the event will be the Stir Da Roux Gumbo Cook-Off. In 2023, 22 teams competed.

"There's no cost to get into the festival, but if people want to take part in the gumbo tasting, they can pay \$20 and can taste all the gumbos they want," Garriga says. "It's all they can eat as long as the gumbo lasts."

The Stir Da Roux Gumbo Cook-Off winner will receive \$2,500 and much coveted annual bragging rights. The second-place team gets \$1,500 with the third-place team taking home \$500. Kenneth Casey III, owner of Flava Krave Catering in Gulfport, and his team won the best gumbo title in 2023.



“

Getting the roux down is all about the stock. That's what's going to flavor the gumbo, not the meat and seasonings we put in it. Trash makes treasure!

“I was nervous,” Casey said. “It was the first time I’ve ever entered the contest. It was an amazing feeling when they announced us as the champions. I just couldn’t believe it. It was like a weight lifted off my shoulders. Waiting for that last minute to be called is just everything.”

For Casey, cooking is a family affair. Also on the team were Kenneth’s grandmother, Julia Ann Butler, his mother, Stacy Bullard-Casey, his aunt, Kenya Casey, and cousin Tavarus Casey.

“Making gumbo starts at home in the kitchen,” Casey said. “I started cooking with my grandparents. I’ve been making gumbo for more than eight years, but I’ve only been catering for five years. I developed a service called Cajun Hibachi Grill where we go to other people’s houses to cook in front of them.”

Casey’s winning recipe, although a family secret, contained sausage, chicken, crawfish, shrimp, blue crabs, and crab meat. He also added three other “flavas.”

“My three main ingredients were ‘love, flava, and soul!’” he said. “Getting the roux down is all about the stock. That’s what’s going to flavor the gumbo, not the meat and seasonings we put in it. Trash makes treasure! I make my stock from end pieces of vegetables, chicken bones, crawfish heads, and some extra seasoning of my own and cook it all down for a good-seasoned stock.”

Casey travels frequently cooking Cajun, creole, and soul food for his clients. Contact him at 228-806-5682 or at flavakatering20@yahoo.com.

In a separate contest from the Stir Da Roux Gumbo Cook-Off, mayors representing their Gulf Coast communities will compete against each other for the Mayor’s Cup. Either the mayor or a representative will defend the honor of their communities.

“We always see a lot of trash talk among the mayors and their teams,” Garriga said. “It’s a lot of fun with great camaraderie. Gulfport Mayor Billy Hewes won in 2023, so he can’t compete in 2025. Gulf Ship won the People’s Choice Award and Red Clay Roux won the Best Decorated Tent Award. People do not need a tasting ticket to taste the mayors’ gumbos, but they can vote for their favorite pots of gumbo.” 🍴

For more information on the festival, visit gumbofestgpt.com or call 228-819-2099.

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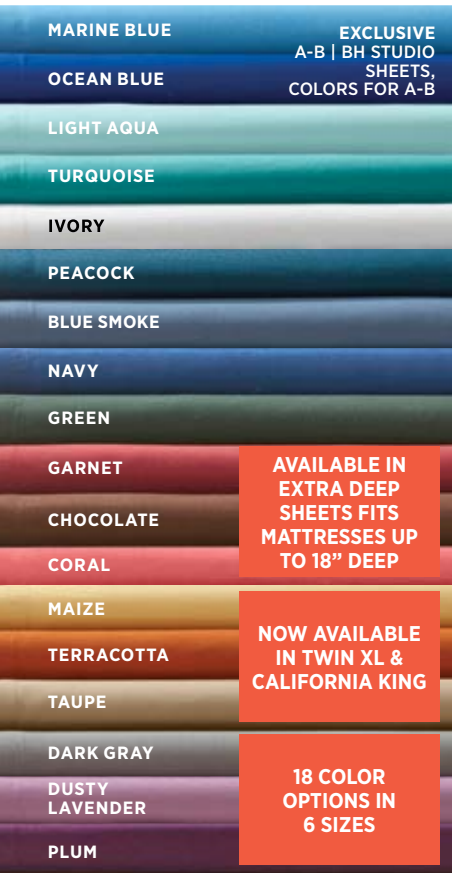


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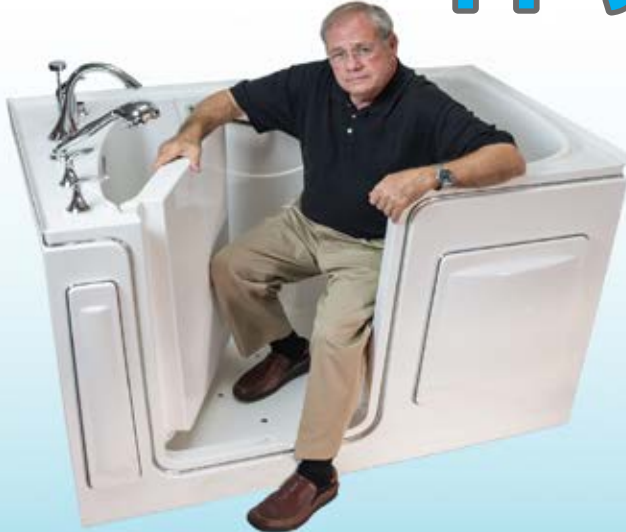
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Start 2025 with *Energy Savings*

If you find yourself looking to make saving energy (and money!) a priority in 2025, we've got some tips to help you out!

by Jennifer Johnson

- Purchase a water heater jacket or blanket – it can reduce stand-by heat loss by up to 45%, and it's an inexpensive project.
- Put your slow cooker to use for easy meals that use less energy. Slow cookers are one of the most energy-efficient appliances. (And see our recipes in this issue for some great slow cooker recipes to get you started!)
- Wash with cold water using a cold-water detergent and try to wash full loads if possible.
- Use LED bulbs in your home. They use about 75% less electricity than incandescent bulbs, and they have a longer lifespan. That means fewer trips to the store to purchase more bulbs!
- Reverse your ceiling fan's direction if possible. This distributes warm air evenly in the winter. And while you're at it, make sure those blades are clean. They can lower the fan's airflow and use more power if they have dust and grime on them.
- Use curtains or blinds on your windows in your home. You can manage the sunlight and heat coming into your home through them by the time of year.
- If you have a fireplace, remember to close the damper when you are not burning a fire. Otherwise, your chimney will pull the warm air out of your house. This can cause your HVAC system to work harder and cost you money.
- Caulking unsealed air leaks is an easy way to save energy. Every little bit helps!



