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April 1998

# Discovering

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## SOUTHERN KENTUCKY



# SNOW STORM 98

# Appliances for Sale

Each year South Kentucky RECC supplies the Home Economics Departments of your local high schools, middle schools, and vocational schools with new electric appliances for use in student training. These appliances are scheduled to be exchanged for new appliances this month. Those being replaced will be sold to the public at special prices. Please contact the Home Economics teacher at the school nearest you if you are interested in purchasing any of these appliances.



## MODELS & PRICES

<i>1997 Appliances (white and almond) (All are Whirlpool brand)</i>	<i>Price*</i>	<i>Monthly Finance Payment**</i>
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Refrigerator (18 cu.ft.) Frost-free, special energy saver, adjustable wire shelves, 29-1/2" wide x 65-1/2" tall x 31-1/8" deep (handle included in dimensions.)	\$519.00	\$19.68
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Microwave oven, 0.8 cu.ft.	\$167.00	\$ 6.76
Microwave oven, 1.2 cu.ft.	\$188.00	\$ 7.53

\*Add sales tax to all stated prices.

\*\* (With approved credit, 10% down payment, and 36 monthly payments. See payment column above).



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## About the cover:

A tired worker pauses as he walks through an electric line right-of-way in almost knee-deep snow during power restoration efforts. Photo by Jeff Renner.

# Discovering

## SOUTHERN KENTUCKY

April 1998

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## ON THE COVER

### 8a Snow Storm '98

Photographs, facts, and figures of the worst outage situation in South Kentucky Rural Electric's 60-year history.



## FEATURE

### 13a Women in the Military

Read about Vertie Smith Bell, Elizabeth Wood Gibbs, Diane Kiser, Constance Lewis, Jean Prather, Virginia Ratliff, Gene Hieronymous Shepherd, and Dorothy Tohill — some of the local women who served their country during times of war.



## DEPARTMENTS

### 5a Money Talk

### 6a Healthy Advice

### 12a Safety Lines

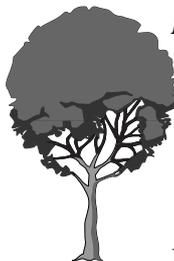
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# Look Before Leaping Into Utility Restructuring

by *Keith Sloan, General Manager & CEO, South Kentucky Rural Electric*

**A**s I follow the arguments of those who favor and those who oppose restructuring the electric utility industry, I find myself disagreeing especially strongly with an opinion voiced by some of those who want to change federal or state laws that regulate utilities.

This opinion is that change is inevitable, that deregulation of electric utilities is coming, and that we need to get on the bandwagon and quit blocking progress. That opinion says that deregulation has come to airlines, telephones, banking, and a number of other industries, and now it's the electric utility industry's turn.

I've got two problems with that argument. First, I don't like being pushed into something just because everyone else is doing it. Just because everyone else is doing something doesn't mean that it's right, or smart, or something you should do. Or, as most everyone's mom told them at least once, "If all your friends jumped off a cliff, would you?"

The second problem with that argument relates specifically to the electric utility industry. There are so many issues involved in the debate over restructuring electric utilities that no one knows what might happen. I'll go out on a limb and say that anyone who says absolutely that utility deregulation will or won't occur, doesn't know what they're talking

about. Right now there are simply no answers to questions like:

What would happen to your home electric bill if anyone could choose their supplier of electricity?

Who would be responsible for the reliability of all the electric lines and making sure the power keeps flowing?

Who would be charged for what kind of service?

A year or so ago electric utility deregulation did seem inevitable. Several states passed laws restructuring the industry, led by California and New Hampshire. New Hampshire has been dealing with questions about the financing of the new structure and California has slowed implementation of its plan because of unforeseen problems. The experience of those two states is probably one reason I haven't heard the inevitability argument used much lately.

The electric utility industry, while incredibly complex, works well. The smart thing to do is study this issue carefully and come up with ways to improve our electric pricing and service. That's the position that Kentucky's electric cooperatives, most of Kentucky's investor-owned utilities, and the state's legislative leaders advocate. It's a "look before you leap" kind of approach that I believe makes a lot more sense than assuming that what could either be a good, or bad, idea is inevitable.

