

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

Casting A Line

With Kevin VanDam

Plus!

Building Your Utility Of The Future

Salvaging History From Lake Michigan

Help Your Favorite Food Pantry

Both of these devices create hot air but which uses less power?



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Please notify your electric cooperative.
See page 4 for contact information.

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IN YOUR WORDS

Last month, we asked electric co-op members a question:

If you had to be trapped in a TV show for a month, which would you choose?

Thank you for all the responses. Here are some of your answers...

Hands down 'Andy of Mayberry' HAPPY, SAD, FUNNY, LOVE, just a lot of good old life lessons in this good old TV show.

The original 'Batman' series with Adam West. He never loses a fight, has an awesome car, and the ultimate man cave.

The 'Waltons' TV show.

Our new Question of the Month is:

If you could ask your future self one question, what would it be?

Please submit answers to countrylines.com by June 1.

ON THE COVER*

Kevin VanDam, often called simply, "KVD," is a professional bass fisherman from Kalamazoo, MI. In the world of professional bass fishing, KVD is at the pinnacle, and arguably the best in the world.

**Some co-op editions have a different cover. Photo-Seigo Saito, Seven Seas Creation, Inc.*



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Midwest Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

System Improvements Drive July Rate Increase



Robert Hance
President/CEO

A member recently visited our office, puzzled by high winter electric bills at his unoccupied summer cottage. We accessed the account and pulled usage data through the Meter Data Management (MDM) program. Sure enough, his usage averaged over 1,000 kWh per month during the winter, a significant number for a small, vacant, winterized summer cottage.

The member couldn't think of any electric appliance of significance, but through further conversation we learned an electric resistance wall unit, set at 60 degrees, was heating and cooling the 700 square-foot cottage.

We asked him to go to his nearby cottage and shut off the unit. When he returned, we again engaged with the MDM and his usage was zero. A week later we met with him and an HVAC contractor to discuss options, and he's now installing a 400 percent efficient electric heat pump.

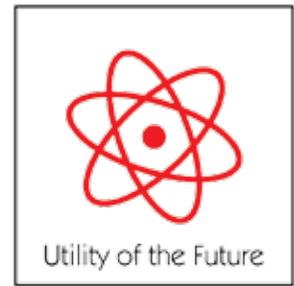
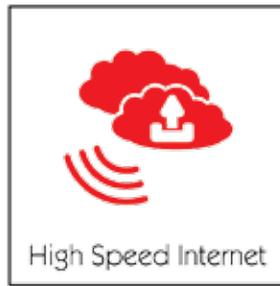
It's a great story of the lengths we go to help our members, and of the robust nature of our system and the benefits of our investments.

That's the path we're on as your "Utility of the Future." We're investing in a two-way fiber communication system across our distribution infrastructure to deliver new levels of value and enhance your service experience.

In March, we incorporated the first new technology: a supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system. This system is the backbone that provides information allowing us to monitor and control power delivery. We've used SCADA for years, but this new version, working with our communication system, introduces distribution automation (DA) to your value mix. DA allows us to improve reliability with real-time monitoring and intelligent control. In other words, we can monitor and manage system devices to reduce outages. We can also pinpoint and isolate devices causing short circuits, minimizing the overall impact of an outage.

This is just the beginning of a story that will continue to unfold as technology evolves. Your Utility of the Future is prepared to give you the best options and service available. Keep in mind however that these benefits come at a cost. We believe that every dollar invested in your distribution system will produce immeasurable results. At the same time, every dollar invested comes from the rate-payers comprising our membership.

At the April meeting, the board approved a rate increase that becomes effective in July. This increase reflects, among other things, capital investments in the distribution system. Your board and staff work diligently to balance rates with service experience, and believe these system investments are membership investments. ■



Building The Utility Of The Future

What do you get when you combine a Smart Utility Grid with what is commonly referred to as The Internet of Things? A whole new world of opportunity!

