

The Unique Power of American Independence



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER ALAN LESLEY

THE FOURTH OF JULY IS A FESTIVE DAY on which we celebrate our nation's independence with family and friends. Typically, it is not a day of quiet reflection; we spend a lot of energy having fun, and if we give any thought to our forbearers and their determined efforts to bring about our nation's independence, it's fleeting.

An Independent Spirit Is a Part of Our DNA

However, it is worth reflecting that this uniquely American spirit of independence remains part of our collective DNA. More than 200 years after the United States was formed and the Declaration of Independence was crafted, this sense of independence has served us well.

innovation is opening up more options and spurring greater efficiency across all forms of energy.

The Road to Energy Independence

The best news is this: Consumers have an important role to play on the road to energy independence. They don't have to wait for Democrats and Republicans to agree, or environmentalists and fossil fuel advocates to reach consensus. Consumers can help by taking action in simple, practical ways—insulating and caulking around windows, doors and electrical outlets; washing clothes in cold water instead of hot; replacing air filters; installing programmable thermostats; and using more energy-efficient appliances and home heating and cooling systems. Efficiency efforts cut costs for individual households, but the collective benefit to our country is even greater.

If we all work together to achieve increased energy efficiency and reduce our overall energy consumption, we can make even more progress on our road toward energy independence.

At Comanche Electric Cooperative, we want to be a resource and a partner in this effort. In addition to saving on your monthly power bill, some of these upgrades also could qualify you to receive cash back in the form of a rebate. Check out our ecoPOWR Rebate program at ceca.coop/energySafety/ecoPOWR.aspx, or call our member services department at 1-800-915-2533 for more information on how to qualify.



By working together, Americans can increase energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption to become less reliant on imported energy.

For example, more than 70 years ago, an independent streak inspired groups of farmers across America's countryside to band together and improve their quality of life. Aside from President Franklin Roosevelt's promise of federal aid in the form of low-interest loans and engineering expertise, rural Americans had little help getting electricity to their homes. So they did it themselves by pulling together and working cooperatively.

For the past 40-plus years, nearly every president since Richard Nixon has talked about the goal of U.S. energy independence—reducing our reliance on imported energy. Today, we still have a way to go, but we are closer to that goal than ever before. We are exporting more gas and importing less foreign fuel than at any other time in recent memory.

American ingenuity in the form of new technology and

Co-ops Provide Renewable Energy Resources

Electric co-ops across the country have been actively engaged in promoting renewable energy resources such as wind, solar, hydropower and biomass. Today, nearly 95 percent of the nation's 900-plus electric co-ops provide electricity produced by renewable sources, all playing a key role in powering rural America while fostering our nation's energy independence.

Recent advances in technology are transforming how we make and move electricity. Over time, these changes will greatly improve not only the efficiency but also the reliability of electric power.

So this Independence Day, as you gaze up at the fireworks lighting up the night sky, reflect on the enduring spirit of independence that is integral to our American character, and remember the ways you can contribute to our nation's energy independence.



Look closely at the top of each pole to see crews putting the finishing touches on almost a mile of tornado-damaged line—rebuilt in a single day!

After the Storm

BY SHIRLEY DUKES

AT APPROXIMATELY 5:10 P.M., Friday, May 8, an EF3 tornado touched down 3 miles south of Cisco, a small town of fewer than 4,000 people just north of Interstate 20 in Eastland County. The tornado, accompanied by hail, heavy rains and flooding, made its first descent at State Highway 206, and traveled about 8 miles northeast.

To our members in Eastland County whose power was disrupted by the storm, Comanche Electric Cooperative would like to say “thank you” for your patience and understanding as we labored to restore power to the area. The damage to our system was extensive, but thanks to our hardworking employees and the help of some well-placed community members, the bulk of the system was back up and running in record time.

After the storm, 584 CECA meters were without power, mostly because of structural damage to poles, wires and hardware. CECA employees made an effort to contact all members affected to inform them that efforts were being made to restore power by Monday morning. However, because of the dedication and hard work of CECA employees, all but two single-phase taps feeding north were replaced by Sunday night. On Monday, more poles were changed out, and by the end of the day, all meters were back on, except a few that serve a location too damaged to re-energize.

For those members who were not in the path of the tornado but suffered outages, we thank you also for your patience and understanding. CECA experienced myriad other weather-related outages in addition to the devastation in Cisco.