Then^{vs.} Now

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) started its journey in rural electrification by setting its first pole to serve rural areas in Pontotoc County. A holiday was declared in Pontotoc, and hundreds took part in the pole-raising ceremony.

Today, PEPA maintains more than 1,700 miles of lines and serves more than 20,000 customers.

January 22,
1934



January
2025

MEET YOUR 2025 MISSISSIPPI ELECTED OFFICIALS

Pontotoc Electric Power Association salutes Mississippi's senators and representatives who represent our state in Washington, D.C. and at our state capitol in Jackson.



TATE REEVES
Governor



DELBERT HOSEMANN
Lieutenant Governor

CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION



TRENT KELLY
First District
Representative



CINDY HYDE-SMITH
United States
Senator



ROGER WICKER
United States
Senator

NOW AVAILABLE

A free, interactive legislative app for Mississippi

The Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi offers an easy-to-use mobile app of Mississippi's state and federal elected officials. Look for "ECM Legislative Roster" in the Apple App Store. An Android version is also available through Google Play.



Download on the
App Store

GET IT ON
Google Play

SENATE



Sen. Nicole Akins Boyd

District 9:
Lafayette and Panola counties

Address:
P.O. Box 1018
Jackson, MS 39215



Sen. Kathy L. Chism

District 3:
Benton, Marshall, Pontotoc, Prentiss, and Union counties

Address:
1506 Moss Hill Drive
New Albany, MS 38652



Sen. Chad McMahan

District 6:
Itawamba and Lee counties

Address:
P.O. Box 1018
Jackson, MS 39215



Sen. Benjamin A. Suber

District 8: Calhoun, Chickasaw, Lafayette, Pontotoc, and Yalobusha counties

Address:
P.O. Box 8
Bruce, MS 38915



Sen. Neil Whaley

District 10: Lafayette, Marshall, Tate, and Union counties

Address:
P.O. Box 1018
Jackson, MS 39215

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Rep. Sam Creekmore

District 14:
Union County

Address:
1315 South Central Avenue
New Albany, MS 38652



Rep. Jonathan "Jon" Lancaster

District 22:
Chickasaw, Monroe, and Pontotoc counties

Address:
463 CR 85
Houston, MS 38851



Rep. Steve Massengill

District 13:
Benton, Lafayette, Marshall, Pontotoc, and Union counties

Address:
1322 Hwy. 5
Hickory Flat, MS 38633



Rep. Andy Stepp

District 23

Andy Stepp passed away on Dec. 5, 2024. Pontotoc Electric sends condolences to his family, friends, and constituents.



Rep. Jerry Turner

District 18:
Lee and Prentiss counties

Address:
1290 Carrollville Ave.
Baldwyn, MS 38826



Rep. Beth Luther Waldo

District 15:
Pontotoc County

Address:
4004 Highway 9 South
Pontotoc, MS 38863





ENJOY THESE GREAT RECIPES FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT PEPA!

Did you know January is slow-cooker month? Try these great recipes to save yourself some time in the kitchen. You could save some energy costs too!

APPLE-DIJON PORK ROAST

INGREDIENTS

- 1 boneless pork loin roast (about 2-3 pounds)
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) chicken broth
- 1 cup unsweetened apple juice
- ½ cup Dijon mustard
- 6 tablespoons cornstarch
- 6 tablespoons cold water
- Coarsely ground black pepper, *optional*

Place roast in a 5-qt. slow cooker. In a small bowl, combine the broth, apple juice, and mustard and pour over roast. Cook on low for 4-5 hours or until tender. Remove roast and keep warm. For gravy, strain cooking juices and skim fat. Pour juices into small saucepan. Combine cornstarch and water until smooth and gradually stir into juices. Bring to boil and stir until thickened, about 2 minutes. Serve with pork. If desired, top with ground pepper.

POTATO SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 32-ounce bag of cube potato hashbrowns
- 1 32-ounce chicken broth
- 1 package dry ranch seasoning
- 1 can cream of chicken soup, *do not dilute*
- 1 8-ounce package of cream cheese, *cubed*

Place first four ingredients into slow cooker. Cook for 4-6 hours. Add cubed cream cheese and cook for about 30 more minutes. Serve with bacon pieces, sour cream, shredded cheese, and green onions.

SLOW-COOKER BUFFALO CHICKEN DIP

INGREDIENTS

- 2 packages cream cheese, *softened*
- ½ cup ranch salad dressing
- ½ cup sour cream
- 5 tablespoons crumbled blue cheese
- 2 cups shredded cooked chicken
- ½ cup Buffalo wing sauce
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 green onion, *sliced*
- Tortilla chips and assorted fresh veggies

In a small bowl, combine the cream cheese, dressing, sour cream, and blue cheese. Transfer to a slow cooker. Layer with chicken, wing sauce, and 1 cup cheddar cheese. Cover and cook on low for 2-3 hours or until heated through. Sprinkle with remaining 1 cup cheese and green onions. Serve with tortilla chips and veggies.

