

OWEN Electric Connection

Owen Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

NOVEMBER 2016

Giving thanks for what makes us great

November is one of my favorite months of the year. And it's not just about the turkey. From beginning to end, it's a month for celebrating what makes our country great.

The 43 participants in this year's Honor Flight sponsored by Owen Electric and Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives represent just some of the real-life stories of service and valor that make Nov. 11, Veterans Day, special.

I'm thankful for men like World War II veteran Ralph Johnson, and Vietnam War veteran Wes Brenton—proud to have them as members of our co-op, too.

At age 96, Ralph was among the oldest to make the Honor Flight trip to Washington, D.C., to view a monument erected in his honor.

Wes had never been to D.C. to see the monuments dedicated to Marines nor those who served in Vietnam.



I am grateful to our veterans as well as today's active duty service men and women. They continue to ensure our freedoms such as the right to choose our leaders. Election Day—this year on Nov. 8—is a crowning achievement of our democratic nation. It's another reason I'm so fond of November.

As a finale to this month of gratitude, Thanksgiving Day provides a moment to reflect on the people and things that make

life better. For me, that includes serving the members of Owen Electric. It is a privilege to provide reliable, affordable electricity to the owner-members of this not-for-profit electric cooperative. I give thanks daily to be employed by an organization that not only improves the lives of individuals but also recognizes the importance of supporting activities such as Honor Flight.

In my book, veterans, democracy, and the privilege to serve you and our 59,000 members are among excellent reasons to give thanks in November and throughout the year.

Mark Stallons
President/CEO

Hundreds of patriotic, flag-waving citizens gave two local veterans and 41 other Kentucky veterans a welcome home they will never forget.

Ralph Johnson of Warsaw and Wesley Brenton of Sadieville were among the 43 war veterans who traveled from Lexington to Washington, D.C., Aug. 27, as part of this year's Honor Flight. Both Johnson and Brenton traveled with the other Kentucky veterans from World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War for the one-day tour of war memorials erected in their honor in the nation's capital.

Johnson, a 96-year-old World War II veteran, and Brenton, a 68-year-old Vietnam veteran, represented Owen Electric Cooperative, which sponsored the all-expense-paid trip.

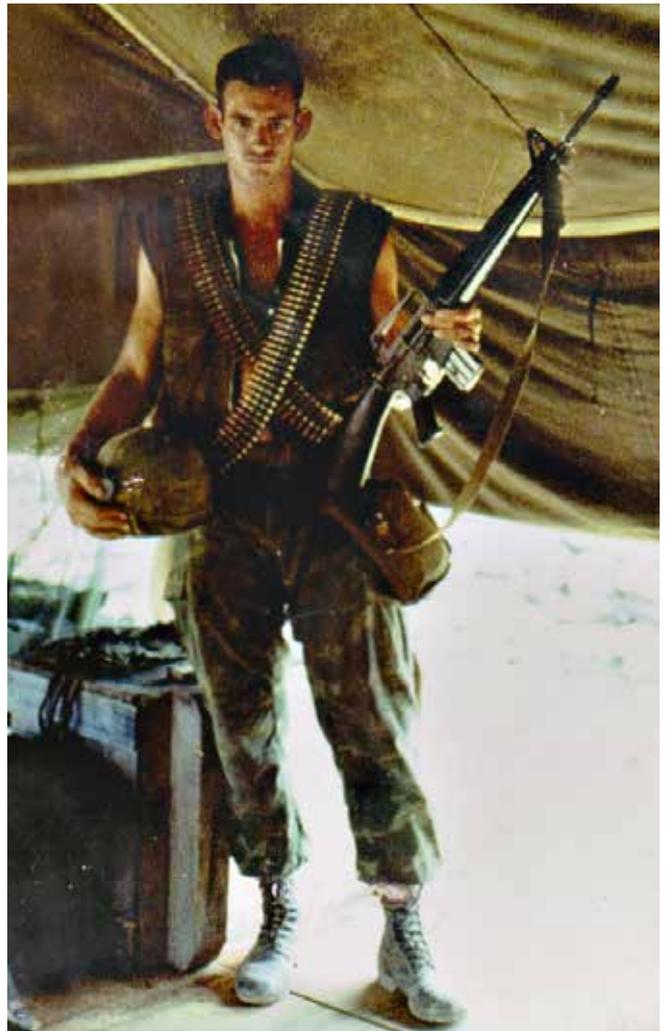
This was the sixth year Owen Electric and Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives sponsored an Honor Flight, and it was the first year of partnering with Honor Flight Kentucky, which was founded in December 2015. Honor Flight Kentucky is a new chapter of the national Honor Flight network.

"We owe both Ralph, Wes, and the other heroes from Kentucky so much," says Whitney Duvall, Owen Electric spokesperson and guardian for the Honor Flight. "This is the greatest generation, and it was unbelievable how they were cheered and greeted everywhere they went in Washington."

