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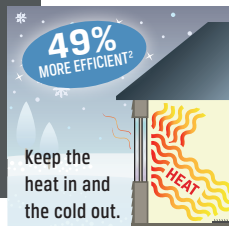
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Gov. Henry McMaster stands with South Carolina electric cooperative linemen at the 2024 Co-op Day at the State House.



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A legacy that counts

For his decades of dedicated service to South Carolina, Gov. Henry McMaster is the recipient of the 2026 Electric Cooperative Public Service Award, the highest honor given by the state's co-ops.

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When cats fly

Dad said he didn't want a cat—then along came stubborn Luigi, Jan A. Igoe reminisces in a classic column from 2014.



Henry McMaster, South Carolina's longest-serving governor, has been recognized by the state's co-ops for his legacy of service and state pride. Photo by Travis Bell.



tri-countyelectric.net

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 Friday, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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District offices closing, new call center opening

I WOULD LIKE to inform you of an important upcoming change in how Tri-County Electric Cooperative serves its valued members. Effective March 2, our district offices in Santee and Lower Richland will permanently close.

This decision reflects our continued commitment to improving service efficiency and accessibility for all members. Over the past several years, we've seen a significant shift in how members interact with the cooperative. Less than 5% of members now visit district offices, while the majority rely on our online and phone services to manage their accounts and for support.

To better meet these changing needs, we're excited to announce the establishment of a new in-house Member Service Call Center, staffed by our knowledgeable and friendly member service team. This enhancement will ensure you continue to receive prompt, professional assistance by phone and online. Our representatives currently handle more than 7,000 calls per month, and this new center will further strengthen that level of service.

While our service strategy is evolving,

our commitment to quality and member satisfaction remains steadfast. We understand that transitions can be challenging, but these updates will allow us to serve you more effectively—anytime, anywhere.

For members who prefer in-person assistance, our St. Matthews headquarters will remain open, with expanded office hours:

- ▶ Monday–Thursday: 7:30 a.m.–5 p.m.
- ▶ Friday: 8 a.m.–1 p.m.

You can also access your account, make payments, apply for service, or report outages 24 hours a day, seven days a week through our convenient online and phone options.

If you have any questions or concerns about these upcoming changes, please don't hesitate to contact our Member Service team (877) 874-1215. We sincerely appreciate your understanding, support and continued trust in Tri-County Electric Cooperative.

Chad T. Lowder

CHAD T. LOWDER
 Chief Executive Officer

Member service options

By Phone: (803) 874-1215 or toll-free (877) 874-1215

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Rebecca Fogle of Santee (right) was ready to take Tri-County Electric lineman, Josh Shealy, home after she registered at the co-op's headquarters.



Faye Coker and Violet Lovejoy of Elloree left the Santee office with their member gifts.

PHOTOS BY JOSH P. CROTZER

Getting 'mower' from the co-op

Tri-County Electric holds annual meeting of members

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

FRED STABLER lives within the Calhoun Hills Golf Complex in Saint Matthews, so he has to make sure his lawn is well taken care of. Fortunately, Stabler now has the same John Deere ZTrak riding mower that is used to cut the fairways by his home.

Although, he might not be the one doing the cutting.

"I'll go from my brother-in-law to my wife doing our lawn," Stabler says. "She loves it, and she's excited about this."

Stabler was the grand prize winner of Tri-County Electric Cooperative's Annual Meeting drawing on Nov. 15, after taking advantage of the drive-thru registration

just a little over a mile from his home up Old State Road.

Perhaps for next year's annual meeting, Stabler can ride through on his new mower.

Stabler was one of 2,983 Tri-County Electric members who registered for the co-op's 2025 Annual Meeting. The co-op welcomed members to its headquarters, the Richland District office and the Santee District office over a four-day period.

Members in District 3 also reelected Jacqueline S. Shaw to Tri-County Electric Board of Trustees.

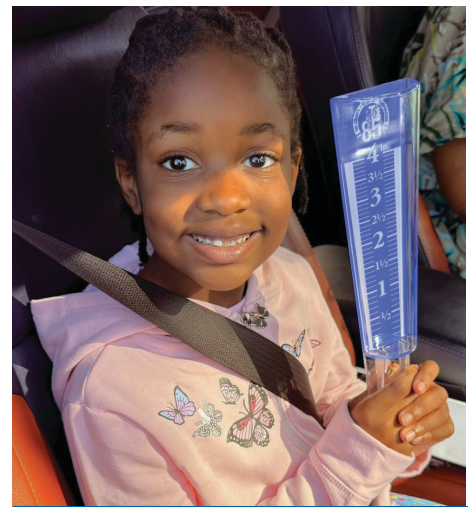
All registered members received a \$25 bill credit and a rain gauge.



Fred Stabler, on his new riding lawn mower, was one of 14 door prize winners of Tri-County Electric's Annual Meeting drawings.



TCEC's Bykiia Frederick got to wish Brent Hendricks of Swansea, with his wife, Phyllis, a happy 70th birthday while he drove through registration in Saint Matthews.



It was a sunny day, but Allison Ben, 7, was ready to use the 85th Anniversary rain gauge her mom, Diane, received at registration.

Connected homes: The power of what's plugged in

OUR HOMES ARE CHANGING, and so is the electric grid. Across South Carolina and the U.S., more households are becoming “smart” and connected. From thermostats that adjust automatically to electric vehicles that charge overnight, the devices we plug in are becoming intelligent, flexible and increasingly central to how we use and even produce electricity.

This growing network of connected devices creates new ways for electric cooperatives and their members to work together to keep power reliable and affordable.

WHAT IS A CONNECTED HOME? A connected home is one where everyday appliances and devices can communicate with each other, you or even your electric co-op. These could include thermostats that adjust to your patterns and preferences, water heaters that operate when electricity is cheaper, home batteries that store solar-generated power for later use or air-source heat pumps that efficiently heat and cool your home.

Each of these tools can help you use energy more efficiently. And when they are managed effectively, or when many homes coordinate and balance their energy use together, they can also help your co-op keep power flowing reliably and affordably for the entire community.