**DSK**

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# Education Planning

Putting a child or grandchild through college is an expensive proposition. Some believe scholarships, grants, and student loans will foot these future costs. Others simply don't realize the tremendous expenses involved. The facts are that financial aid rarely covers the entire financial investment of a college education. To make matters even more challenging, tuition prices have been increasing annually at almost twice the rate of inflation over the past 10 years.

For the 1997-1998 academic year, the average annual cost of tuition, fees, and room and board is nearly \$7,500 at a four-year public school and more than \$19,000 at a four-year private institution, according to a report published by the College Board. Listed below are approximate annual costs (including tuition, fees, and room and board) for 12 colleges located in Kentucky.

Many factors must be considered when planning for college funding, and many options are available for investing and account registration. For example,

custodial accounts offer tax savings. If you register the account in your name, obviously you will pay taxes at your tax rate. If you register the account as a custodial account in the child's name, the IRS states that children under the age of 14 are allowed to receive \$650 of unearned income (such as interest or dividends) on a tax-free basis. An additional \$650 of unearned income is allowed to be taxed at the child's lower

**For the 1997-1998 academic year, the average annual cost of tuition, fees, and room and board is nearly \$7,500 at a four-year public school and more than \$19,000 at a four-year private institution.**

tax rate, and any additional unearned income over \$1,300 is taxed at the higher of the child's or the parents' marginal rate. After age 14, all income is taxed at the child's rate.

## College Costs in Kentucky

Berea .....	\$ 5,025	Morehead.....	\$10,550
Campbellsville ...	\$13,200	Northern .....	\$11,260
Cumberland .....	\$13,706	Transylvania .....	\$19,750
Eastern KY.....	\$10,611	University of KY .....	\$12,684
Georgetown .....	\$16,120	Univ. of Louisville ...	\$14,248
KY State .....	\$10,440	Western KY .....	\$11,257

(Source: College Board)

Putting securities in the child's name can affect how much financial aid the child may receive later on. Federal and college financial-aid formulas typically require children to contribute 35% of their savings annually to pay for college costs, whereas parents are expected to spend 5.65 percent of their holdings.

Key to Success: Start planning now to meet those future college expenses. By beginning a savings plan today, you can be earning interest on your savings, rather than paying interest on a college loan. Come see us today! **DSK**

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# An Early Start For Healthy Babies

Provided by the Lake Cumberland District Health Department

**T**he most important time for a developing fetus is between days 17 and 56 after conception. However, most women do not even find out they are pregnant until they are about eight weeks into the pregnancy. By the end of the eighth week after conception, and certainly by the end of the first trimester, any structural irregularities that will affect the fetus are already determined.

Some potential problems with the development of a child can be avoided before conception. Through a program at the Lake

Cumberland District Health Department, many women are finding out how to have the healthiest pregnancy possible. The program, Preconceptional Health, is available to any woman of childbearing age who may become pregnant in the future, but is currently not pregnant.

Nina Wilhelm, coordinator for the program, says, "By adopting a healthier lifestyle prior to pregnancy, a woman can improve her pregnancy outcome."

Women are counseled on the benefits of good nutrition and

a healthy diet, on the importance of lifestyle changes including those related to smoking, drinking, and drug use, and on their family, medical, and reproductive histories. In addition, women are advised about the importance of taking B-vitamin folic acid before becoming pregnant to prevent certain birth defects of the brain and spine, called neural tube defects.

For more information on the Preconceptional Health program, call the health department at 1-800-928-4416. Wilhelm and health educator Gina Sears are also available for community awareness programs and public speaking engagements.

The LCDHD is open to the general public and does not discriminate on the basis of sex, age, race, color, national origin, religion, or physical capability.

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AND COOLING COST**

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\$ 56.82 Cooling Cost  
\$ 174.98 Total

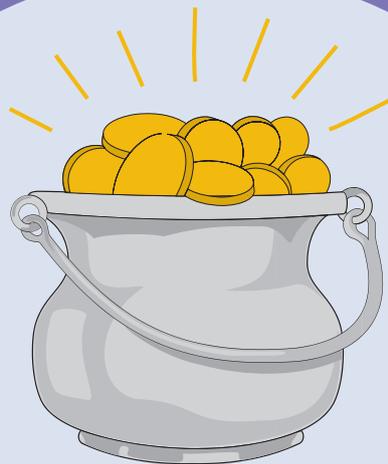


tim & Connie  
Armstrong

**1997 ANNUAL HEATING  
AND COOLING COST**

\$ 234.03 Heating Cost  
\$ 49.81 Cooling Cost  
\$ 283.84 Total

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For more information on finding your pot of gold, contact one of the Energy Advisors at your local South Kentucky Rural Electric office.