PINEAPPLE-CHERRY DUMP CAKE

INGREDIENTS

- ¾ cup butter, *divided*
- ⅔ cup packed brown sugar
- 1 16-ounce jar maraschino cherries, *drained*
- ½ chopped pecans, *toasted*
- 1 can (20 ounce) unsweetened pineapple tidbits, *undrained*
- 1 package yellow cake mix

In a microwave, melt ½ cup butter. Stir in brown sugar. Spread evenly onto bottom of greased 5-qt. slow cooker. Sprinkle with cherries and pecans. Top with pineapple. Sprinkle evenly with dry cake mix. Melt remaining butter and drizzle over top.

Cook on high for 2 hours or until fruit mixture is bubbly. To avoid scorching, rotate slow-cooker insert a half turn midway through cooking, lifting carefully with oven mitts. Turn off slow cooker. Let cake stand uncovered for 30 minutes before serving. A scoop of vanilla ice cream pairs great with this!



PONTOTOC ELECTRIC POWER ASSOCIATION

will be closed on Monday, Jan. 20, 2025,
in observance of

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

A Pontotoc Electric dispatcher is on duty
24-hours a day, seven days a week. To report a power
outage after hours or during the holiday, please call
662-489-6711 for Pontotoc and 662-983-2727 for Bruce.

WARNING - WARNING - WARNING

If Your Hands, Arms, Feet, or Legs Are Numb - If You Feel Shooting or Burning Pain or An Electric Sensation - You Are at Risk Don't Let Creeping Nerve Death Ruin Your Life

Get The Help You Need - Here's What You Need to Know...

Purvis, MS - If you experience numbness or tingling in your hands, arms, legs, or feet or if you experience shooting or burning pain, this is important. Please read this carefully.

Peripheral Neuropathy is when small blood vessels in the hands, arms, feet or legs become diseased and tiny nerves that keep the cells and muscles working properly shrivel up and die.

Early-warning symptoms include tingling and numbness, mild loss of feeling in your hands, arms, legs or feet, inability to feel your feet, which increases your risk of foot-injury and falling.

More Advanced Symptoms Include...

- Loss of coordination & dexterity, which puts you at increased risk of accidents.
- Inability to feel clothing like socks and gloves.
- High risk of falling, which makes walking dangerous, and makes you more dependent on others.
- Burning sensations in your arms, legs, hands or feet that may start mild, but as nerves and muscles die, may feel like you're being burned by a blow torch.

Ignore the early warning signals long enough and you risk progressive nerve damage leading to muscle wasting, severe pain, loss of balance and a lot of staying at home wishing you didn't hurt.

When every step is like walking on hot coals, sitting still may be the only thing you feel like doing. But there's little joy in sitting still all day long.



Without treatment, nerve degeneration that begins with slight tingling or numbness may lead to a hot burning sensation and intense pain. Without treatment muscle wasting, loss of mobility and loss of independence is often the next stop.

Now here's the scary part....

- Nerve damage CAUSES cell damage.
- Cell damage SPEEDS UP nerve degeneration

Without treatment this can become a DOWN-WARD SPIRAL that accelerates.

The damage can get worse fast. Mild symptoms intensify. Slight tingling, numbness or lack of feeling can turn into burning pain.

Before you know it, damage can become so bad you hurt all the time.

Unless this downward spiral is stopped and nerves return to proper function - the damage to nerves and cells in the affected area can get so bad your muscles begin to die right along with the nerves and cells. And that sets the stage for weakness, loss of mobility, disability, and dependence on others.

If you have early warning signs of peripheral neuropathy, (tingling &/or numbness, loss of feeling or pain) it's CRITICAL you get proper treatment.

It's critical, because with proper treatment the symptoms can often be reversed. Without it, you are playing Russian Roulette with your health.

Once your nerve loss reaches 85%, odds are there's nothing any doctor can do to help.

The most common method your doctor may recommend to treat neuropathy is prescription drugs



Drugs like Gabapentin, Lyrica, Cymbalta, & Neurontin are often prescribed to manage the pain. But, damaged nerves and dying cells do not heal on their own.

Pain pills do not restore healthy nerve function. They just mask the pain as the nerves continue to degenerate and cells and muscle continue to die.

Taking endless drugs and suffering terrible side effects that may damage your liver & kidney and create even more problems, is not a reasonable path. You deserve better.

Three things must be determined to effectively treat neuropathy. 1) What is the underlying cause? 2) How much nerve damage has been sustained? 3) How much treatment your condition will require?

With proper treatment, shriveled blood vessels grow back & nerves can return to proper function. How much treatment you may need depends on your condition.

At **Purvis Chiropractic** we do a complete neuropathy sensitivity exam to determine the extent of your nerve damage. The exam includes a detailed sensory evaluation, extensive peripheral vascular testing, & a detailed analysis of the findings.

Dr. Rob Acord, D.C. will be offering this complete neuropathy sensitivity exam for **\$47**. This special offer goes away at the end of this month as we have a limited number of exam appointments available.

Stop Hurting & Start Healing
Call Now to Schedule Your Complete
Neuropathy Sensitivity Exam with
Dr. Rob Acord, D.C.
(601) 794-0081

105 Main Street
Purvis, MS 39475



The Deans of the State Capitol

Dean Kirby and Percy Watson

by Steven Ward

There's an argument that an infusion of new blood into the bodies of political institutions benefit constituents through new ideas, fresh eyes, and a naïve fearlessness of the way things have always been done.

The flip side to that idea is that experience, institutional knowledge, and years of politically forged relationships are essential elements to a public servant's success when fighting for the people they represent.

District 30 State Sen. Dean Kirby (R-Pearl) and District 103 State Rep. Percy Watson (D-Hattiesburg) are pillars of the latter train of thought.

Kirby, 78, is the longest serving Republican lawmaker in the state Legislature's history. This year will mark 34 years for Kirby as a Mississippi GOP lawmaker.