In addition to a number of individual outages, we had major outages at our Holder substation, which feeds east toward Brownwood and north toward May and Williams, interrupting power to another 1,634 meters. Also, the Leon metering point was affected with longer-than-normal outage times for 1,075 members. Because of the manpower necessary to rebuild a line, approximately two-thirds of our linemen were in the Cisco area, leaving only one-third to address the remaining issues over the remainder of the system.

“Since I’ve been here, I can’t think of another time when we’ve had such a persistent weather pattern that’s caused us this much trouble,” said Eddie Strube, director of outside operations. “I can’t tell you how proud I am of the hard work and dedication of our people who worked tirelessly in the rain and storms to restore power to so many people.”

As the storms continue to rage across the state, CECA line crews will, as always, be on call 24/7 in the event of outages and emergencies and will remain committed to keeping the lights on.

CECA

P.O. Box 729
Comanche, TX 76442

Operating in Brown, Callahan, Comanche, Eastland, Mills, Shackelford and Stephens counties

HEADQUARTERS

201 W. Wrights Ave.
Comanche, TX 76442

EARLY OFFICE

1801 CR 338
Early, TX 76801

EASTLAND OFFICE

1311 W. Main St.
Eastland, TX 76448

OFFICE HOURS

Comanche Office: Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Early Office: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., closed from 1 to 2 p.m.

Eastland Office: Tuesday and Thursday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

YOUR LOCAL PAGES

This section of Texas Co-op Power is produced by CECA each month to provide you with information about current events, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact Shirley at the Comanche office or at sdukes@ceca.coop.

Contact Us

CALL US

(325) 356-2533 local or
1-800-915-2533 toll-free

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The Cunningham Reunion

BY LUCCHESI GORDON

Unlike most recurring family reunions, the Cunningham reunion did not start small and grow. It started huge—and kept growing. When Captain James and Susannah Cunningham first gathered their scattered descendants in 1889, they already had more than 100 grandchildren from their 12 children. If you think that sounds like a big family, you should see it today.

If it's any other day of the year, the Cunningham land will be locked up and deserted, but on the second weekend of August, every inch of the place will be overflowing—with great-great-great-grandnieces, second cousins once removed and sons-in-law of daughters-in-law filling every available parking spot, lawn chair and scanty bit of shade.

The Cunningham reunion grounds outside Comanche are home to a family reunion that is not only staggering in size but

is also the longest continually running annual reunion in the state. The gathering regularly draws more than 200—and sometimes up to 600—relatives. They come not only from all over Texas, but also from other states and countries. Cunninghams gather from all over the globe to see distant relatives, meet new family members and celebrate their shared history.

That history goes back to 1839, when Captain Cunningham, his wife, Susannah, and their two small children left Alabama



Clockwise from top left: The Cunningham reunion in 1901. The “original 12” Cunninghams: Captain James and Susannah Cunningham’s 12 children. Two children play outside the Cunningham house. Captain James and Susannah Cunningham.



A group of men visits at a Cunningham reunion in the 1960s.

for the newly formed Republic of Texas. They settled first in Titus County then moved on to Bastrop, Travis and Williamson counties before they found home in what was at that time an unnamed portion of the Upper Leon River country—now Comanche, Texas.

By then it was 1855. Texas was one of the newer states in the union, and though it was cultured and populated in spots, it was barely settled in others. Comanche County was completely untamed Native American territory.

Despite Comanche raids and the other dangers of the new territory, the Cunninghams thrived, adding 10 more children to the family, bringing the total to nine boys and three girls. Cunningham and his sons led their neighbors in the defense against the Comanche, fighting in every battle that happened in that area. It was here that he was named a captain, when he was commissioned to lead a company of men to protect neighboring settlers.

Over the years, the Cunningham men faced the Comanche both in open battle and as rangers who, alone or in small groups, patrolled the area as guards. By the time the area was settled and (relatively) safe for newcomers, they were experienced fighters.

As one of the first five families in Comanche County, the Cunninghams were well established at a time when many were just arriving and struggling to begin a life in the new settlement. Captain Cunningham and “Aunt Susie,” as his wife was known, used their position to help their neighbors out whenever they could. In his book “Early Days in Central Texas,” F.M. Cross remembers that when newcomers arrived, the Cunninghams would pen up as many of their own milk cows as the new family needed to get started. During the summer, when Captain Cunningham would be butchering one of his cattle every two or three weeks, he would send for his neighbors to come and take all the beef they needed home with them. They were, Cross goes on to say, “as good neighbors as I ever lived by in my life.”