# SNOW STORM

The



This was just one of more than 100 broken poles in McCreary County.



The folks in the RECC, neighboring companies, labor. From left to right: from Pennyrite to SKRECC lineman



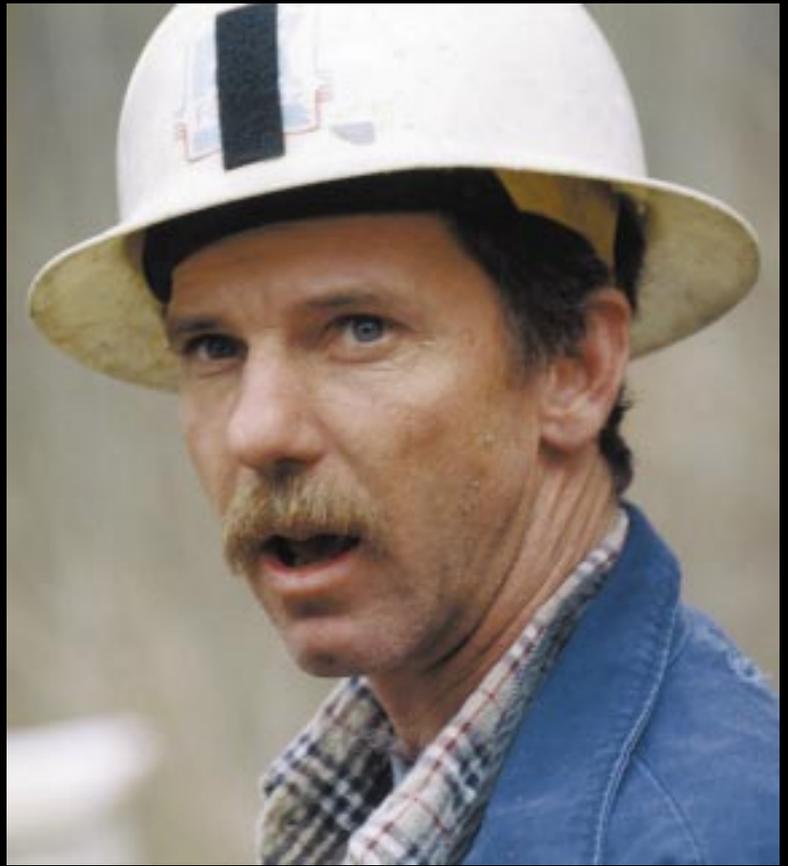
Left and right: More than wet snow turned our wonderland. By Saturday days after it had quit roads were still on

# 1998

## The Story in Pictures

Photos by Jeff Renner

field — About 300 workers, from South Kentucky  
ng utilities, and electrical and right-of-way contract  
ored to restore power to our devastated service area.  
ve right are: SKRECC lineman Robbie Miller, two men  
RECC in Hopkinsville, SKRECC lineman Dan Ware, and  
Steve Harris.



an 15 inches of heavy,  
r area into a winter  
day afternoon, three  
snowing, many major  
nly one lane wide.

# SNOW STORM 98

The Story in Pictures



This pole broke, but it didn't fall.