Team Midwest is implementing a long-term vision to benefit our members and communities today and into the future. Two projects on a parallel path: a major upgrade to the electric distribution system and deployment of a communications solution, including fiber internet. This investment will forever change the way our members live, work and interact.

Project 1: Creating a Smarter Grid

So much of our daily life, at home and work, revolves around a wall outlet. Technology is evolving at a fast and furious pace. We don't know what's coming, but we do know that the next generation of energy efficiency, safety, and reliability standards and measures will require robust, two-way communications across the electric grid.

Our national electric infrastructure is an engineering marvel—truly a “smart grid.” In 2013, Team Midwest committed to making our own distribution infrastructure even smarter with the implementation of a fiber-based communication system to power

utility solutions into the future. This investment gives us access to information and data that will help us see and address problems and opportunities in real time, and positions us to be ready for whatever technology brings your way.

Project 2: Communications Solution

For many years, Midwest members looked to us to bring a high-speed solution to the rural space, and we attempted to meet that need for over a decade with limited success. With the necessary upgrades to the electric distribution grid described above, we recognized the opportunity to leverage that investment and bring the ultimate broadband internet solution to our membership. In 2014, the Midwest board directed leadership to fully deploy a fiber internet solution in five years across the southwest Michigan service area. We're providing previously unknown opportunities for homes and businesses while creating an environment in which communities can grow and thrive from an economic development perspective. Learn more about our Rural Broadband Revolution at TeamFiber.com.

The Utility of the Future doesn't stand still. Stay in the know about what we're doing, and what it means to you by subscribing to our blog at UtilityoftheFuture.coop. ■

From our family to yours, have a happy and safe Memorial Day weekend.

Cooperative offices will be closed for Memorial Day on Monday, May 30. Payments may be made at the drop box and will be posted on the next open business day.



Clean Power Plan Update



Craig Borr, CEO
Michigan Electric
Cooperative
Association

As a result of a Feb. 9 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court, the State of Michigan has stopped efforts on its development of a plan to meet the demands of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan (CPP). The CPP is a federal regulatory action that requires states to reduce carbon emissions from power plants by approximately 30 percent by 2030.

What Does This Mean?

The Supreme Court's "stay" of the CPP means that it has no legal effect while the courts are reviewing the carbon reduction rules to determine whether they are lawful. During this time, the EPA cannot enforce any of the CPP deadlines or requirements. While the granting of a "stay" does not guarantee victory for opponents of the plan, it greatly increases the odds of the courts ultimately determining that the CPP is unlawful.

For the past several months, Michigan's electric cooperatives were engaged with the State of Michigan in developing an implementation plan that would have, prior to the Supreme Court ruling, had Michigan on a trajectory of submitting an initial carbon reduction plan to the EPA this fall. Those development efforts have now been suspended.

The Court's ruling means that "certainty" for our state and its electric utilities may not be forthcoming until sometime in 2018—a rather ominous sign, given the fact that several of Michigan's old and dirty coal-fired power plants will be retired in the next three to five years by companies like Detroit Edison, the Michigan South Central Power Agency, and the Lansing

Board of Water & Light. At present, just two cleaner, natural gas-fired power plants are under construction in our state—one in Holland by the City of Holland and one near Gaylord by Wolverine Power Cooperative.

This recent court action is a keen reminder of the statement uttered by former U.S. Rep. John Dingell, the architect of the current U.S. Clean Air Act, when commenting about the EPA's regulation of carbon via rulemaking rather than legislation enacted by Congress. Dingell said that the EPA's regulation of carbon would be "a glorious mess." Sadly, I believe Mr. Dingell was right. It's the job of the U.S. Congress to regulate carbon emissions, not a federal regulatory agency led by political appointees.

Michigan Co-ops Well Positioned With Renewable Energy

The other ironic twist is that Michigan's electric cooperatives, as a group, are very well positioned to potentially benefit from new carbon rules. As our state's unquestioned leaders in renewable energy, the State of Michigan and the cooperatives could be "economic winners" from implementation of the current CPP.