By 1889, Captain Cunningham and Susannah knew that



The oldest and youngest members in attendance at the 2012 reunion.

they would not live much longer. Their children were all grown, married and gone, spread all over the country producing families as large as their own, but the couple wanted to see them all in one place before they died. The task seemed impossible, but somehow they rounded up all 12 children, their wives, husbands and children for a reunion at the old home place in August 1889. Though Captain Cunningham and his wife did pass away shortly afterward, the reunion was held sporadically from 1889 until 1901, when the Cunningham clan made it a custom to gather in Comanche annually. From then until now—world wars, depressions and droughts notwithstanding—they have not missed a single year.

An Old-Fashioned Tradition

The reunion kicks off on Saturday night with a big hot dog cookout, a live band, and the excited greetings of relatives who have not seen each other since last year’s get-together.

“Used to, it was a sort of bring-your-own-sandwich affair. Families sort of stuck to their own small families,” remembers Janice Williams, a Cunningham descendant who now resides in Dallas. “Then we changed it to where it was a hot dog dinner. And people started bringing chips and some of those kind of side dishes and sharing them among other people, so it got a little bit more community-oriented.” Today you will find a group meal, with lots of mingling, visiting and meeting distant relations for the first time.

The next day, though, is when the reunion gets serious. Around 7:30 or 8 on Sunday morning, the whole clan turns out for chicken-fried steak, gravy and eggs cooked over a campfire and “cowboy coffee” brewed in a big, iron washpot. This alone, says Williams, is worth the trip. “It is just so good,” she says. “It is the best meal ever. I just crave it all year. It’s the best part of the whole reunion.” Breakfast is followed by a business meeting for the whole family to discuss finances, upkeep of the reunion grounds and other issues.

Throughout the weekend, many of the Cunninghams will

make individual pilgrimages to family sites in and around Comanche. The Newburg, Alban and Oakwood cemeteries house the plots of many branches of the family, and the Comanche County Historical Museum is teeming with proof of their impact on the area. Most important of all is the Cunningham House, the original residence of Captain Cunningham and Aunt Susie. The home was sold out of the family many years ago, but shortly before the 100th annual reunion, a family member bought it back and restored it to as close to its historic condition as possible.

A few things have changed, but for the most part, the Cunningham reunion is similar today to what it was originally. If there is water in Mercer's Creek, you are sure to find someone fishing and maybe even a few youngsters splashing around. Folks still bring swings to hang in the trees so they can swing and visit in the shade. Prizes are still given to the oldest and youngest members in attendance and the farthest-traveling guest. (This award has gone to visitors from locations as distant as China.)

There are modern additions, though. The children can usually be found jumping around in the inflatable bounce house,

through-Friday jobs, it was rescheduled to the second weekend of August.

The grand finale is a gigantic barbecue lunch around noon on Sunday. "They used to barbecue goats and cows and everything in the world," Williams says with a laugh, "but now it's just beef." After the barbecue winds down, people begin packing up and heading home before the afternoon becomes too sweltering.

Hooked on Family

Williams did not get to attend the reunion regularly until she was an adult, but she was fascinated by her genealogy early on. "I was hooked before that, even in high school," she says, "because they had pictures of the family, and there's so many stories about the family. There was a history, a sort of a genealogy pamphlet written about the family in 1919, and so I had that growing up. I had seen it, and it just fascinated me. I was hooked on family really early."

Today she follows that passion through extensive research on the family's history. She has been working on a new genealogy book that documents all known Cunningham descendants.

"So far, it's 350 pages long," she laughs. "Bigger than I thought it would be when I took it on."

The Cunningham reunion is a great time to meet new relatives, see ones you've known your whole life, eat a lot of good food and revisit your history—but for Williams, as for many Cunningham descendants, the reunion is important on a far deeper level.

"There is just something deep in my soul when I cross the Comanche County line that I just feel very connected to my past—not just my personal past, but ancestry—and owing something to those people, that I can hardly define," she says. "I need to understand that I'm part of a long line of history and be conscious of my place in it. And, you know, make sure it continues as it should. I found a great quote yesterday. It was in a song: 'One generation plants the trees while the other feels the

shade.' They planted the trees. They're the ones that made Texas possible, and I appreciate it. I get the shade. I get to live a much easier life because of what they did."