Watson, 73, is one of the current longest serving state legislators in

Jackson. Watson, a Democrat, has served as a state representative for 45 years.

To say Kirby and Watson have seen and heard everything there is to see and hear at the state capitol is an understatement.

“

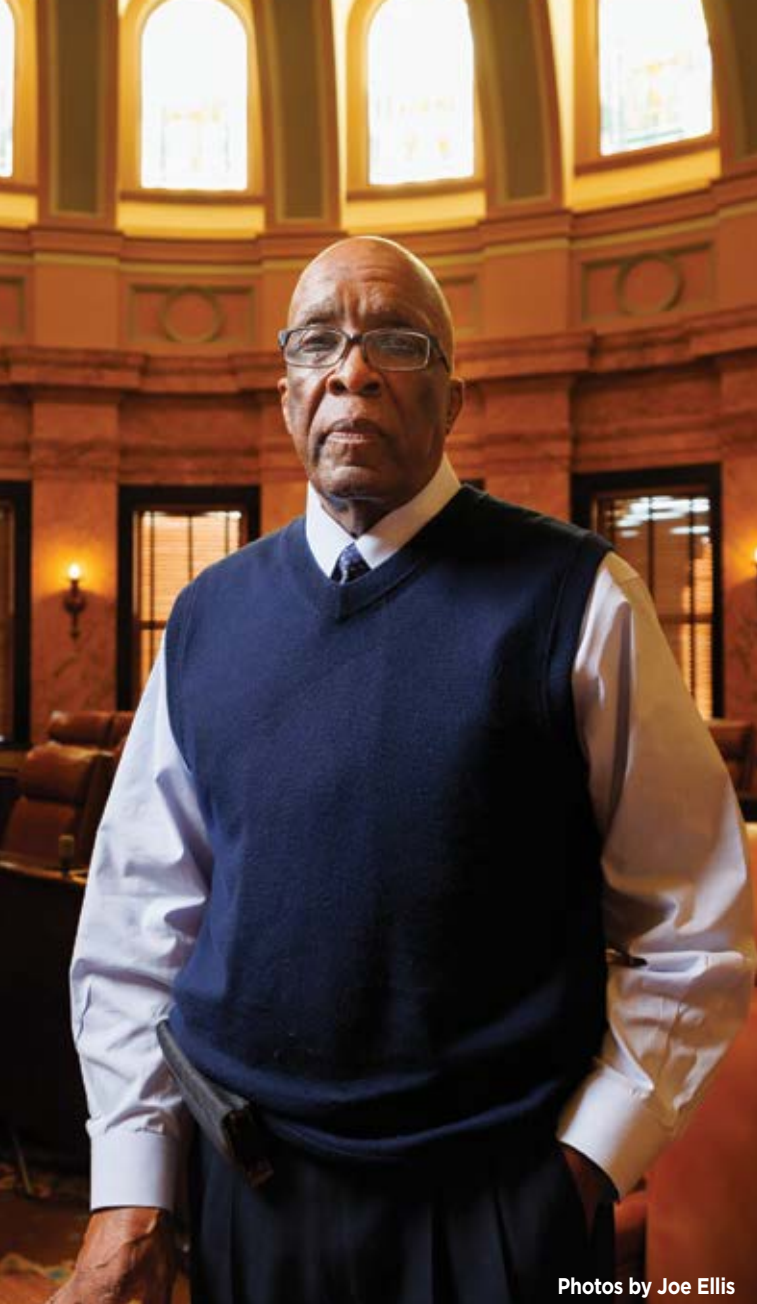
He is a good man who cares about his constituents and our state. Do we always agree — no, but who does? We represent different parts of the state. He is my good friend.

about his constituents and our state. Do we always agree — no, but who does? We represent different parts of the state. He is my good friend,” Kirby said.

What the pair have in common is a commitment to helping their constituents, working with the state's electric cooperatives, and a longtime friendship that only time can bring about.

Watson and Kirby got to know each other better when Kirby was the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and Watson was the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

“He (Watson) is a good man who cares



Photos by Joe Ellis



Watson's notes

Watson is known for always taking copious notes during legislative sessions.

Some of have wondered if there might be a book about his time as a state lawmaker in Watson's future.

"I'm a notetaker, and I keep a daily journal. I have no plans to write a book at this time," Watson said.

Watson was elected to his House seat in 1980 at age 28.

When Watson graduated high school, the Legislature had one African American member.

Times have changed.



Watson, an attorney, grew up in Hattiesburg and graduated from the University of Iowa. He got his law degree from the University of Iowa College of Law and then practiced in Alaska for less than two years before coming back to Mississippi.

When Watson was elected in 1979, Cliff Finch was governor. After he was sworn in, William Winter became governor, and the House was filled with Democrats and just one Republican.

Again, times have changed.

When asked why he has served so long as a lawmaker, Watson said there were three important policies he wanted to help get through the Legislature — tax revenue reform, the elimination of the sales tax on groceries, and the expansion of Medicaid.

Watson said a few of his accomplishments he's most proud of include the passage of laws that improved highways and roads, passage of the law for the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, and securing a new state flag.

Watson, who has constituents that are members of Pearl River Valley Electric and Dixie Electric, said he's always enjoyed working with the state's electric cooperatives.

"The co-ops have always been supportive on advancing issues that benefit our constituency," Watson said.

Watson is the vice chairman of House Ethics Committee.

After 45 years of public service, Watson speculated on whether this may be his last term in office.

"I might have one more term in me," Watson said with a smile on his face.

"Maybe."

Dean is one of the deans

Kirby grew up in Pearl and went to Mississippi College before getting into the insurance industry. His business, Dean Kirby Insurance Agency, specializes in commercial property and casualty insurance.