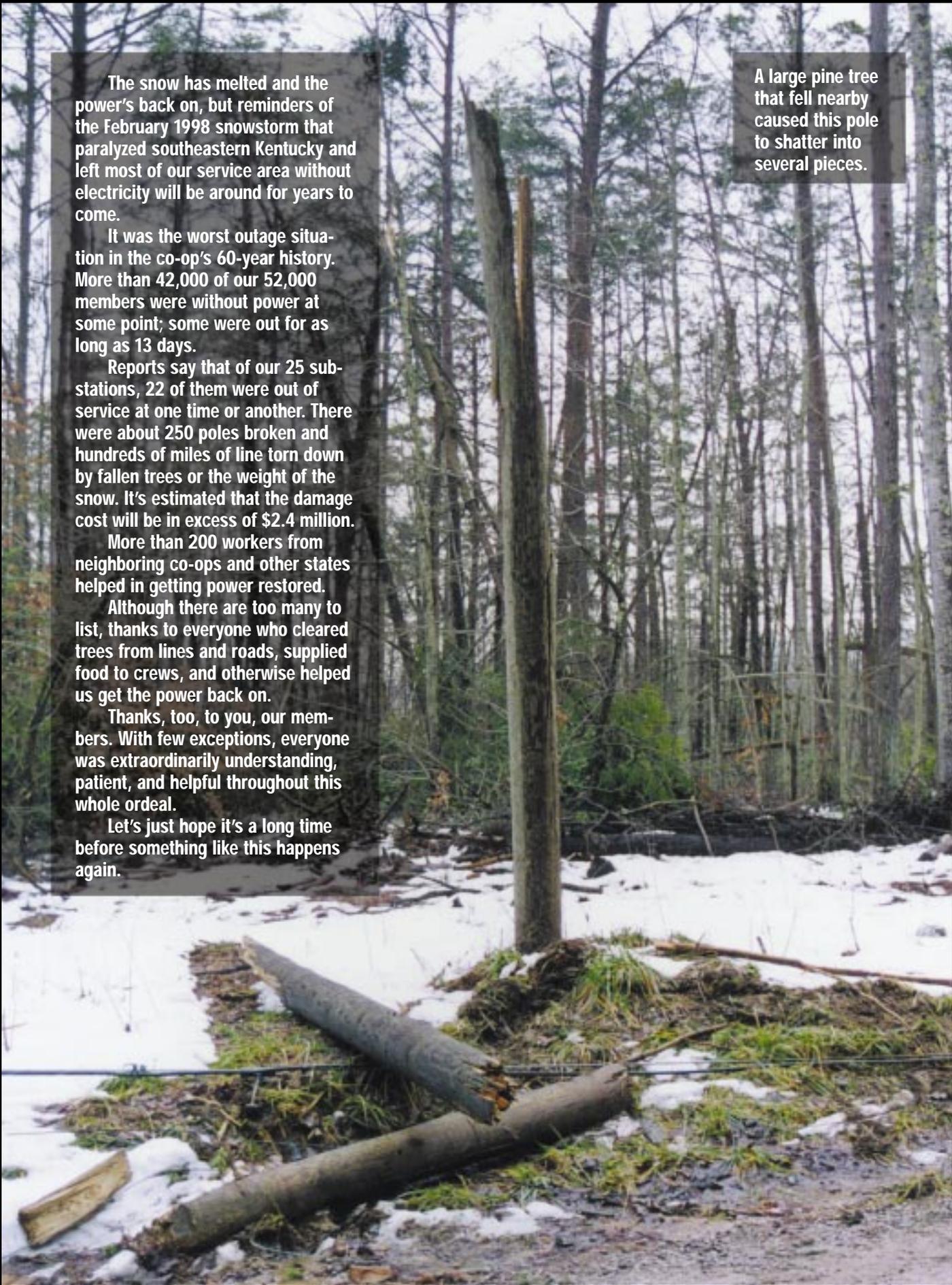
Warren RECC, headquartered in Bowling Green, brought their bucket/digger truck on tracks to aid in restoring power.

Even though our right-of-ways are well-maintained (generally about 15 feet on each side of the line), dozens of tall pine trees took several spans of line down in this photo, taken near Parmleysville in Wayne County.



SKRECC lineman Darrell Scruggs.





The snow has melted and the power's back on, but reminders of the February 1998 snowstorm that paralyzed southeastern Kentucky and left most of our service area without electricity will be around for years to come.

It was the worst outage situation in the co-op's 60-year history. More than 42,000 of our 52,000 members were without power at some point; some were out for as long as 13 days.

Reports say that of our 25 substations, 22 of them were out of service at one time or another. There were about 250 poles broken and hundreds of miles of line torn down by fallen trees or the weight of the snow. It's estimated that the damage cost will be in excess of \$2.4 million.

More than 200 workers from neighboring co-ops and other states helped in getting power restored.

Although there are too many to list, thanks to everyone who cleared trees from lines and roads, supplied food to crews, and otherwise helped us get the power back on.

Thanks, too, to you, our members. With few exceptions, everyone was extraordinarily understanding, patient, and helpful throughout this whole ordeal.