THE POWER YOU DON'T SEE You might have heard the phrase “behind the meter.” This simply refers to energy equipment that operates on your side of the electric meter that you own or control. This could include solar panels, battery storage systems or connected devices such as electric vehicle chargers or smart thermostats.

Individually, they may seem small, but together they can make a big difference. If hundreds of water heaters slightly delay heating during a peak time of day (when electricity use is high), the co-op can avoid purchasing power at a higher cost, which helps keep rates lower for members. If home batteries store solar-generated energy during the day and release it back to the grid at night, it helps balance the overall supply and demand of electricity.

HOW CONNECTED DEVICES HELP THE GRID Each day, our electric grid must maintain a perfect balance to match the amount of electricity generated with the amount we are using—all in real time.

Connected devices give electric co-ops powerful new tools to help manage this complex balancing act. Traditionally, electricity use was simple: Flip a switch, and power flows instantly. But today, many devices can shift when and how they use energy, also known as load flexibility. Load flexibility



Connected devices such as smart thermostats can help you use energy more efficiently. When many homes coordinate and balance their energy use together, connected devices can also help your co-op keep power flowing reliably and affordably for the entire community.

allows you and your co-op to better align energy use during times when electricity is more affordable, without sacrificing comfort or convenience.

THE COOPERATIVE ADVANTAGE Electric co-ops are led by the members they serve, aka *you*. That means co-ops can design connected home programs that work for your community, not Wall Street. Members who participate can often earn bill credits or incentives, and every member benefits from lower peak costs and improved reliability.

Contact your local electric co-op or visit its website to learn more about programs for connected devices and additional ways you can save energy (and money!). —JENNAH DENNEY

How bright is this bulb?

Confused about how many lumens your new bulb should be to match the brightness of that 60-watt incandescent that finally burned out? Here's the answer.

		Lumens (brightness)
Watts (power)	150 W	2,600 lm
	100 W	1,600 lm
	75 W	1,100 lm
	60 W	800 lm
	40 W	450 lm

Estimates based on typical incandescent bulbs. SOURCE: U.S. FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

energy efficiency tip

When shopping for new light bulbs, know the difference between lumens and watts. Lumens measure the amount of light produced by the bulb. Watts measure energy consumption. Energy-saving LEDs come in a variety of colors and brightness levels and last 15–25 times longer than incandescent bulbs.

SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV



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DISCOVER
South Carolina



DANCING PAST DOUBT

How an Upstate performing group helps seniors find their rhythm

BY LINDSEY BECKWORTH
PHOTOS BY
MATTHEW FRANKLIN CARTER

THE DANCE INSTRUCTOR WALKS THE GROUP through the steps, explaining terms as she goes. For sugar, you twist your legs a little. For step-ball-change, pretend you're a rocking chair. Behind her, senior adults stand in two rows, watching closely, trying to keep up.

"I'm looking at your feet," 78-year-old Jim Wentink tells the instructor. He points to his own. "That's not happening here."

The instructor wants to see everyone's jazz hands, and Wentink throws up his arms. Stiff, like a criminal surrendering to the cops. Except for one difference. The smile on Wentink's face says he's having the time of his life.

On an August morning, Wentink is one of 20 hopefuls vying for a spot in the Anderson Senior Follies, an Upstate performing arts group for adults 55 and over.

Many onstage today have followed the Follies for years. They attended a past performance or have friends who, after a little cajoling, convinced them to give it a try. Some are here because tragedy—an illness or the loss of a spouse—reminded them that life is short. Auditioning "is a bucket-list item for me," says 66-year-old breast cancer survivor Diana McMahan.

She's not sure she'll make the cut, though. Wentink doesn't have high hopes either. Afterward, in the auditorium lobby, they point out their deficiencies. Where they messed up. What they could have done better.

They don't yet know that they need more than talent to win a spot in the Follies. Just as with talent, some people are born with this special something, while others have to work hard to develop it.

A safe place to shine

The Follies debuted in 1989 as an outreach of Anderson University and has since grown into a yearly production anticipated by thousands of loyal fans. In March, during the show's four-day run, the parking lot outside Henderson Auditorium fills with branded buses featuring the names of area churches and assisted living facilities.

For the many seniors in the audience, what they see onstage is often "counter to what they thought of themselves and to what they thought seniors are capable of doing," says David Larson, dean of the South Carolina School of the Arts at Anderson University and founder of the Follies. "That's the power of this thing."



◀ Director Mary Nickles looks for the best of performers, and attitude can count more than talent.

◀ Opposite, clarinetist Jim Wentink, 78, is discovering new talents and having the time of his life.

▼ Diana McMahan, 66, checked off a bucket-list item when she auditioned for the Follies.

When director Mary Nickles took the helm of the Follies in 2019, she expected to run the group like she had other shows. *This should be the best of the best*, she thought. As her first season progressed, though, she realized the best sometimes takes a while to emerge. What if the group wasn't just a place where the best came to shine? What if it were a ministry—a place where seniors came to discover what their best could be?

With this new goal in mind, Nickles adjusted her approach. Now, before auditions, she chats with each person and asks questions. *How did you find out about the Follies? What are you interested in?*

These conversations reveal attitude, which, for Nickles, matters just as much as talent.

Finding your rhythm

“Even if your heart is happy, if your face is not, it brings us all down,” Nickles reminds the cast every year during the season kickoff meeting.

On a misty September day, Wentink and McMahan sit with their new castmates in a wide circle of padded chairs inside the church social hall that serves as a rehearsal space.

They laugh. They smile. They have no idea what's coming.

Even in a group with more than 50 members, it's hard to hide from Nickles. Sooner or later, she'll come for your comfort zone.

“I think Mary forgets we're senior citizens sometimes,” says 73-year-old Follies veteran Beverly Robinson. When she joined the Follies, she never dreamed she could handle a speaking role or a tap number. But Nickles believed Robinson could. So Robinson did.

“I've never done anything like this before,” McMahan says after receiving her assignments. The line dance she's in should be a piece of cake. But the costumes she'll be working on? It's the most complex project she's tackled in her 45 years as a



seamstress. Even still, her happy heart radiates from her face.

Wentink is a clarinetist who doesn't consider himself a singer. But Nickles sees his potential, so Wentink's up for learning something new.