Kirby said he first got interested in politics when he was in his early 20s and was asked by a friend to help in a campaign.

"After years of helping others, local leaders kept asking me to run for office," Kirby said.

"After many discussions with my wife and lots of prayers and encouragement from friends, I decided to run for state senate. I felt a calling, and now, I think it was indeed my destiny."

Kirby holds the third most powerful seat in the state government behind the governor and lieutenant governor as the Senate's president pro tempore.

The job involves a gavel and presiding over the body during legislative sessions when Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann isn't there to do so.

"I love presiding. That's my favorite part of being president pro tempore," Kirby said. Sometimes the job means calling a meeting to order and other times it might mean banging the gavel to get members "under control," he said.

“

The day I can't help people anymore is the day I need to get out. I never get tired of coming here. It's like getting to go to a candy store every day.

"Things sometimes get very loud here. People are running around talking to different members," Kirby said while standing in the Senate chamber.

Talking about the highlights of his 34-year career, Kirby said he has seen the state improve in education, garner better jobs, and secure the largest reserve and rainy-day fund in the state's history. He also said he's proud of his work to get teachers their largest pay increase ever and advancing Mississippi transportation and health care.

Kirby is also a board member of Southern Pine Electric. He said he loves being on the electric co-op's board and working with cooperatives.

"Every member of that board is so conscientious and really does their homework. Every member is so good at what they do; they could all be Mississippi senators," Kirby said.

It doesn't appear that Kirby has any plans to halt his public service soon.

"The day I can't help people anymore is the day I need to get out. I never get tired of coming here," Kirby said in the Senate chamber.

"It's like getting to go to a candy store every day." ❁



Photos by Chad Calcote





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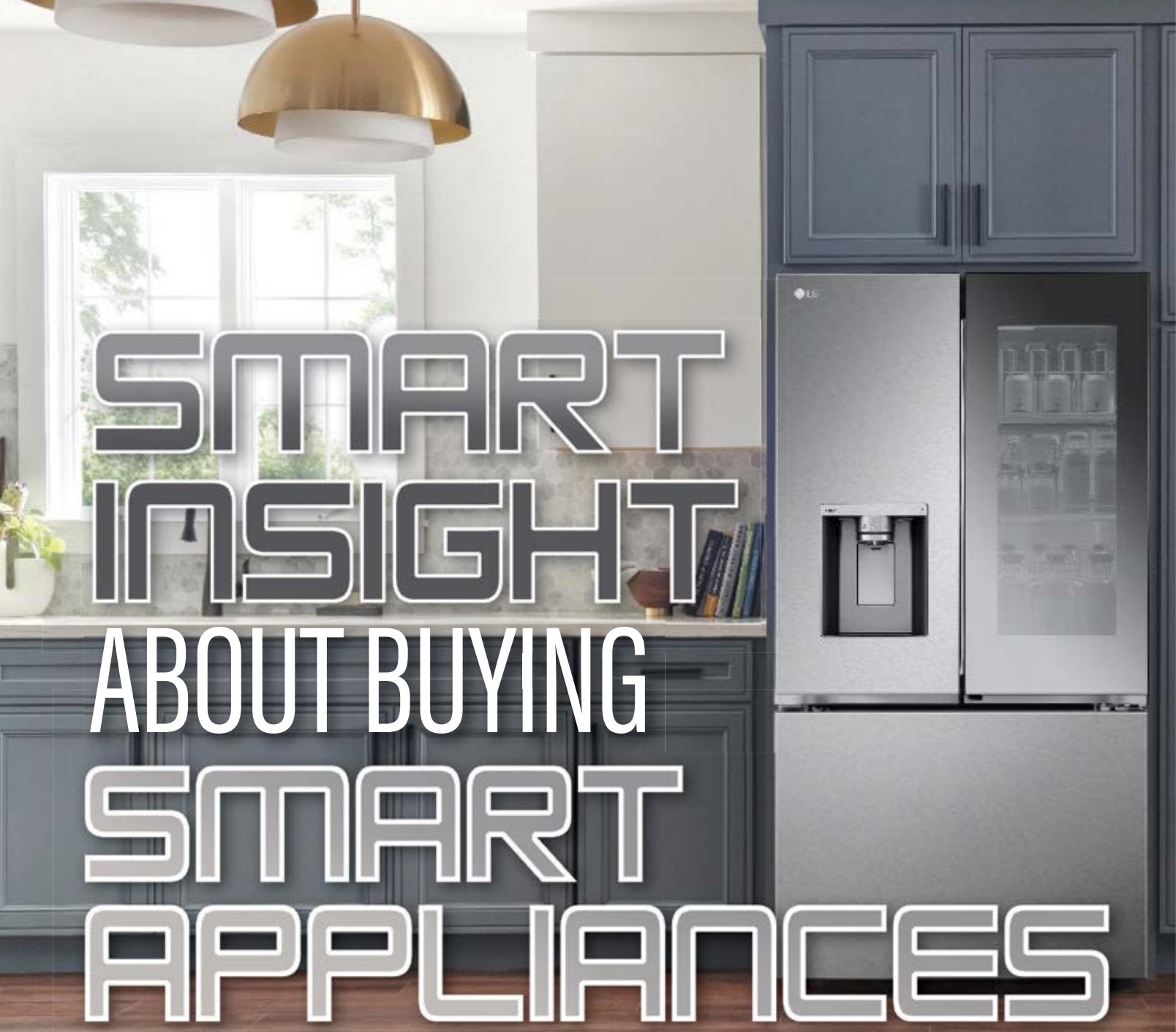
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SMART INSIGHT ABOUT BUYING SMART APPLIANCES

by Scott Flood

Santa isn't the only one who makes an appearance as the year nears its end. Retailers start trumpeting deep discounts on home appliances. That's great if you've considered replacing some of your home's tired appliances with one of today's "smart" models. Before deciding to buy a smart appliance, take some time to get smarter about what they offer – and what you really need.