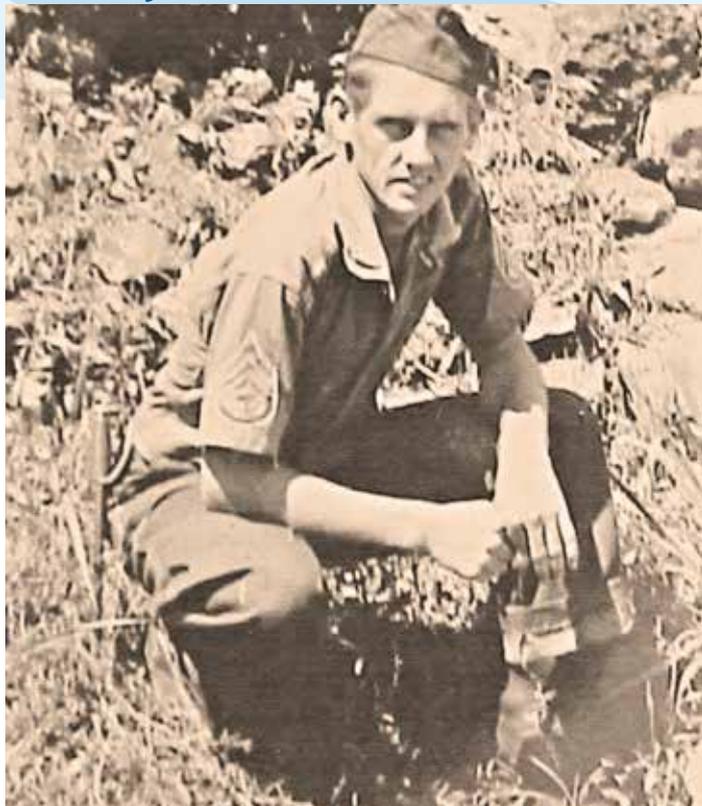


Wesley Brenton

Wesley Brenton shared several photos he had from his time serving with the United States Marines. Included are a photo of him while in Vietnam and him at his 'welcome home' reception.



Ralph Johnson



Johnson was 22 years old when he was drafted and served three years and three months in post artillery with the Army, guarding the locks in Panama. He recalls that as his convoy was coming through Cuba and the Yucatan Peninsula, one of their ships was sunk.

Johnson received no basic training during his time serving in the Army, just what he learned on the job.

Brenton was a forward observer in artillery with the Marines, but did some flying as well when higher-ups learned he was a pilot. He recalls that when he was discharged to Camp Pendleton, California, he would report for duty each morning, then be told to remove his military uniform. This area was anti-Vietnam and it was not safe to wear uniforms.

He served 19 months with the Marines, and unfortunately has been affected greatly by Agent Orange. Brenton said he has “no regrets” serving in the military for his country.

The veterans flew from Lexington’s Blue Grass Airport to Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C., where soldiers and citizens clapped loudly before they boarded two buses for a full day of honors and sightseeing. They visited the World War II and Korean War memorials on the National Mall.

In Arlington, Va., the group toured the Marine Corps War Memorial, saw the Air Force Memorial, and watched the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington

National Cemetery. Veterans who participated in a wreath-laying service at the tomb included: Nello Francis, 92, of Garrett; Delmer Picklesimer, 90, of Versailles; Morris Alford, 90, of Lexington; and Noel Phillips, 91, of Cynthiana.

The response at each memorial was overwhelming. Visitors surrounded the veterans. Children and adults alike shook their hands, took photos, and waved flags. Just before the return flight to Lexington, the veterans were treated to a bit of nostalgia, as they experienced “mail call,” just as they had when they were young servicemen.

To further honor this year’s Honor Flight participants, Owen Electric helped to organize a special welcome for their return. Families, friends, and supporters packed the terminal at Blue Grass Airport to welcome them home.

The trip evoked a number of emotions for Brenton.

“I was proud to be an American and had the same feeling when my son won his first Sprint Car race or when my daughter won her first horse show. This feeling only comes from emotions you get rarely in life and the Honor Flight sponsored by Owen Electric was one of these times in my life,” says Brenton. “I’m a proud American, proud husband, and proud father.”

In a letter following the Honor Flight, Johnson wrote:

“We veterans just did what we had to do. You that are not veterans would do the same.”

To view the full album of photos taken during the 2016 Honor Flight, log on to Flickr at www.flickr.com/photos/owenelectric or Facebook at www.facebook.com/owenelectriccoop.

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Serviceman Kenny Widener visited Owen County Christian Preschool and spoke about his job and his bucket truck as a part of their unit on "Community Helpers." The children loved watching him demonstrate how his bucket lifts him high up into the air to make repairs on power lines and equipment!