This is due to the fact that by 2017 Michigan's electric co-ops will serve nearly 1,000 megawatts of electrical load and have nearly 400 megawatts of renewable energy in our power supply basket to serve that load. My math says that puts Michigan's electric cooperatives, as a group, at nearly 40 percent renewables, with the state standard currently at 10 percent.

That's called leadership. ■



For Safe Digging, Call Miss DIG

MISS DIG has been the first step in utility damage prevention and excavation safety in Michigan for over 45 years. MISS DIG is a nonprofit organization funded by utility owners and municipalities, and serves as a single point of contact for those performing excavation anywhere in the state.

MISS DIG is available around the clock, 365 days a year, so whether it's the excavation of a new housing development, or something as simple as installing a new mailbox, contacting MISS DIG is a fast and free way to start your project.

Contact MISS DIG by dialing 811, or online via missdig.org, three business days prior to beginning work. You will be asked questions regarding your project such as, location, date, work being performed, and more. That information will be passed on to utility owners in the area who will locate and mark the underground lines on your work site or yard. They will also provide information



on how they've handled your request through MISS DIG's Positive Response program. After three days have passed and the marks are laid, you are free to begin with your project, provided you respect the marks and work carefully around them. If a question about your request or the marks comes up, MISS DIG is ready to assist.

So be smart, be safe, and know what's below. Contact MISS DIG before you dig.

For more information about MISS DIG or utility damage prevention, please visit missdig.org. ■

ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

For your safety and for the protection of underground utility lines, always follow these steps before starting any digging project.

1. Contact MISS DIG at 811 or missdig.org
2. Wait 3 days for utility owners to mark their lines
3. Respect the marks
4. Dig with care



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**
visit missdig.org for more information

Stay Cool And Save Energy This Summer

Gorgeous summer days filled with swimming, popsicles and picnics are all within reach! But along with all the wonderful things summer brings comes the costly effort of keeping our homes cool and comfortable. Prepare your home for the summer heat and save energy while earning cash incentives from the Energy Optimization (EO) program.

1. A/C tune-up: Ensure your central A/C runs as efficiently as possible by scheduling a tune-up. A tune-up can help reduce energy usage, prevent costly breakdowns, and allow you and your family to enjoy cleaner, healthier indoor air. **EO program cash incentive: \$50**

2. New central A/C or air-source heat pump system: If your central A/C system is more than 20 years old, it's time to upgrade. Install a new ENERGY STAR® central A/C system and save up to 20 percent in cooling costs annually, or opt for an air-source heat pump system to save even more. **EO program cash incentive: \$250-\$500**

3. New thermostat: Stop wasting energy by running the A/C excessively while you're sleeping or away.

Standard programmable, Wi-Fi enabled and smart thermostats allow for the customization of daily schedules with varying temperature settings. Wi-Fi enabled and smart thermostats allow users to remotely program and adjust temperatures, while smart thermostats can program themselves after "learning" your behaviors. **EO program cash incentive:** \$20 for standard programmable; \$100 for Wi-Fi enabled and smart thermostats

Combo Cash Incentives Now Available!

Save even more when you purchase a combination of qualifying energy-saving equipment:

Cash Incentive	Equipment	Bonus Incentive	Maximum Total Incentive
HVAC Combo Bonus	New furnace + central A/C unit	\$100	\$800
Smart HVAC Combo Bonus	New furnace + central A/C unit + Wi-Fi enabled or smart thermostat	\$150	\$950

Visit michigan-energy.org or call 877-296-4319 for additional energy-saving information and rebates. ■



Get your ducks in a row.

Summer is almost here, which means it's time to prepare your home for the cooling season! Schedule a tune-up for your central A/C today in order to:

- Save energy
- Prevent costly breakdowns
- Enjoy cleaner, healthier indoor air

ENERGY TIP: Act now to receive a \$50 cash incentive toward a central A/C tune-up!