Let's just hope it's a long time before something like this happens again.

A large pine tree that fell nearby caused this pole to shatter into several pieces.

# Safety Around The House

**H**ere is a 10-point checklist for home safety:

## 1. Outlets

Replace missing or broken wall plates, and make sure they're protected by child safety covers if there are little ones in the house.

## 2. Cords

It's tempting to nail or staple cords to walls and baseboards to keep them out of the way. But if you puncture the cord, it can overheat and catch on fire.

## 3. Extension Cords

So many of us use extension cords as permanent plugs — and that's risky. Extension cords are meant to be used only temporarily. They're not sturdy enough for prolonged use.

## 4. Plugs

The third pin on the plugs of new appliances is there for a reason. It's a grounding pin. Never ever cut it off to fit into a two-prong outlet. Call an electrician and have your outlets updated.

## 5. Ground fault circuit interrupters

If you don't have one in your bathroom, drop everything and go buy one. GFCIs can help prevent electrocution. They interrupt the flow of power when they sense there is a problem.

## 6. Light bulbs

Did you know that each lamp in your house is designed for a light bulb with a specific wattage? If you put a 100-watt bulb into a socket designed for a 75-watt bulb, it could cause a fire. Check all your lighting fixtures today.

7. Water and electricity

You know this one: They don't mix. Take a second after you blow-dry your hair in the bathroom

to unplug the hair dryer. If it falls into the water, it can shock or electrocute anyone who touches it — even if it's turned off. Play it safe.

## 8. Circuit breakers and fuses

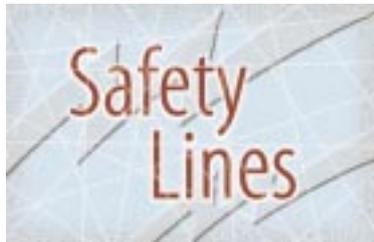
It's important to replace blown fuses and worn circuit breakers with the correct size. If you don't know the correct size, call an electrician.

## 9. Appliances

Have you ever gotten a shock from a kitchen appliance? It's a warning. Unplug it and replace it.

## 10. Entertainment and computer equipment

Protect the intricate parts of your expensive equipment by plugging it into a surge protector. The device helps prevent electrical surges from damaging your equipment. **DSK**



## Use Electric Lawn and Garden Tools Safely

**W**orking in the yard is a spring-time treat with lightweight electric tools that take a lot of the bending, stretching, and backache out of gardening. But they can be hazardous if you're not careful.

Keep these safety tips in mind this spring while you're planting, weeding, and cleaning up with electric tools:

- Never use outdoor power tools when it's raining.
- Don't allow children to operate the equipment.
- Don't clean, adjust, check, or lift equipment while it's plugged in.
- Wipe equipment clean with a dry cloth; never wash it with water.
- Look for the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label before purchasing a power tool; this label assures you that the equipment is approved for safety.
- While electric garden tools require little maintenance, it's a good idea to have them serviced by a qualified electrician every two to three years.
- Check equipment, including plugs and extension cords, before using it.
- Wear rubber boots to increase your protection if you're out when the garden is wet.
- Watch for buried cables and electric lines when using power tools to dig in your yard.
- Remove loose stones or debris from the lawn before mowing.
- Read and follow manufacturer's instructions before using your new tools.



# WOMEN IN THE MILITARY



BY GLORIA STANTON

*Above photo:  
Constance M. Lewis, who served as a  
pharmacist's mate, nurse's aide, and  
hospital corpsman during World War II.*

**R**OSIE THE RIVETER — SYMBOL OF WORLD WAR II working women. Yes, Rosie was a real person; in fact, she grew up in Science Hill.

As a young widow, Rose Monroe's job in an Ipsalanti, Michigan, aircraft factory was to pound rivets into B-24 and B-29 bombers.

Rosie and those like her were a link to something bigger, more complex; ongoing, but nothing new: women in military service.

Since the Revolutionary War, 1.8 million women have served our country in a military capacity. Deborah Sampson, disguised as "Robert Shirtleff," fought in the Continental Army that saw "Captain Molly" Corbin assume her husband's cannon post when he was killed. Clara Barton, who later founded the Red Cross, was a Civil War nurse. American women have served in a myriad of capacities to help keep the peace.