Nickles never asks anyone if they think they can handle an assignment before she gives it to them. She assumes. Her “bull-in-a-china-shop” approach to casting may get some headshaking at first, but this group has enough history with Nickles to know she's usually right.

At the end of each season, when the crew strikes the stage, they sweep up the shattered bits and pieces of the cast's self-imposed limits, too. When the final curtain falls on this performance, McMahan, Wentink and the rest of the newbies will understand what seasoned Follies members already know:

Growth, at any age, is just like dancing. One step. Then another.

Even if it feels awkward at first, keep going. With the right attitude, finding the rhythm can be part of the fun. ☺

GET THERE

This year's Follies performance, “The Last Resort,” will take the stage March 12–15, 2026, at Anderson University's Henderson Auditorium. For tickets, visit andersonseniorfollies.org.

Crowd-pleasing meals

BY BELINDA SMITH-SULLIVAN

SEAFOOD MAC AND CHEESE

SERVES 8-10

- 1 pound cavatappi pasta or mini penne
- 1 pound lump crabmeat, drained and picked over
- 1 pound small (bite-sized) shrimp, peeled, deveined and tails removed
- 8 ounces raw lobster meat, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 tablespoon Old Bay or favorite seafood seasoning, divided
- 2 cups grated Gruyere cheese
- 2 cups grated sharp cheddar (1 cup white and 1 cup yellow)
- 2 cups grated fontina cheese
- 1 cup grated Parmesan, divided
- 7 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 4 cups milk
- 2 cloves garlic, whole
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 sprigs thyme (optional)
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- ¼ cup sherry (optional)
- ¼ cup plain breadcrumbs



GINA MOORE

Looking for easy, cost-effective recipes for a large gathering, potluck or church event? These recipes can be made ahead, require little effort and are guaranteed to minimize the stress of entertaining!

Cook pasta according to package instructions. In a large bowl, combine seafood and season with ½ tablespoon Old Bay seasoning. In another large bowl, combine Gruyere, cheddar, fontina and half of the Parmesan cheese. When pasta is done, drain and return to pot and toss with 1 tablespoon butter to prevent pasta from sticking together. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with 2 tablespoons butter and set aside. In a saucepan over medium-low heat, add milk, garlic, bay leaf and thyme. Warm until milk starts to steam and slightly simmer, about 10 minutes. Do not allow it to boil! Remove from heat and let the flavors infuse. Meanwhile, in a large skillet over medium heat, add remaining 4 tablespoons butter and flour. Cook, stirring, for 3-4 minutes. Do not let brown. Strain milk and whisk into the roux to avoid lumps. Continue to cook,

stirring constantly, until thickened, about 5 minutes. Stir in remaining Old Bay, pepper and sherry and remove from heat. Add 2 cups of cheese mixture and stir until melted and smooth. Taste and adjust seasoning. Add drained pasta to roux and stir well.

Layer half of the pasta mixture into the prepared dish and sprinkle with half the seafood mixture and half the remaining cheese mixture. Repeat with another layer. Loosely cover with foil (so foil is not touching the top of cheese layer) and bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes. While baking, in a small bowl, mix breadcrumbs with remaining Parmesan. Remove casserole from oven and sprinkle with breadcrumb mixture. Return to oven and bake until breadcrumbs are golden brown and edges of casserole are bubbly. Remove from oven and let rest at least 10 minutes before serving.



GWENAELE VOT

THREE-MEAT SPICY CHILI

SERVES 8-10

- 1½ tablespoons canola oil
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 jalapeño, minced
- 2 poblano peppers, chopped
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 5 large cloves garlic, minced
- ½ pound sirloin steak, trimmed and cut into ¼-inch cubes
- 1 pound ground beef
- ½ pound bulk hot Italian sausage
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose seasoning
- 1½ tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 1 15-ounce can fire-roasted diced tomatoes
- ½ cup tomato paste
- 2 cups beef stock
- 1 15-ounce can pinto beans, with juice
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans, with juice
- Grated cheddar cheese, sliced scallions, sliced jalapeños or sour cream, for garnish as desired

Heat oil in a large stockpot over medium-high heat. Add bell pepper, jalapeño, poblanos and onion and sauté until tender, about 7 minutes. Add garlic and cook an additional minute. Add steak, and brown. Add ground beef and sausage, breaking up with a wooden spoon, and cook thoroughly until nicely browned, 7-10 minutes. Add seasoning, chili powder, cumin and oregano, and cook for 1 minute. Add tomato sauce, diced tomatoes and tomato paste, and stir for 2 minutes. Stir in beef stock. Lower heat and simmer for 2 hours. Stir in beans 30 minutes before end of cooking time. Serve with your choice of garnish.



CHEF'S TIP Enjoy great grated cheese. Pre-grated cheeses contain anti-caking additives that prevent easy melting and add a grainy texture to the finished dish. Freshly grated cheeses melt more smoothly without clumping or graininess, and they have a richer and fresher taste.



KAREN HERMANN

BAKED SAUSAGE ZITI

SERVES 8

- 1 pound ziti pasta
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, room temperature
- Olive oil
- 1½ pounds bulk Italian sausage or links
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3–4 garlic cloves, minced
- 32 ounces marinara sauce, store-bought or homemade
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 cup ricotta or pecorino Romano cheese
- 2 cups freshly grated mozzarella cheese
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- Fresh chopped basil, for garnish

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with cooking spray. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil on medium-high heat. Cook ziti according to directions until al dente but still a little firm (ziti will finish cooking in the oven). Drain pasta and toss with butter to prevent pasta from sticking together. Set aside.

Heat 1–2 tablespoons oil in a very large skillet over medium-high heat. Crumble sausage into skillet. (If using sausage links, remove from casing and crumble.) Cook sausage until brown; drain and set aside. Add 1 tablespoon oil to pan and sauté onions until tender. Add garlic and cook an additional minute. Return sausage to pan and add pasta, 2 cups marinara sauce, Italian seasoning and red pepper flakes; mix well.

Cover the bottom of the baking dish with 1 cup marinara, then spread pasta/meat mixture evenly over top. Add remaining sauce. Dot the top with ricotta and cover evenly with mozzarella. Bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes until warmed through. Remove from oven and turn on oven broiler. Sprinkle top with Parmesan cheese and place under broiler for 2–3 minutes to brown. (Watch carefully so it does not burn.) Remove from oven and allow to cool slightly. Sprinkle with basil before serving.