Special thanks to Janice Williams for providing so much helpful information for this article.

Every Family Has Its Oddball

IT SEEMS TO BE A LAW OF LIFE that every family must have at least one bizarre uncle. In the Cunningham clan, the man who lays claim to that title is J.R. Lewis, husband of Unity Lewis, one of the original 12 Cunninghams. In 1905, J.R. was in a wagon accident that injured him so badly he had to have one of his legs amputated. Unfazed, he purchased a beautifully engraved tombstone for his leg and buried it in the family plot in Newburg Cemetery, where it still rests today, next to his own grave.



while the adults are more likely to be staying cool under the new pavilion. In the beginning, the reunion was held on a certain date every year, regardless of what day of the week it fell on, but sometime after World War II, as people began to move from farming and ranching to more industrialized Monday-

Pole Parole

Attaching objects to poles puts lives on the line—and it's a crime

WHAT DO YARD SALE SIGNS, basketball hoops, deer stands, satellite dishes and birdhouses have in common? They're often found illegally attached to utility poles. But this isn't only a crime of inconvenience. Safety issues caused by unapproved pole attachments place the lives of CECA lineworkers and the public in peril.



Signs and objects illegally attached to utility poles can be a safety hazard for line crews that climb these poles.

support legs for deer stands, lights and carports. Not only do these attachments put line crews at risk, but also anyone illegally placing these items on poles comes dangerously close to energized power lines with thousands of volts of energy pulsing overhead. It's always wise to keep yourself and any structure at least 10 feet away from utility poles.

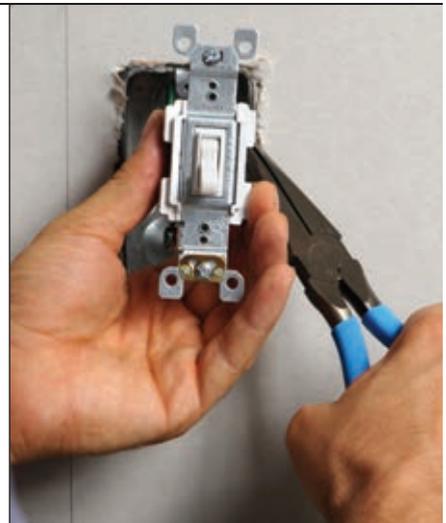
Unauthorized pole attachments also violate the National Electric Safety Code. With this danger in mind, many states make it a crime to attach any unapproved item to a utility pole.

Please help us keep our linemen—and our community—safe. Remove any unauthorized items attached to utility poles. Fixtures not belonging to the cooperative or another utility will be removed by CECA line personnel; the co-op is not responsible for any losses if an item is damaged or destroyed during removal.

Many people may wonder, "What's the big deal?" To them, it may seem like a simple matter of convenience to use a utility pole as a bulletin board or support structure. But to co-op line personnel, an obstruction on a pole is, indeed, a big deal.

Your co-op's line crews climb utility poles at all hours of the day and night, in the worst of conditions. Anything attached to utility poles can create serious hazards for them while they're on the job. Sharp objects like nails, tacks, staples or barbed wire can puncture rubber gloves and other safety equipment, stripping away critical protection from high-voltage electricity. Even a small nail partially driven into an electrical pole can leave a lineman vulnerable to electrocution.

Lineworkers regularly see poles used as community bulletin boards, satellite mounts and even



Have switches inspected by a professional as soon as you notice a problem.

Switch to Safety

WITH THE FLIP OF A SWITCH, we can light our world. But it's important to remember the powerful electric force that the switch controls and make sure it is operating safely.

Don't ignore these warning signs:

- ▶ The wall plate is hot to the touch.
- ▶ There is discoloration on or around the switch plate.
- ▶ Lights dim and/or flicker without apparent cause or when other appliances turn off or on.
- ▶ You hear crackling, popping or buzzing from a switch or outlet.
- ▶ Breakers trip or fuses blow when the switch is turned on.
- ▶ You detect an odor when a switch is used.
- ▶ The switch leans to one side or feels loose when operating.
- ▶ You experience a shock when operating the switch.
- ▶ The home is more than 40 years old and has aluminum wiring, but has not recently undergone a safety inspection by an electrician.

If any of these are happening in your home, have the electrical system inspected by a professional as soon as possible.