Begin with an honest look at how you live and consider the role your current appliances play in your daily routine. Would the capabilities of a smart appliance make your life easier? For example, if you frequently forget to start the laundry or your dishwasher, Wi-Fi enabled appliances with remote start capabilities may save you time and trouble. But if you're thinking about stepping up to a smart appliance because it has a cool feature you might use once a year, ask yourself if it's worth the extra cost.

Next, think about any smart devices you already use in your home. Make sure they're compatible with the smart appliance's operating system, so you can get all the benefits you expect. For example, many of these appliances are engineered to work with familiar voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, or Apple's Siri. Incompatible systems might limit your ability to use the features that are most important to you.

Is your home's infrastructure ready to handle the demands of a smart appliance? Depending upon the model you choose, it might require anything from a basic internet connection to a home Wi-Fi network to provide the operation you expect. Some smart appliances may require Bluetooth, Zigbee, Z-Wave or other systems for connectivity. Others have the ability to receive software updates via Wi-Fi. Having access to the right technology ensures your system will function correctly and be able to handle updates as they become available.

It's always important to consider energy efficiency when purchasing a new appliance. Most smart appliances are designed to reduce energy consumption, with operating modes that deliver the performance you want while making more efficient use of energy. Smart appliances that are Energy Star® certified meet or exceed federal energy efficiency standards and some may use only half as much energy as standard appliances. Many let you schedule operations during times of day when energy rates are lower. That's particularly beneficial with high-energy appliances like washing machines, dishwashers and clothes dryers.

Repairs to smart appliances can be expensive, so be sure to consider the warranty. Generous manufacturer warranties demonstrate the company's confidence in the quality of its products.

Finally, because most smart appliances are connected to the internet, make sure you think about privacy and security. Research the manufacturer's privacy policies and security features to ensure that data like your voice commands and shopping habits don't fall into the wrong hands. Making sure the manufacturer takes your privacy and online safety as seriously as you do is a smart strategy.

For most homeowners, the biggest downside to smart appliances is that they carry a higher price tag than their not-so-smart counterparts. However, price is just one factor in the cost of any appliance. When you also consider the long-term value smart appliances deliver – whether that's in energy savings, helpful conveniences or improved reliability – most will save you money over their service life. In addition, smart appliances may be eligible for rebates and tax incentives, so ask your retailer what's available.

What's ahead for smart appliances in the foreseeable future? The marketplace is starting to see the integration of basic artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities that can make smart appliances provide better service, greater reliability, and lower energy needs. As these AI-fueled systems become more common, your refrigerator might know your habits so well that it can generate a shopping list for you. Your dishwasher could adjust its operating cycle to better clean your family's uniquely dirty dishes.

There was a time when appliances changed little from decade to decade. Today, products advance more quickly than ever before, and we can expect to see more big changes ahead. Fortunately, today's smart appliances give you a way to start using the technology that will make you the envy of your neighbors as it makes your life easier. ✨

For more than four decades, business writer Scott Flood has worked with electric cooperatives to build knowledge of energy-related issues among directors, staff, and members.



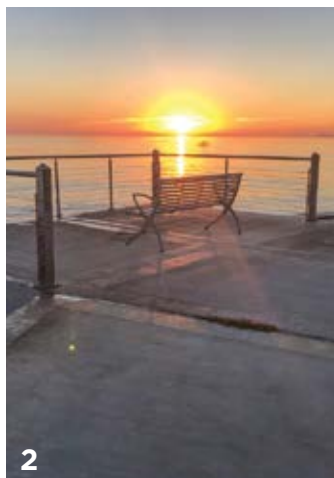
Most smart appliances are designed to reduce energy consumption, with operating modes that deliver the performance you want while making more efficient use of energy. Photo Credit: LG



Many smart appliances are engineered to work with familiar voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, or Apple's Siri.

Sunrise or Sundown

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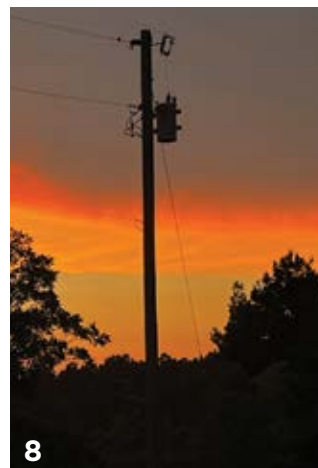
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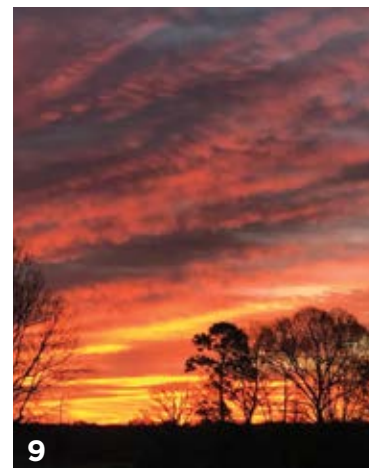
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1. **Dana Price** of Jayess; Magnolia Electric member.
2. **Norma Jones** of Wiggins; Pearl River Valley Electric member.
3. **Mark Lovorn** of Olive Branch; Northcentral member.
4. **Ginger Harris** of Walls; Coahoma Electric member.
5. **Emile and Julie** of Picayune; Coast Electric members.

6. **Rita Luna** of Caledonia; Monroe County Electric member.
7. **Jay Fontaine** of Jackson; Yazoo Valley Electric member.
8. **Theresa Johnson** of Vancleave; Singing River Electric member.
9. **Linda Wall** of Liberty; Magnolia Electric member.
10. **Barbara J. Cannette** of Biloxi; Coast Electric member.
11. **Donna Ferguson** of Hernando; Coahoma Electric member.