IT'S A MATTER OF TASTE.

SC RECIPE IS SPONSORED BY SC DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



IULIA NEBRYGAILOVA

EASY OVEN-BARBECUED CHICKEN

SERVES 8+

- 8 chicken drumsticks
- 8 chicken thighs
- 1 cup ketchup
- ½ cup white vinegar
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
- 1½ tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon dry mustard
- 2 teaspoons smoked paprika

Preheat oven to 400 F. Wipe chicken parts with paper towel and place in a large, rimmed baking pan lined with foil. In a medium bowl, combine ketchup, vinegar, sugar, butter, salt, pepper, Worcestershire, mustard and paprika, and mix well. Pour sauce evenly over chicken and cover baking pan with foil. Bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes. Remove foil and brush chicken with barbecue sauce in pan. Bake 30 minutes, uncovered, until temperature on an instant-read thermometer indicates 165 F. Serve with garlicky potato salad (see recipe below) or your favorite side.

GARLICKY POTATO SALAD

SERVES 10–12

- 4 pounds small baby red potatoes, cut in half
- 8 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 3 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 2 teaspoons fresh ground black pepper, divided
- ½ garlic bulb, minced
- 4 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ½ cup fresh chopped chives
- ½ cup fresh chopped parsley

Preheat oven to 400 F. Place potatoes on a large baking pan; drizzle with 4 tablespoons oil, 2 teaspoons salt and 1 teaspoon pepper. Toss to coat and roast for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and stir; roast another 30 minutes until lightly browned. Transfer to a large bowl.

In a small bowl, whisk together garlic, vinegar, 4 tablespoons oil, 1 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon pepper. Pour over potatoes and toss well to coat. Sprinkle with chives and parsley and toss well. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Doing the math on new appliances

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Q Should I upgrade my appliance?

A Before you hand over your hard-earned money to buy a new appliance, here's how to choose one that will help you save money over time.

Keep in mind that not all new appliances are high-efficiency, and not all old appliances are inefficient. The less efficient your current appliance, the more you will save with an upgrade. The yellow EnergyGuide label on new appliances shows the yearly energy cost, kilowatt-hour electricity use and Energy Star logo, if certified.

Let's look at some examples to see how costs and savings stack up.

Refrigerators have seen major efficiency improvements over the years. New refrigerators use up to 73% less



To improve the efficiency of your washer, run it with cold water.

energy than 1970s models and about a third less than 20-year-old models.

My mom likes to proudly show off her 1980s refrigerator. Based on the typical energy use of these models, we can estimate that it costs her about \$280 a year to operate her old fridge. Now, new Energy Star-certified refrigerators start at \$500, with yearly energy costs ranging from \$38 to \$122. So if Mom buys a new Energy Star-certified refrigerator for \$1,000 with a \$100 yearly energy cost—saving her \$180 per year—it will pay for itself in about 5½ years.

New Energy Star-certified clothes washers and dryers are also more efficient than older models. Use the Energy Star Product Finder at energystar.gov to compare products.

I recently bought a new **washing machine** when my old front-load machine died. I was considering a top-load machine. But when I compared Energy Star-certified top loaders to front loaders, I changed my mind. Energy Star-certified front loaders use about 50% less energy and water than top-load agitator washers and about 25% less energy and water than top-load impeller washers that don't have an agitator.

My new washer cost \$698. Its estimated yearly energy cost, based on six

loads of laundry a week (whew!), is \$15. Meanwhile, similar non-Energy Star-certified models cost \$48 per year. My washer didn't cost much more than non-Energy Star models upfront and will help me save over time.

Then I had to decide whether to buy the matching **dryer**. My dryer was functional but had features I didn't like—not to mention, its estimated annual energy cost was more than \$131.

The new matching Energy Star-certified dryer would cost \$698, and my estimated annual energy cost would be \$84.98. With a savings of about \$46 per year, the dryer would take 15 years for the savings to cover the price. That's a long time and not worth the cost.

Of course, you can improve your energy efficiency whether you upgrade your washer and dryer or stick with your older models: Wash in cold water, don't over-dry clothes and clean your lint trap between every load.

Let's consider one more appliance equation.

Just like the light bulbs in your home, **LED televisions** are more efficient.

Energy Star-certified televisions are 34% more efficient than conventional models. If you have an LED television, swapping to an Energy Star model is more efficient, but it might not make up for the cost of a new TV. Instead, check the efficiency settings on your TV or buy a smart power strip that turns off other connected devices when not in use.

Whatever appliance you are upgrading or replacing, make an informed decision by comparing the cost of operation and shopping for Energy Star models to help lower your electric bill. ☺

MIRANDA BOUTELLE writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.



PHOTOS BY MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

Deciding whether to buy a new appliance is a balancing equation. You may spend more on energy if you buy a new fridge and hook your old one up in the garage, but maybe you save by buying groceries in bulk. It pays to do the math before you buy.

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Why I ♥ my co-op (use additional paper as needed!):

A legacy



TRAVIS BELL

that counts

MANY TEENAGERS WANT TO BE ROCK STARS, professional athletes or celebrities when they grow up. Henry McMaster had other plans.

As early as high school, the Columbia native had his sights set on becoming governor. By college, he began planning to seek the job one day.

Growing up in the shadow of the South Carolina State House, McMaster was never far from politics. His father, a revered attorney, served in the state House of Representatives, and the family ran in social circles full of public servants. He developed a deep reverence for South Carolina, its history and the political figures who have shaped its course.

“It seemed like they were doing something that counted,” McMaster says now. “I thought about it a lot.”

Decades later, McMaster, now 78, has made an impact of his own. After following in his father’s footsteps to law school and then private practice, McMaster has served as South Carolina’s top federal prosecutor, attorney general, lieutenant governor and now governor—a resume few politicians in state history can boast.

As South Carolina’s 117th and longest-serving governor, McMaster has navigated the COVID-19 pandemic, led the state’s response to several major hurricanes, worked with the Legislature to raise teacher pay and overseen the statewide deployment of broadband internet infrastructure.