In honor of women's sacrifice and personal contribution,

the Women in Military Service for America Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery was dedicated October 18, 1997. Among those attending the dedication from Somerset was Jean Prather. It was her enthusiasm that sparked my interest in finding some area women who had served their country during times of war.

Since Rosie the Riveter was fresh on my mind, I first pursued other "Rosies." Loretta Fitzgerald Lattie spent two years at a defense plant during WWII. She worked as an artillery shell crimper and painter, but also with detonators, the tiny capsules in shell fuse heads that set off the ammunition.

"Once, a detonator exploded. It scared me! The metal casing blew fragments into my arms. The nurse got them out with tweezers, and I went right back to work, although I was a little leery of the next detonator."

Marie Row welded filaments into fluorescent light bulbs at a Westinghouse factory.

"There was a whole line of us welders. They put us where the need was in

the assembly line. The light bulbs were used extensively — on ships, in businesses, everywhere."

In the fall of 1944, Ella Page Strunk was living in Houston when she went to work for the Inspector of Naval Materials. She wrote travel and per diem claims for officers who inspected plants making war supplies in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.

"I liked my job very well, and somebody had to do it. I was pleased I could do something; my three brothers were in the service."

Elizabeth Wood Gibbs says, "At Christmas, 1943, events were not going well for the Allied Forces in Europe, nor in the Pacific." Her husband, Kenneth, was a Navy hospital corpsman on Guadalcanal, although she didn't know where he was at the time. "I had gone home to North Carolina to live with my parents for the duration. I was fortunate to be qualified and employed as one of two X-ray technicians under civil service at the new Moore Army General Hospital." Her work included training men to operate portable X-ray machines for mobile hospitals.

In my pursuit of women veterans, I found they had represented a network of activity, stateside as well as overseas, 400,000 strong during WWII.

Corporal Vertie Smith Bell served in the women's reserve of the Marine Corps, Department of the Pacific, San Francisco. A teletype operator, Vertie received military base messages that ran the gamut from troops being moved to discharge of military personnel.

"I told my grandchildren the teletype machine was the forerunner of the computer," Bell says with a chuckle. With a background in business typing, she "loved each minute of it; I wouldn't change anything."

Yet, other memories surface. "The war was a horrible thing to happen to our country," Bell says solemnly. "I had friends and neighbors who went down



*Gene Hieronymous Shepherd, Army Nurse Corps, WWII.*

with the Arizona."

Another stateside veteran is Constance Lewis, who enlisted in the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) during WWII. She served as a pharmacist's mate, nurse's aide, and hospital corpsman.

"The war was a harrowing experience; this was when the war in the Pacific was hottest." Patients were shipped in by train from Okinawa and the Pacific area for treatment of mental and psychological problems, surgery, orthopedics, lab work, diseases such as TB, and other pulmonary problems.

Beyond the stress of wartime patient care, Lewis was impressed and bolstered by the patriotism of famous people she saw active in the Navy, including movie stars Robert Montgomery, Buddy Ebsen, Robert Taylor, and Henry Fonda. Constance was chosen hostess for the visit of 15-year-old Shirley Temple.

Undoubtedly her most important contact was meeting her future husband, Richard Q. Lewis, wounded when a mortar exploded on Iwo Jima in February 1945.

Also a WAVE, Jean Prather served in the U.S. Navy during WWII, achieving Lieutenant, junior grade. She



*Jean Prather, WWII Navy veteran, proudly wears the Women in Military Service medal she received at the dedication of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial.*



**Elizabeth Wood Gibbs** (left), X-ray technician at Moore General Army Hospital, WWII.

received her officer's training at Smith College and subsequently served in the Office of Naval Officer Procurement in Pittsburgh. Jean also taught in a yeoman's school in Cedar Falls, Iowa, wrote orders for Naval Air Corps personnel in the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington, D.C., and was on the staff of the Commander of Naval Transport Service in Oakland, California.

Jean says, "I loved every minute in the Navy, everything I did. If I hadn't married, I probably would've stayed in."

"I was a yeoman in the Navy," says Virginia Ratliff. "I think they call it a pencil pusher." She worked for the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Arlington, Virginia, helping to determine eligibility for family allowances. "I wouldn't trade the experience for anything ... but I just wish everybody could know what the nurses did. What we did was so little."