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org

PHONE: 877.296.4319



Energy Optimization programs and incentives are applicable to Michigan service locations only. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit michigan-energy.org.

Saluting Our Armed Forces Photo Contest Winners



Photos With The Highest Facebook Votes!

The votes are in, and we're happy to share the winning photo (and some great runners-up) from our April photo contest. Winners were selected from 10 Facebook entries receiving over 250 votes! Thanks to everyone who submitted a photo, voted and spread the word by sharing the post on Facebook.

1. **Winner:** Tammy West, Jones—
"Free To Be Me, Because Of You!"
2. Shelly Evilsizor, White Pigeon—"Old Glory"
3. Kate Dorner, Cassopolis—
"Officer Lieutenant Thomas, USS Vicksburg"
4. Barb Warren, Dowagiac—"In Daddy's Arms"
5. Holly Chiddister, Three Rivers—
"Father And Son Reunion After Deployment To Afghanistan"

Visit teammidwest.com/photo-contest/ to view all the photos submitted.



Enter Your Photos And Win!

Team Midwest's photo contest is under way, and one lucky winner will end up with a credit of up to \$200 on their December 2016 electric bill. Every month, we will announce a new theme and invite you to submit your best shot. The photo receiving the most votes each month on our Facebook contest page will be entered into the drawing for the year-end bill credit, and will also be featured in a subsequent issue of *Michigan Country Lines* for all to enjoy.

How to submit? Just visit facebook.com/TeamMidwest and click on "Photo Contest" from the menu tabs. Not on Facebook? You can also enter at TeamMidwest.com/photocontest. Make sure to vote, and encourage others to vote for you, too! A high resolution photo (at least 1 MB) will be required to print your photos in *Michigan Country Lines*. We look forward to seeing your photos!

Our May theme is "**All About Michigan.**" Photos are accepted from **May 1 to May 20**. Photos with the most votes will be featured in the July/August issue.

SNACKS & APPETIZERS

Party-worthy recipes for your next gathering.

Bacon Wrapped Water Chestnuts

Connie Bowman, Manistee

- 1 c. ketchup
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1 lb. bacon, cut into thirds
- 2 small cans whole water chestnuts

Preheat oven to 350°. Mix together ketchup and brown sugar. Wrap ½ piece of bacon around each chestnut. Place in a 9x13 pan. Pour ketchup mixture over wrapped bacon/chestnuts. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes.

Photos—831 Creative

Jalapeno Popper Boats (Pictured)

Ted Herrst, Mancelona

- 25 medium, fresh jalapeño peppers*
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1 pkg. bacon bits
- 3 c. finely shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 t. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 T. olive oil
- ¼ c. cornmeal

Preheat oven to 400°. Spread olive oil evenly over a cookie sheet. Sprinkle cornmeal evenly over cookie sheet. Cut jalapeño peppers in half lengthwise; remove all seeds and membranes. In a small bowl, beat cream cheese, bacon, Worcestershire sauce, and 2 cups cheddar cheese until smooth. Spoon 2 teaspoons of mixture into each jalapeño half, and place on the oiled cookie sheet, then roll each jalapeño lightly in cornmeal. Top with remaining cheese. Bake for 5–10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve warm. Optional: For milder peppers, after cutting, boil peppers in water for 2–5 minutes. Drain, rinse and allow to cool.

*Wear plastic gloves while working with jalapeño peppers; DO NOT touch face, especially eyes.



Buffalo Chicken Dip

Patsy Dalrymple, Lake Isabella

- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 10 oz. can chicken breast, drained
- ¼ c. hot sauce
- ½ bottle blue cheese dressing
- 8 oz. pkg. sharp cheddar cheese, crumbled

Mix all ingredients together and place in microwave. Cook 1 minute at a time until all cheese is melted (you can also use a mini crock pot). Serve warm on crackers.