The pro-business Republican has also helped usher in an era of explosive economic growth since he took office in 2017, recruiting nearly 100,000 new jobs and \$53 billion in capital investment.

Those accomplishments and more help explain why South Carolina’s electric cooperatives recently voted to recognize McMaster with their highest honor, the Electric Cooperative Outstanding Public Service Award.

“His love for the state—and the people in it—pours out of him. He can’t contain it,” says John Frick, senior vice president for public policy at The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina. “People rally to that passion, and rural South Carolina is better today because of it.”

A closer examination of McMaster’s legacy, bolstered by nearly a dozen interviews with the governor’s current and former colleagues, employees and advisers, reveals more about the lessons and state pride that sparked McMaster’s rise and fuel his service.

Trusting the process

If McMaster’s career has a single origin, it was the time he spent as a boy at his father’s law office in downtown

From hurricanes to broadband to the economy, Gov. Henry McMaster’s longstanding leadership earns the Electric Cooperative Outstanding Public Service Award

BY AVERY G. WILKS

Columbia. There, surrounded by case files and law books, McMaster fell in love with the legal profession.

McMaster’s father, John Gregg McMaster, was the kind of trial attorney other lawyers flocked to the courthouse to watch. Known for his enthusiasm and presence, the elder McMaster enraptured juries all the way until his final trial at age 93.

But to his son, he always insisted he owed his courtroom success to his exhaustive preparation, not the punchy arguments he delivered for the judge and jury.

“You win law cases in your office back at the law firm,” McMaster recalls his father saying. “You don’t win them in the courtroom.”

The lesson has shaped McMaster’s approach to every legal case, policy challenge, ethical dilemma and emergency ever since.

Current and former employees describe the governor’s decision-making process as hands-on and intense. On decisions big and small, McMaster carefully studies the law, quizzes experts and then peppers his advisers with questions and follow-ups until there is nothing left to learn. He often carries a stack of briefing documents, legal pads, news clips and court briefs—research that helps him decide whether to declare an emergency, veto a bill or grant clemency to a death row inmate.

“He reads everything, absorbs everything, saves everything,” says Thomas Limehouse, who worked nine years for McMaster as the top lawyer in the governor’s office.

The process can take days. But it ends with the governor confident he has left no stone unturned.

That confidence is important when making difficult and divisive decisions. Take, for instance, how McMaster withstood criticism from the press and other politicians in the early days of the pandemic. He was one of the last governors in the country to issue a work-or-home order and the first to reopen a few weeks later, in part because of his study of the state constitution’s limits on executive power.

At some point, McMaster concluded the Palmetto State is the best place on earth, and no one has been able to convince him otherwise.



"You're never going to get away with the easy answer, the politically expedient answer," says former McMaster spokesman Brian Symmes. "He wanted more. ... Nobody is making a more informed decision than him."

South Carolina exceptionalism

It took a while for McMaster to reach the governor's office. He suffered setbacks early and often, partly because he was willing to take on longshot runs for the U.S. Senate in 1986 and lieutenant governor in 1990 at a time when it was difficult for Republicans to win statewide elections.

After stints as state GOP chairman and attorney general, he failed to make it out of a crowded Republican primary in his first run for governor in 2010. Eventually, courtesy of his election as lieutenant governor in 2014 and then-Gov. Nikki Haley's resignation to become U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in 2017, McMaster reached the job he wanted from the start.

Talk with McMaster for any length of time, and his infatuation with the state he has now led for the better part of a decade—its people, its history, its natural resources—becomes clear. At some point, he concluded the Palmetto State is the best place on earth, and no one has been able to convince him otherwise.



It comes up at press conferences, at campaign stops, in recruiting pitches to foreign business executives and at high school graduation ceremonies.

"If he could coin the term 'South Carolina exceptionalism,' he would," says longtime chief of staff Trey Walker.

McMaster's reverence for South Carolina runs as deep as his roots here. Both sides of McMaster's family have lived in South Carolina for generations. He can trace their exploits in the history books he's so fond of reading, often in the quiet hours of the morning before his wife, Peggy, or their English bulldogs have risen.

Several worn-out copies of Walter Edgar's *South Carolina: A History*, sticky notes poking out of the sides, speak to the governor's penchant for studying the state's past, particularly its key role in deciding the American Revolutionary War.

His travels throughout the state to visit relatives, stump for campaigns and work on legal cases have only deepened his encyclopedic knowledge. His employees have grown to expect the detours he makes to stop at historic sites on the way back to the office. McMaster hops out of the vehicle and takes on the role of unofficial tour guide, reciting a place's significance, chapter and verse.

"He loves the state to its core," says Bryan Stirling, the U.S. Attorney for South Carolina. "I think that's the reason he stepped forward several times to serve the state in different capacities."

It also helps make McMaster an effective governor, observers say. Wanting the best for South Carolina takes precedence over partisan politics, political ambitions or getting the credit, they say.

U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, a Columbia Democrat, recalls working closely with McMaster to pull together the state and federal funding to expand broadband access in rural South Carolina, including for many electric cooperative members. As a result, nearly every South Carolinian has access to high-speed internet today.

"He wants what's best for South Carolina," Clyburn says.



McMaster thanks Fairfield Electric Cooperative service technician Chris Glenn for his service at the 2017 designation of Linemen Appreciation Day.

MIC SMITH



McMaster has steered the state through numerous natural disasters and recoveries. Here, he gives a briefing on Tropical Storm Idalia in 2023.

FILE PHOTO



Students participating in the 2023 Cooperative Youth Summit enjoy a special opportunity to meet with McMaster in the governor's office.

FILE PHOTO

When asked about his tendency to defend the defenseless, McMaster seems puzzled. “That’s what you’re supposed to do,” he says.

Looking out for the defenseless

One night a few years back, McMaster ordered his motorcade to a halt on Interstate 26 in Newberry County. The governor got out of his state vehicle and spent the next several minutes trying to corral a cow that had escaped a broken fence and wandered into the median.

Eventually, his security detail fashioned some twine into a lasso and led the bovine out of harm’s way.

It’s the kind of episode that no longer fazes McMaster’s aides and advisers. Over the years, McMaster has fostered dogs, ferried stray cats to the vet for care, rescued wounded birds and helped stranded turtles get to safety.