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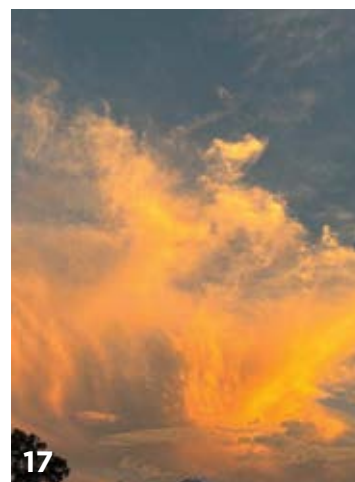
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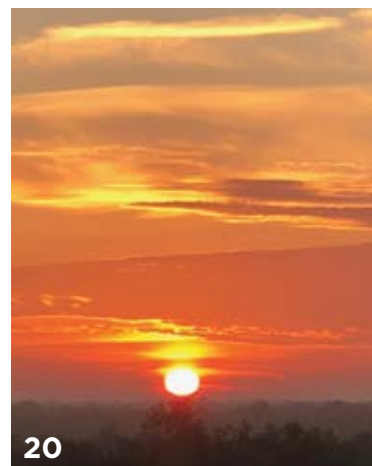
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12. **Arleen Weatherby** of Columbus; 4-County Electric member.

13. **Robin Johnson** of Florence; Southern Pine Electric member.

14. **Tonya Gatlin** of Heidelberg; Dixie Electric member.

15. **Stacy Turner** of Union; Central Electric member.

16. **Ron Burge** of Vancleave; Singing River Electric member.

17. **Leigh Conerly** of Vicksburg; Yazoo Valley Electric member.

18. **David Goodwin** of Columbia; Pearl River Valley Electric member.

19. **Robin Lee Canode** of Lucedale; Singing River Electric member.

20. **Inez McGee** of Morton; Southern Pine Electric member.

A close-up photograph of a plate of food, including a slice of yellow cake, a serving of lentils with carrots and a piece of bacon, and a portion of blue cheese.

THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN

with
Vicki
Leach

Memories made around the table

I love old cookbooks. I have scads of them and read them like novels. One of my favorite things to do is pick up a vintage cookbook from years (sometimes decades) ago and search for lost treasures among the Jello salad and porcupine meatball recipes. Junior League and Auxiliary cookbooks always have those one or two “go-to” recipes everybody makes; if made often enough, they become our own favorites, finding their way into family celebrations and holiday dinners.

In my household when my kids were growing up, family favorites were defined by how quickly I could get dinner on the table. Convenience foods weren’t exactly a staple, but they were sure helpful when it came to throwing something together in a rush.

Weeknight dinners looked a little different than Sunday sit downs, but were loved them just the same. Those dishes, many containing Cool Whip and Jello, instant pudding, and cream of anything soup, are still staples, and the must-haves for many of our family get together. They are the tried and trues.

Food follows fashion and just like fashion, food is trendy. Right now, vintage foods are all the rage. Why not kick off a new year with some old favorites? Maybe you keep your pantry stocked with everything convenient. Maybe you —like me —scour vintage cookbooks for old (and new) favorites and have a fondness for throwback recipes. One thing’s for certain — there’s nothing like a little stash of something easy to lighten the food load. 

Oreo Fluff serves a lot

INGREDIENTS

- ½ package Oreo cookies
(about 20 cookies)
- 1 small carton frozen
whipped topping, thawed
(Cool Whip)
- 1 small box instant
vanilla pudding

Place Oreos in a gallon baggie, and crush with a meat mallet or a can (use a light touch so you don't bust the bag). Make the instant vanilla pudding according to package directions.

To assemble, place crushed Oreos and thawed whipped topping in the bowl with the pudding. Mix well. Refrigerate until serving time.



Lemonade Pound Cake

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lemon cake mix
- 1 small instant lemon pudding mix
- 4 eggs
- ½ vegetable oil
- ½ milk
- 12 ounces frozen lemonade
concentrate, thawed, divided
(use ½ cup in cake)

GLAZE

- Lemon concentrate
- ½ cup granulated sugar

Combine the remaining thawed frozen lemonade and the white sugar. Mix thoroughly and pour over still warm cake.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour one 10-inch tube pan or bundt pan.

Combine the cake mix, lemon pudding mix, eggs, vegetable oil, ½ cup lemon concentrate, and the milk. Mix until smooth. Pour the batter into the prepared pan.

Bake at 350 degrees for 45 to 50 minutes.

Remove from oven and prick cake all over with a fork. Immediately pour lemonade glaze over top of cake. Let cake stand in pan to absorb the glaze. Remove before it cools completely.



Beanie Weenies

INGREDIENTS

- 1 28-ounce can pork and beans
- 1 8 count package hot dogs,
sliced ½ inch thick
- ½ cup ketchup
- ½ onion, minced
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon yellow mustard
- 1 tablespoon
Worcestershire sauce

Combine beans, hot dogs, ketchup, onion, brown sugar, mustard, and Worcestershire sauce in a large bowl, mixing to combine. Pour into a Pam-sprayed 9 x 13 inch glass casserole dish. Bake for 25-35 minutes until hot and bubbly.

Serve with corn, green salad, and toast points.



by Vicki Leach

Vicki Leach is a full-time chef/culinary instructor at Mississippi State University in the Department of Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion. She teaches Science of Food Preparation, Foodservice Organization, and Quantity Food Production. She also serves as the food service coordinator for First Baptist Church in Starkville, where she attends with her husband, Rob. She has four children and five grandchildren, and lives in a 130-year-old farmhouse that speaks to her old soul. She still has the first cookbook she ever owned.