Gather Round

The Co-op Kitchen Table

A **NEW** and **EXCLUSIVE** online cooking community for our electric co-op members.

MI CO-OP KITCHEN is a place to share your recipes and food ideas with lots of other like-minded members. You will also get a chance to win awesome prizes.

In every *Country Lines* issue, members can submit recipes online for a chance to win a **\$50** electric bill credit. While that's pretty cool by itself, there's more! We will print the winning recipe in *Country Lines* (complete with a professional photo of the dish), and create an instructional "how to" video for micoopkitchen.com.

Ready to pull up a seat?

GREAT! Go to MICOOPKITCHEN.COM and register.

Please submit your favorite "Dessert" recipes by July 1.

Enter your recipe online at micoopkitchen.com or send to (handprint or type on one side, please):
Country Lines Recipes, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900,
Lansing, MI 48933. Please note the co-op from which you receive your electric service.

micoopkitchen.com



Midwest In The Community

Neighbor helping neighbor – that’s how your Team Midwest family approaches daily work and efforts to give back. We live, work and serve right here in your local community, and strive to actively live our Community value in meaningful and impacting ways.

In February, members of the employee family rolled up their sleeves to show community care and support with the annual blood drive at the Cassopolis office. In total, 29 signed up to donate, 27 registered and Michigan Blood collected 25 donations. Rich Drews (pictured), safety and loss control director, received a pin as a lifetime donor of 3 gallons. Drews started donating blood as a freshman at Lake Superior State in 1975. ■



‘Feed The Need’ And Earn \$1,000 For Your Favorite Food Pantry

Midwest Energy Cooperative invites you to help “Feed The Need” with our summer food drive contest.

In last year’s inaugural event, nine food pantries received more than \$7,700 in cash donations and 3,000 pounds of food. We’re hoping to top that in 2016 and make a difference for friends and neighbors across our co-op service territory.

How do you get involved? Simply identify your favorite pantry and plan a food drive. The pantry must have a physical presence and serve individuals within our co-op service territory. Be creative in your approach, then share that plan and the name of your charity partner in a 2-minute video posted on our Facebook page in June. Your food pantry partner will benefit from your generous efforts to bring in much-needed donations, but it gets better! Midwest Energy Cooperative will donate an additional \$1,000 to the two pantries whose videos receive the most votes. The more you engage and share your efforts in the social media environment, the better chance of extra cash for your favorite pantry!

Summer is a time of significant need for food pantries all across the country. School breakfast and lunch programs are largely curtailed, meaning



more meals are needed. Donations tend to be high during the winter and holiday seasons when the need is most evident, but those needs don’t necessarily go away with warmer weather.

Working together, we can help Feed the Need for many food pantries. Upload your video beginning June 1, and voting will run through June and July. Winners will be announced in August. Visit [Facebook.com/TeamMidwest](https://www.facebook.com/TeamMidwest) for full contest details and requirements. If you have questions or need more information, contact Nicole Barfell at 269-445-1112 or pr@teammidwest.com. ■

Great Savings On High Efficiency Water Heater Purchase

Buying a new appliance can be an overwhelming proposition. Which brand is best? What features do I need? What will this do to my energy bills?

When it comes to your next water heater purchase, Midwest Energy Cooperative wants to take the confusion out of your hands.

We offer a program that puts a 50-gallon, high-efficiency water heater in your home for only \$125 out of pocket. Comparable units are \$400 and above at most hardware stores and retail outlets. Plus, our Energy Optimization (EO) program offers a \$50 mail-in rebate, and will also throw in a free hot water savings kit which includes pipe wrap, a low-flow showerhead, and low-flow faucet aerators.

The Rheem High Efficiency Residential Electric Water Heater offers a .95 efficiency rating. The unit comes with a full one-year in-home warranty through Home Depot, and a six-year limited warranty on tank and functional parts. It features double 4500-watt heating elements and a factory-installed temperature and pressure relief valve. Special porcelain lining provides tank protection.