On official trips and campaign stops, “you never knew when you were going to have to stop and render aid to some critter,” Walker says.

In three decades of working off and on for McMaster, Stirling says he saw the wildlife rescues as part of a larger trend with the governor: “Helping those that can’t really stand up for themselves.”

While serving as attorney general in the 2000s, McMaster

led crackdowns on dogfighting rings and crimes against children. Faced with a dangerous backlog of criminal domestic violence cases, McMaster created a pro bono program that allowed private attorneys to prosecute domestic abusers on behalf of the state, gaining valuable trial experience in the process.

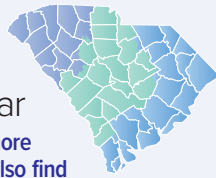
The program made a difference. Stirling himself tried some of the cases. Years later, Stirling crossed paths with a woman whose husband he had prosecuted. She told him she would be dead if not for McMaster’s program.

When asked about his tendency to defend the defenseless, McMaster seems puzzled. “That’s what you’re supposed to do,” he says. “I just hate to see an animal or a person hurt.”

Now nearing the end of his tenure in the governor’s office, McMaster stands on a legacy of being a leader who cares deeply for the state and its people. It’s a reputation that has comforted voters who overwhelmingly reelected him twice and have been lifted up by his servant leadership.

As for McMaster, looking back on the job he worked so long to achieve, “It was everything I ever dreamed,” he says.

“I think it’s the best job in the whole world.” ☺



SCLiving.coop/calendar

Our mobile-friendly site lists even more festivals, shows and events. You'll also find instructions on submitting your event. Please confirm information with the hosting event before attending.

Upstate

FEBRUARY

- 19 Upstate South Carolina Coin Show**, Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium, Spartanburg. (864) 293-8416 or upstatecoinshow.com.
- 21 Deep Winter Blues Festival**, Hagood Mill Historic Site, Pickens. (864) 898-2936 or visitthagoodmill.com.
- 21 Sweetheart Charity Ball benefiting Meal on Wheels**, Greenville Convention Center, Greenville. (864) 233-6565 or mealsonwheelsgreenville.org.
- 24 Spartanburg Philharmonic presents Voices of a Nation**, Twichell Auditorium, Spartanburg. (864) 948-9020 or spartanburgphilharmonic.org.

- 27–March 1 Southern Home & Garden Show**, The Greenville Convention Center, Greenville.

MARCH

- 14 Greenville St. Patrick's Day Festival**, NOMA Square, Greenville. gvlstpatricks.com.
- 19–April 4 A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder**, Centre Stage, Greenville. (864) 233-6733 or centrestage.org.
- 21 Forging a Life: The African American Historical Experience at Rose Hill Plantation**, Rose Hill Plantation Historic Site, Union. (864) 427-5966.
- 21 South Carolina Waffle Fest**, 119 W. Front St., Liberty. (864) 843-3177 or libertysc.com.
- 27–29 Reedy Reels Film Festival**, SC Children's Theatre, Greenville. reedyreels.com.

Midlands

FEBRUARY

- 20–March 14 The Crucible**, Trustus Theatre, Columbia. (803) 254-9732 or trustus.org.

- 25–March 1 Aiken Women's Heart Board Benefit Show—Heartbeat of America**, The Etherredge Center, Aiken. awwb.org/heartshow.html.

- 25–March 1 Freaky Friday the Musical**, USCL Bundy Auditorium, Lancaster. (803) 462-4557 or lancasterplayhouse.com.

- 28 Master Gardeners of York County Joy of Gardening Symposium**, Gateway Conference Center, Richburg. symposium.yorkmng.org/home.

- 28 Red Hot Chilli Pipers**, Arts Center of Kershaw County, Camden. (803) 425-7676 or artscenterkc.org.

- 28–March 1 The Battle for Broxton Bridge Civil War Reenactment**, Broxton Bridge Plantation, Erhardt. (803) 267-3882 or broxtonbridge.com.

MARCH

- 7 Aiken Coin & Currency Show**, South Aiken Presbyterian Church, Aiken. (803) 645-1769 or aikencoinclub.org.
- 7 Cottontown Art Crawl**, Cottontown neighborhood, Columbia. cottontown.us.
- 7 Doko Ribfest**, Doko Manor, Blythewood. (803) 403-6769 or blythewoodchamber.com.
- 7 Irish Fest Camden**, Kershaw County Airport, Camden. irishfestcamden.com.
- 13–15 Carolina Classic Home and Garden Show**, South Carolina State Fairgrounds, Columbia. homeshowcolumbia.com.

- 14 South Carolina Pimento Cheese Festival**, Saluda Shoals Park, Columbia. scpimentocheesefest.com.

- 14 St. Pat's in Five Points Festival**, Five Points, Columbia. (803) 748-7373 or stpatscolumbia.com.

- 21 Aiken Spring Steeplechase**, Aiken Steeplechase Race Course, Aiken. (803) 648-9641 or aikensteeplechase.com.

- 21 Andrew Jackson at 259**, Andrew Jackson State Park, Lancaster. (803) 285-3344.

- 21 Crafted in Carolina Festival: A Celebration of South Carolina's Brewers & Artisans**, Segra Park, Columbia. scbeer.org.

- 21 Irmo Cherry Blossom Festival**, Irmo Town Park, Irmo. (803) 781-7050 or townofirmosc.com.

- 21 Limitless Purpose Annual Family Celebration**, Camp Cole, Eastover. (803) 476-7124 or limitlesspurpose.org.

- 21 Soiree on State**, State Street, Cayce. soireeonstate.com.

- 21 Sumter Springfest**, downtown, Sumter. sumterspringfest.com.

- 21–22 Columbia Brick Con**, The Oaks Venue, Columbia. scbricksevents.com.

- 26–29 Tartan Day South Highland Games & Celtic Festival**, The Oaks Venue, Cayce. tartandaysouth.com.

- 27–29 Palmetto Sportsmen's Classic**, South Carolina State Fairgrounds, Columbia. psclassic.com.

- 27–29 Read Freely Fest**, Richland Library Main, Columbia. readfreelyfest.com.