Events open to the public will be published free of charge as space allows. Submit details at least two months prior to the event date. Submissions must include a phone number with area code for publication. Email to news@ecm.coop. **Events are subject to change.**

Mississippi Gem and Mineral Show. Feb. 22 and 23. Jackson. From 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Feb. 22. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Feb. 23. Trade Mart on Mississippi State Fairgrounds. The event will feature 27 vendors, college and state organization exhibits and educational opportunities, children's activities, and lapidary demonstrations. Admission for adults is \$8 and \$3 for students. Scouts/Leaders in uniform \$2. Details: 601-278-3997 or missgems.org

Mid-South Military History & Civil War Show. March 7 and 8. Southaven. The South's oldest military history show will be at the Landers Center in Southaven on I-55 and Church Road, Exit 287. Open March 7 from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. and March 8 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$10 each day for adults, two-day pass for \$15, children 12 and under free. Vendors from across the country will have quality artifacts from the American Revolution through the 20th Century available to buy, sell, or trade. These include books, documents, prints, uniforms, weapons, relics, photographs, and Native American items. Musicians, food trucks, and re-enactors will be on site. On Saturday, historians will speak on the Civil War, World War I, and World War II topics. Civil War re-enactors with a cannon and World War II re-enactors will be there as well. Details: 901-832-4708 or email dwharrison@aol.com.

Good Ole Days Festival. March 8. Lucedale. Hosting the International Harvester Tractor Club Chapter 44 State Show. All day events for a tractor show with new and antique tractors, hit and miss engines, and various farm equipment. Food, crafts, live demonstrations, live music, and entertainment for the kids. Will also be collecting family recipes to create a Good Ole Days Family Cookbook. Admission is free. LC Hatcher Elementary School Grounds, 689 Church Street. Details: 601-337-3136 or email goodoledaysfest@gmail.com.

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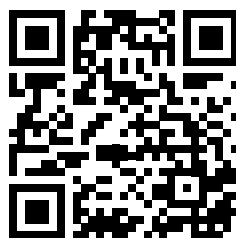
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I Resolve...

“

Why, you can take a stick of firewood and do most anything you want to with it — and it'll still burn when you're finished.

Here we are at the beginning of another New Year. This is the time of year that I toy with the idea of resolutions — a least for a few days before I move on to something else.

Usually, New Year resolutions center around some kind of self-improvement. I resolve to read the Bible through this year; I resolve to lose weight (again); I resolve to quit smoking. Although, there aren't as many smokers today as there used to be. When I was a kid, people smoked in movie theatres. There was a smoking section on airplanes. That was a long time ago. A friend of mine told me quitting smoking was easy. He did it every New Year for years.

A few weeks ago, I visited with Clinton artist Wyatt Waters in his newly remodeled studio on the brick streets in downtown Clinton. I bring up Wyatt and his studio because he is an example of “resolve” personified.

Wyatt knew that he wanted to be an artist when his kindergarten teacher complimented him

on a picture he colored. He said if she had never praised him, he may never have pursued art as a career. Years later, Wyatt majored in art at Mississippi College in Clinton and often walked the few blocks to the downtown area and pictured in his mind that he would have a studio there. It is years and years later now, but inside that newly remodeled and enlarged studio is where we were talking.

He admitted there were times when things got tough through the years. But he never quit. And by sticking with it (isn't that more or less the definition of resolve? Sticking with it?) his dreams from years ago have more than come true.

Feature filmmaker Tate Taylor of Church Hill in Jefferson County told me the story of how he went from being a jet fuel salesman to making movies. He had a dream and stuck with it.

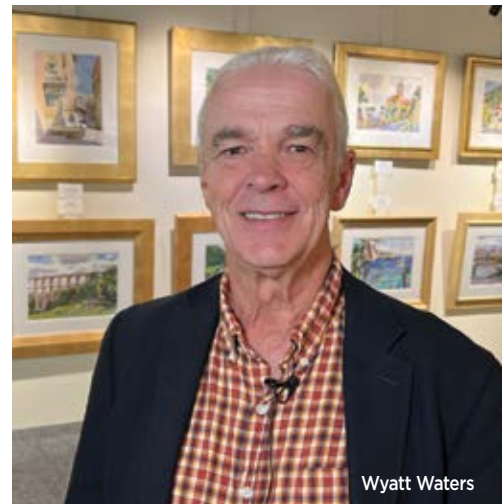
Some people's dreams don't come true because they're afraid to try. They are scared it might not work out. Years ago, I did a story with Neshoba County whittler Jerome Ferguson. He could come up with the most interesting and intricate figures from little sticks of wood. I still have one of his roosters, with tail feathers and all. I told to him that I'd be afraid to even try such delicate work. He gave me a great piece of advice that I have used more than once when facing a daunting project. He said, “Why, you can take a stick of firewood and do most anything you want to with it — and it'll still burn when you're finished.”

So, let's go boldly into the new year and face challenges with resolve and the assurance that it will still burn when we're finished if it doesn't work out. But it will NEVER work out if we don't at least give it a shot. 🌿

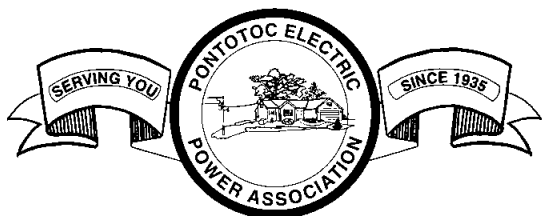


by Walt Grayson

Walt Grayson is the host of “Mississippi Roads” on Mississippi Public Broadcasting television and the author of two “Looking Around Mississippi” books and “Oh! That Reminds Me: More Mississippi Homegrown Stories.” Walt is also a reporter and 4 p.m. news anchor at WJTV in Jackson. He lives in Brandon and is a Central Electric member. Contact him at walt@waltgrayson.com.



Wyatt Waters



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