Co-op members who are homeowners and use a minimum of 400 kilowatt-hours (kWh) a month can take advantage of this great offer when they participate in our load management program. Load management allows us to remotely control the electricity to your water heater. As a utility, we have periods of peak usage, meaning our collective customer base is using a lot of power at one time. Because energy supply charges from our power supplier are based on monthly peak demand, all co-op members ultimately benefit when we can reduce peak load. We then pass those savings back to those participating in the load management program with a credit on your electric bill.

With this program, your \$4 monthly water heater load management credit will be applied to the cost of your water heater for 66 months. After that time, you will receive the full monthly credit under the terms of the load management program.

Water heater control does not exceed five hours a day and occurs predominately between the hours



of 3-9 p.m., when the system is at its peak. The hot water stored in your insulated tank will remain hot for a long time.

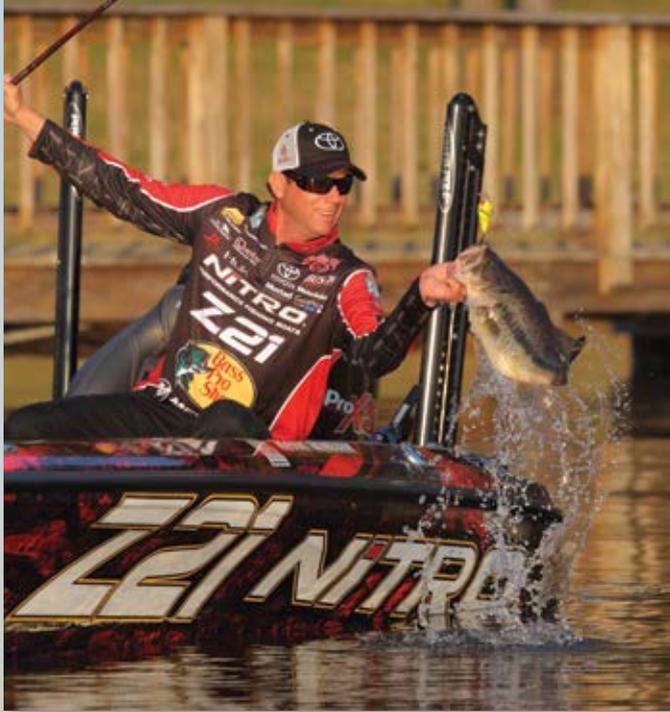
Water heaters are available for pick-up from 8 a.m.–5 p.m. in the Cassopolis and Adrian offices, and from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. in Paw Paw. For more information about this program or to see if you qualify, please call the cooperative at 800-492-5989, or visit one of our offices. ■



More Great Deals At EO Store

Want some great deals on energy efficient lighting? Our Energy Optimization (EO) program provides two quick and convenient ways for Michigan residential members to purchase the products you want and need for your home and save up to 50 percent with instant rebates!

Visit any of our district service centers to view the various options available, or visit the online store at Michigan-Energy.org for a quick and convenient purchase. Items vary between the on-site and online stores. Visit the website for details, or contact us at 877-296-4319.



“That’s the beauty of Michigan—pretty much everywhere you look there’s a lake, river or stream with something willing to bite.”

Casting A Line

With Kevin VanDam

By Emily Haines Lloyd



When you're talking to Kevin VanDam you don't get the feeling you're speaking with an internationally recognized angler and arguably the best bass fisherman in the past 20 years. You just feel like you're talking to "Kevin"—the Kalamazoo guy who grew up on the lakes, streams and rivers of southwest Michigan. He sounds like a guy you went to school with, who just happens to travel 250 days a year to compete in bass tournaments and promote the sport he loves.

"Fishing has always been a part of my life. I have a memory of going ice fishing with my dad and I was maybe three years old," VanDam recalls. "So, even when I started competing at the professional level, it took me a long time to think of this as my career. It was just always something I did."