- 28 Carolina Cup**, Springdale Race Course, Camden. (803) 432-6513 or carolinacup.org.

- 28 Curing Kids Cancer Fire Truck Pull**, Soda City Market, Columbia. curingkidscancer.org.

- 28 True to the Brew Trail 10K Run/Hike**, Pomaria entrance to Palmetto Trail, Pomaria. runsignup.com.

- 28 Xtreme Xperience Car, Truck, Bike Show**, Generations Park, Aiken. (803) 571-3630.

- 28–29 Shaw Air & Space Expo**, Shaw Air Force Base, Sumter. shawairexpo.com.

Pee Dee & Lowcountry

FEBRUARY

- 17–22 Beaufort International Film Festival**, USCB Center for the Arts, Beaufort. beaufortfilmfestival.com.

- 20–21 Mardi Crawl**, Park Circle neighborhood, North Charleston. lowcountryparrotheadclub.org.

- 20–22 Horry Georgetown Home Builders Association Spring Home Show**, Myrtle Beach Convention Center, Myrtle Beach. springshow.hghba.com.



- 20–22 Vintage Market Days of Coastal Carolina**, Myrtle Beach Sports Center, Myrtle Beach. vintagemarketdays.com/market/coastal-carolina.

- 21 Home Team BBQ Rock The Block**, 126 William St., Charleston. (843) 225-7427 or hometeambbq.com.

- 21 Sea & Sand Festival**, Folly River Park, Folly Beach. visitfolly.com.

- 21–22 American Heritage Festival**, Graham's Historic Farm, Lake City. theamericanheritagefestival.com.

- 22 Lowcountry Food Bank Chefs' Feast**, Trident Technical College, North Charleston. lowcountryfoodbank.org.

- 22–23 Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra presents Ellis Island—The Dream of America**, First Presbyterian Church, Hilton Head Island. (843) 842-2055 or hhsso.org.

- 23–March 1 Hilton Head Island Seafood Festival**, various locations, Hilton Head Island. hiltonheadseafoodfestival.com.

- 26 Dr. Neil Degrasse Tyson: Search for Life in the Universe**, Gaillard Center, Charleston. gaillardcenter.org.

- 28 Isle of Palms Polar Plunge benefiting Special Olympics South Carolina**, The Windjammer, Isle of Palms. (803) 772-1555 or so-sc.org/event/isle-of-palms.

MARCH

- 4–8 Charleston Wine + Food Festival**, various locations, Charleston. chswf.org.

- 7 Front Beach Fest**, Front Beach, Isle of Palms. (843) 990-7074 or iop.net.

- 7 Myrtle Beach Marathon**, downtown, Myrtle Beach. mbmarathon.com.

- 13–22 Can-Am Days**, various locations, Myrtle Beach. (843) 626-7444 or visitmyrtlebeach.com.

- 14 North Myrtle Beach St. Patrick's Day Parade & Festival**, Main Street, North Myrtle Beach. (843) 626-7444 or visitmyrtlebeach.com.

- 14 Power Comicon**, Florence Center, Florence. (843) 347-3477 or powercomicon.com.

- 17 Charleston St. Patrick's Day Parade**, downtown, Charleston. charlestonstpatricksdayparade.com.

- 18–April 11 The Charleston Festival to benefit Historic Charleston Foundation**, downtown, Charleston. thecharlestonfestivalsc.org.

- 20–21 The Garden Club of Charleston House and Garden Tours**, downtown, Charleston. thegardenclubofcharleston.org.

- 20–22 Cobblestone Quilters Guild Celebration of Quilts**, Textiles & Fiber Arts Show, Trident Technical College, North Charleston. cobblestonequilters.com.

- 20–22 Palmetto Quilt Guild Welcome to Paradise Quilt Festival**, Hilton Head Beach & Tennis Resort, Hilton Head Island. palmettoquiltguild.org.

- 21 Birds of a Feather Festival**, Caw Caw Interpretive Center, Ravenel. (843) 795-4386 or ccprc.com.

- 21 Fiddlin' on the Farm**, Agape Farm South, Little Rock. agapefarmssouth.com.

- 21 Hilton Head Wingfest**, Lowcountry Celebration Park, Hilton Head Island. hiltonheadwingfest.com.

- 21 Mount Pleasant ArtFest**, Mount Pleasant Town Centre, Mount Pleasant. (843) 884-8517 or experiencemountpleasant.com.

- 22–28 Hilton Head Island Wine and Food Festival**, various locations, Hilton Head Island. hiltonheadwineandfood.com.

- 27–28 Tour of Historic Plantations & Homes**, Georgetown County. (843) 633-1502 or princegeorgeplantationtours.com.

- 27–29 Summerville Family YMCA Flowertown Festival**, downtown, Summerville. summervillymca.org.

- 28 Cooper River Bridge Run**, downtown, Charleston. (843) 856-1949 or bridgetrun.com.

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	AM		PM	
	Minor	Major	Minor	Major
FEBRUARY				
15	3:26	9:38	3:51	10:04
16	4:13	10:25	4:37	10:49
17	4:59	11:11	5:23	11:34
18	5:47	11:32	6:10	--
19	6:36	12:25	6:59	12:47
20	7:27	1:15	7:51	1:39
21	8:21	2:09	8:46	2:33
22	9:18	3:04	9:44	3:31
23	10:17	4:03	10:45	4:31
24	11:17	5:02	11:47	5:32
25	--	6:02	12:17	6:33
26	12:44	7:00	1:15	7:31
27	1:40	7:55	2:10	8:25
28	2:33	8:48	3:02	9:16
MARCH				
1	3:23	9:36	3:49	10:02
2	4:11	10:23	4:35	10:47
3	4:57	11:08	5:19	11:30
4	5:42	11:53	6:04	--
5	6:29	12:18	6:50	12:39
6	7:16	1:06	7:38	1:27
7	8:06	1:54	8:28	2:17
8	9:56	3:45	10:20	4:08
9	10:48	4:36	11:12	5:00
10	11:39	5:27	--	5:52
11	12:06	6:18	12:30	6:43
12	12:55	7:07	1:20	7:33
13	1:43	7:56	2:09	8:21
14	2:30	8:42	2:55	9:07
15	3:14	9:27	3:39	9:51

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**FEBRUARY
IN THE GARDEN**

■ For Valentine’s Day, give the gardener who is the love of your life sticks. Well, bare-root roses, which, at this time of year, do look like bundles of sticks. Ideally planted in late winter, bare-root roses should be easy finds at local garden shops now.