Dorothy Tohill, an enlisted Army nurse, personally aided in the return of wounded soldiers. Based at Wendover, Utah, Dorothy volunteered for air evacuation during WWII. A Second Lieutenant with Air Medical Evacuation, she was in the crew that met planes carrying casualties from the European and Pacific theaters. The crew then transported the wounded by air to hospitals nearest their homes.

"I had 1,338 hours of flying time. Some of the flights were rough trips, especially over the Rockies. It took three days to cross the country in those prop planes. We stopped at Army bases along the way to refuel and the Red Cross fed the men."

While stationed in Honolulu, Tohill was aboard larger hospital planes on evacuation flights to Pacific areas, including the Philippines, Guam, Kwajalein, and Okinawa.

"The nurses were mostly a comfort to the soldiers," but also changed dressings, ran IVs, and gave injections. "I was concerned about these young men who had lost arms and legs. What would life mean for them?"

Tohill received a battle star for being in Okinawa while "pockets of battle" were still going on.

Another Army nurse finding herself in the thick of things was Gene Hieronymous Shepherd. She was first stationed at White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

"The Army took over the famous Greenbriar Hotel, turning it into a hospital for wounded American soldiers." In addition, "There was one ward for Ital-

ian prisoners of war and one for Germans," says Gene. "I carried a dictionary under my arm. The POWs were just patients," she says, "just like the Americans."

What made Shepherd, a public health nurse in Clay County, enter the military in the first place? "I heard radio pleas for RNs for military service. I felt guilty. If our American soldiers went into combat, the least I could do was to join the Army Nurse Corps and help care for the wounded. I felt it was my patriotic duty to go. When I was in Belfast, Ireland, there was bombing in the area. We nurses had to go to the wards and help patients put on helmets attached to the heads of their beds. One night we were alerted three times."

Of course, WWII wasn't the war to end all wars. Others have come and gone, among them the Vietnam War.

Diane Kiser, along with husband Danny, was sent to Long Bien, a large military post reservation north of Saigon. Army nurse corpsmen, they served there after the Tet Offensive in March 1968. In the 24th Evac, Diane, one of 7,500 American military women to serve in Southeast Asia, was in the maxillofacial



**Diane Kiser**, shown here holding a Vietnamese infant, served in the Army Nurse Corps.

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"The serviceman was very helpful and very pleasant."  
"I was happy that a real person answers your phone."

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unit. "We got people brought in directly by chopper. It was overwhelming at times, but nursing is a war zone anyway. A few times our post was hit, but not bad; there was a Viet Cong POW camp right next to us. We didn't know whether or not the VC would come."

Diane's duties include cleaning tracheotomies and stitches, redressing wounds, and tube-feedings. "Supplies were limited and we had to improvise; we made do. There was a horrendous loss of life and limb, and no time to grieve."

Says Diane, "The funny things are what you try to remember — not the horror of the war." With a smile she recounts the showers. "There was a wooden water tower. You'd pull the chain and, depending on the time of day, the water was cold, or scalding. You had to time the shower," because water would give out. "Being in Vietnam was like being in another world. You couldn't believe that it was real, that you weren't just on another planet."

Diane, now Health Ministries Coordinator at Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital, says of her Vietnam experience, "I couldn't have made it through a day without the Lord; my faith was a stabilizing factor, my foundation. I felt it was a ministry. I've never felt that nursing was just medicine and IVs but instead a ministry of presence; of listening, comforting, holding hands, crying. These young soldiers needed a support system."

Diane says, "I'd do it again. I didn't volunteer, but it was a valuable experience. I grew professionally and spiritually."

The Women's Memorial at Arlington exists to honor all U.S. women veterans. Approximately 250,000 of the 1.8 million women eligible have been registered thus far. At its dedication last fall, 36,000 women veterans converged on Washington, D.C. Presiding over the dedication was Retired Air Force Brigadier General Wilma L. Vaught, who has family ties to Pulaski County.

Local women veterans give a unanimous "thumbs up" to the memorial. Ratliff, who also attended the dedication, stated, "It was wonderful, just great."

Tohill says, "It's been a long time coming. I'm pleased it's under way. I'd like to visit there someday."

Shepherd's bags are packed. "I'm looking forward to seeing the Women's Memorial. I'm going to Washington this month."

DSK