It could be this single-minded and humble mindset that made VanDam the multiple championship winner in professional bass fishing. If you know the sport—you know VanDam. If you thought anglers worked with protractors—let's catch you up. The Bassmaster Classic is the most coveted bass fishing title. In his 263 Bassmaster Classic events—VanDam has won 20, finished second 13 times and landed in the top 10 a remarkable 100 times. He was also the very first Outdoorsman of the Year ESPY award winner, at the ESPN awards in 2002. Not that you can get him to muse on his accolades. VanDam is more likely to brag on his home state when asked why he still lives in the area where he grew up.

"Michigan is home," VanDam says. "I love the four seasons, and my family loves being outdoors. In the summer, you'll find us on the lake boating or fishing. In the winter, I love taking my sons hunting. There's so much diversity in the landscape. Michigan has so much to offer. I can't imagine living anywhere else."

When asked to give up some of his favorite fishing spots in Michigan, VanDam chuckles.

"That's the beauty of Michigan—pretty much everywhere you look there's a lake, river or stream with something willing to bite," he answers. "But I really think the best fishing anywhere is Lake St. Clair on the east side of the state. It's my favorite



tournament location. Having said that—there's nothing like heading up to Traverse City and casting a line."

As VanDam continues his 2016 season of tournaments, sports shows, promotions and product design meetings—you get the feeling his thoughts are always in Michigan—secretly thinking about that next day on the lake with his wife and sons, lazily casting a line without the pressure of a championship title, just a guy named "Kevin" hanging out and having fun. ■

Photos-Seigo Saito, Seven Seas Creation, Inc.





Lost In Time

By Heidi Prescott

Taras Lyssenko thinks of his work as a hobby.

Only most of us would not consider the work of an aviation historian who recovers water-submerged U.S. Navy World War II aircraft from the floor of Lake Michigan to be the same kind of leisure activity as gardening or painting.

The Chicago native and Midwest Energy Cooperative member discovered his passion for exploration at a young age. He has always loved the thrill of the hunt and the rush he would feel when he stumbled upon something big.

Taras was barely old enough to drive when he found his first aircraft while scuba diving.

"We were a bunch of inner-city kids who liked to find things," Taras explains from his home outside of Cassopolis. "We were really good at it."

Taras and childhood friend Allan Olson also became very skilled at hoisting submerged planes from the floor of the lake for museums. Since the late '80s, when they formed A and T Recovery, they have recovered more than 40 aircraft found off the

Chicago shoreline. Their work has been for the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, FL.

A PBS documentary called "Heroes on Deck," scheduled to air beginning Memorial Day weekend, will feature the recovery of an Eastern Aircraft FM-2 "Wildcat" fighter plane that Taras discovered almost 20 years ago in Lake Michigan.

Taras, a former Army Ranger, used some of his money to locate the U.S. Naval plane that was used to train pilots.



A group of spectators watches as Taras Lyssenko directs a crane operator in lifting the Wildcat from the water.

Because that's what you do when you're passionate about your work.

The plane, which crashed due to engine failure in December 1944, is being restored by the Kalamazoo Air Zoo at the cost of about \$1 million. The project is being funded by the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation.

Lifting old planes from the water involves a lot of planning, a lot of people and a lot of time. The recovery and restoration operations involve as many as 500 people and can take years to complete.

The process of securing a number of permits and approvals can take as long as a year. Taras has to get permission from the Army Corps of Engineers, state historic preservation agencies, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and many others.

The FM-2 Wildcat also had to be moved to the Waukegan Harbor before the plane could be pulled from the water so its fragile wings wouldn't break. Among the team used in the recovery are a myriad of experts, from divers to crane operators, and archaeologists to genealogists.

"Part of an aircraft is its circle of life. Our genealogist finds the family, the grandchildren of the men who flew them. Their lives are touched by that aircraft and the event that occurred," he said. The pilot of this particular plane escaped the crash.