■ While many houseplants rest during the winter, they still need to be watered occasionally. But to prevent a chilly shock, if you use tap water, first fill a container and let it sit overnight to warm to room temperature before giving your pretties a drink.

■ Plant-bothering bugs might seem like a summertime problem, but the warm, dry air inside houses in the winter can encourage insect varmints such as mealy bugs, mites and aphids to come out and play on houseplants, so be on guard.



WINTER COLOR Pansies can extend their pretty flower shows even into the spring.

TIP OF THE MONTH Pansies are visual workhorses in winter flower beds, but with proper care, they can keep popping out cheerful blooms into the spring. First, make it a regular chore to pick off spent blossoms to encourage the formation of future flowers. Also, apply a diluted solution of liquid fertilizer (preferably high in phosphorus) about every three weeks to promote continued colorful bloom production. Finally, check with your local, friendly garden centers for heat-tolerant cultivars that have the durability to extend their flower shows for months into the warming spring.



FEELING ANTSY? When it’s still too cold to plant, build that shed you’ve always wanted.

Building a better garden shed

BY L.A. JACKSON

WITH A NEW SPRING SO TANTALIZINGLY near, the desire to do something—anything—wells up inside of gardeners. This yearning sometimes manifests into a full-blown project, such as building a garden shed, which gets most backyard growers all giddy just thinking about it.

Such a shed, whether pre-fabricated or built from scratch, can certainly be a useful addition to the garden. But before you reach for the hammer and nails, here are a few sensible notions to stick into your head to help make it a pleasant, practical reality:

Legalities. Do you need a building permit to construct a garden shed in South Carolina? My best response is, “It depends.” That weak answer simply means there are different building codes for different cities and counties in our state, so check with your local building permit office first.

Location ... If it is truly going to be a garden shed and not a backyard catch-all for crusty tools and abandoned Big Wheels, site it as close as you can to the garden—heck, maybe even in it! You will appreciate its immediate proximity whenever large flats of plants, buckets of dirt or heavy pots are involved.

... Location, location. Will your garden shed also be a personal destination for some “me” time? If possible, locate this

hideaway so that, in the summer, it basks in morning light but is sheltered by shade the rest of the day to keep it from turning into an afternoon oven. Also, with a strong southern exposure during the colder days of the year, it will receive comforting warmth from the rays of the low winter sun.

Longevity ... Don’t buy lumber on the cheap. Use a resilient exterior-grade such as cypress or pressure-treated wood, so your neat new garden shed will remain pretty—and stable—for years to come with minimum maintenance.

... Longevity, longevity. Small garden sheds can blow away in strong winds. Building anchors are definitely worth the extra expense.

Natural light. A garden shed shouldn’t have the ambiance of a dungeon—let there be light! Windows and even skylights will bathe your happy place in an embracing, natural glow.

Utilities. Electricity and water can certainly be useful, but if you opt for these conveniences and have never tinkered with installing either, consult a professional electrician or plumber, not a five-minute YouTube video. ☺

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When cats fly

BY JAN A. IGOE

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, my family couldn't have pets. Not real pets, anyway. If it had fur, some sibling would immediately erupt in hives and start wheezing. So we were mostly turtle-with-a-plastic-palm-tree people until Luigi showed up.

Luigi was the neighborhood's battle-scarred, brawl-winning, feline transient. Everybody knew him, but nobody admitted to owning him. He dwarfed all the local cats and, come to think of it, most of the dogs. Striped like a tiger, Luigi stalked the streets as if the suburbs were his personal Serengeti. You did not want to be a mouse, lizard or human limb within leaping distance of this cat.

So one day, Luigi, whose left ear was hanging on by sheer will alone, followed me into the house. I didn't notice him until my father started screaming colorful adjectives in exceptionally high decibels. Loosely translated, it meant, "If you kids plan to see puberty, you'd better get that thing out of here!"

Dad grabbed a broom, and Mom armed herself with pot lids. They didn't have an emergency plan for cat eviction, so they went for the closest domestic weapons. My mother leaped from chair to chair, clanging the lids wildly as my father swept the cat out with a series of macho thrusts. Luigi left, but only long enough to decide if my parents were serial killers.

Dad delivered daily rants: "You kids



“Don’t sit there. You’ll disturb my cat,” Dad warned. “If you’re going to sneeze, go outside.”

better keep that thing out” because “It’s filthy,” and “I don’t want a cat. Period.” We listened. Luigi didn’t.

Every time our front door opened, the “mangy thing” would materialize out of thin air and strut right in. Then a miracle happened.

A week later, Dad was lounging on the sofa watching Sunday football with his new BFF, Luigi. “Don’t sit there. You’ll disturb my cat,” he warned. “If you’re going to sneeze, go outside.”

My siblings theorized that aliens had

abducted our real father, but I think Mom just wanted her broom back. Either way, we had a cat.

Since then, I’ve been fascinated by cat-centric people, like the Dutch guy who couldn’t bear to part with his long-time pet, Orville.

In 2012, Orville was tragically killed by a car, so his owner—an artist, which may explain a lot—decided to see if the cat would have better luck flying.

This involved a visit to a taxidermist, who preserved the beloved feline in a spread-eagle stance.

Next, a helicopter expert attached propellers to the pussycat’s paws and motorized his belly.

The cat-copter’s inaugural flight took place at an Amsterdam art festival, where some visitors were not prepared for a remote-controlled feline navigating amongst the nudes.

I’m just glad Dad didn’t know about this taxidermy business. Luigi might still be sitting on the couch, with the TV remote mounted in one paw and a Budweiser in the other. Fortunately, he wouldn’t have to fly unless the Giants fumbled. ☺

EDITOR’S NOTE: South Carolina Living is reprinting some of Jan A. Igoe’s previous columns. This “Humor Me” originally appeared in the November 2014 issue. Visit SCLiving.coop/news/in-memory-of-jan-igoe.



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