Taras, now 55, still feels the same rush of excitement with each aircraft he salvages from its watery grave in the lake.

"No one has ever really told us how to look, and I think that's why we're so successful," he says.



Taras stands on top of the Wildcat directing the A and T Recovery crew as they stabilize the aircraft just after lifting it from the water.

"We've done what no one else can do. We've been told that if it weren't for us, the Navy wouldn't have a good number of rare aircraft in its collection. And yet if I walk down the street in Chicago, no one knows who I am."

His parents raised him to try to make the world a better place, to make a difference.

"Life should be something that's a challenge. Honestly, there's nothing special about what we do except that we're willing to do it," he said. "The work we do, it's not just me, it's a team. We're all people who think there is so much more to life when you go out and look for it and grab hold of it. Life should take your breath away all the time." said Taras. ■



Hug A Lineman

By Jack O'Malley

The lights flicker once, twice. You wait for it. Boom! A crack of lightning illuminates the night sky as thunder simultaneously rolls over your neighborhood, taking the power with it. Most of us start scrambling for flashlights, candles and the battery operated radio. But across town, a lineman grabs his gear in preparation for what could be a long night of restoring electricity.

I recently visited with a line crew from Cherryland Electric Cooperative. Dustin Ockert, a journeyman lineman, talked about those days and nights when the power goes out. "Leaving my family at home with no power can be stressful. They're home in the dark without me and I'm out working to get the lights back on." However, it's work that Dustin finds enjoyable, despite its risks.

Every day, Dustin and his crew face a number of occupational hazards, including high-voltage contact, confined spaces, and challenging weather conditions, often while working at great heights. Deceptively simple-looking, power lines are connected by a complex arrangement of small parts that crews learn to manipulate while wearing heavy protective gloves. Handling up to 7,200 volts of electricity at any given moment, losing concentration for even a second could result in serious injury. When asked what wind speed would prevent him from taking the bucket up, Dustin confidently replied, "That hasn't happened yet!"

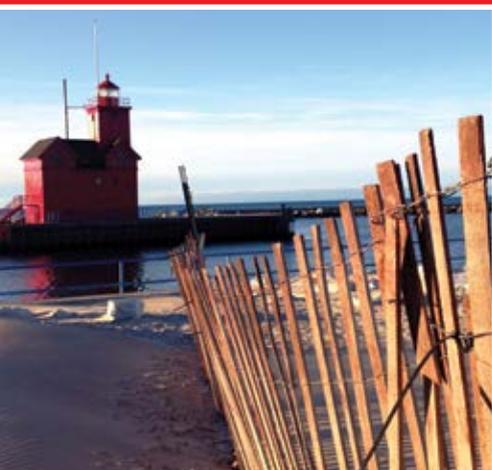


Fortunately for Dustin and his crew, most days are quiet and filled with routine maintenance work and installations. Safety remains the crew's first priority, even on normal days. But all concerns for family and safety aside, Dustin loves his job. During an outage, "The world is dark when we get where we're going and by the time we leave, the lights are back on. That's the glory of our job."

If you're like me you take your power for granted, forgetting the men and women who work in the dark, rain, wind and snow, ensuring that we can turn the lights on each morning. So take a minute, thank your local linemen, and do as Dustin suggests the next time you see his crew pulling up, "Stand back and watch what happens!" ■



Jack O'Malley



«« Where In Michigan Is This?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **June 18** will be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 bill credit from their electric co-op. We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone. Enter your guess at countrylines.com or send by mail to: *Country Lines Mystery Photo*, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933. Include the name on your account, address, phone number, and name of your co-op.



March Photo

Our Mystery Photo Contest winner from the March 2016 issue is Norman Schultz, a Great Lakes Energy co-op member who correctly identified the photo as the Back Forty Ranch at the Double JJ Resort in Rothbury, MI.

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