

# Life Without Electric Co-ops

MESSAGE FROM **GENERAL MANAGER, KERRY KELTON**

**FOLKS OFTEN TAKE STOCK OF BLESSINGS AND CHALLENGES** at the beginning of each year, thinking about the impact their lives have made on the world and envisioning the effect they'd like to have on the future. At Mid-South Synergy, we approach the new year with this spirit of contemplation.

In the classic movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, lead character George Bailey wishes he had never been born, because he is in financial trouble. With the help of an angel, he sees how many lives would have been negatively affected if he didn't exist. Bailey comes to realize that, even with his problems, he has a wonderful life with great friends and family.

So what do you think life would be like if community leaders had not founded Mid-South Electric Cooperative all those years ago?

Living in the United States in 2016, it is nearly impossible to imagine life without electricity. So many of our modern conveniences that improve the quality of our lives depend on electricity as the "fuel" to make them work. From the alarm clock that wakes us up, to the refrigerator that keeps our morning milk cold and fresh. From the air-conditioning and heating units that keep us cool in summer and warm in winter, to the vacuum that lets us clean more efficiently and all those kitchen appliances that save us time and effort. So much of our entertainment, whether from the TV, radio or computer, depends on the kilowatt-hours that your electric co-op provides. Just think: There would be no smart phones or cellphones if there were no electricity.

As you consider the new year, remind yourself to be thankful for all that you have. It also is important to remember the 1.3 billion people in the world who still live without reliable electric service—a number equal to about four times the U.S. population.

Many of the things we take for granted living in the U.S. are much harder and more time-consuming for people in developing countries around the world. We are proud members of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, which works through its affiliates, NRECA International and the NRECA International Foundation, to help empower people in developing countries such as Haiti and Liberia.

We are thankful that our community ancestors had the vision and foresight to do for themselves what needed to be done, gathering friends and neighbors to form our electric co-op. As the electric business of the 21st century continues to evolve, you can count on Mid-South Synergy to meet all of your electric energy needs. More important, we are here to help improve the quality of your wonderful life.



# MEET THE ARTIST STEVE KNOTTS

Steve Knotts is the artist behind our 2016 Mid-South Synergy Calendar. You can pick up your calendar at any of our three office locations.

Steve Knotts was born and raised in Dallas, Texas in the mid 60's. He was an athlete, playing football in high school and college. He studied Environmental Design at Texas A&M, then broadened his study to the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena California. During his years at the Art Center, Steve won several awards from the Society of Illustrators in Los Angeles and New York. After receiving his Bachelor of Fine Arts, he began his career as an editorial illustrator, working for various publications nationwide. His client list includes Texas Monthly, Movieline, Muscle and Fitness, Playboy, Live, and The Wall Street Journal. Steve has also worked in-house for Nike, Sony Entertainment and Nintendo. After a career in illustration, Steve moved into a different industry as a software developer, working for companies such as Sega, Kronos Digital Entertainment and Oddworld. Steve has also been involved in the production of feature films working for Disney Feature Animation.

Steve has always had the desire to paint, which he finally had the opportunity to accomplish. Steve uses oil on canvas board as his medium and has recently produced twenty-four paintings in the last 18 months. Steve's paintings are currently on exhibit at the Horlock Gallery in Navasota until March 2016.

1215  
Horlock  
Art Gallery &  
History Museum



**Tell us a little bit about growing up.**

I was born in South Oak Cliff just outside of Dallas, TX and moved to Plano, TX when I was about four or 5. I went to high school there where I graduated and went off to college.

**What were some of your interests as a child?**

My father was a runner and a biker; just an all-around athlete and I always wanted to emulate the way he was able to stay in shape. I enjoyed playing football, and all kinds of sports. As soon as I got older and taller, my only interest became football.

**Were you interested in art from a young age?**

I drew everything, all the time. My mother gave me free reign in my room and I used to draw and paint on my wall and she let me do it and didn't mind. I always found that amazing that she let me decorate my own room.

**Where did you go to college?**

I went to Northwestern state on a football scholarship. I played there for two seasons. From there I transferred to Texas A&M, where I got injured and never really had the desire to play any more, so I decided to see if I could make it through school. I loved College Station; I lived there for many years.

**What did you study at Texas A&M?**

I studied Environmental Design. I wanted to study Architecture, but Environmental Design covered a broader spectrum of architecture and engineering.

**Did you take any art classes at A&M?**

No, I actually didn't take any art classes until I was thirty. That was the day I decided to go to California and study fine art in Pasadena at the Art Center.

**Tell us about your time at the Art Center.**

It was the greatest experience of my life. I didn't really know what was going to happen. I didn't know who I was going to meet, but I loved California. I studied and met some incredible people; Richard Bunkle, Dwight Harmon, so many people that influenced me to become a painter – to understand composition and color. It was the best thing I've ever done in my life.

by myself. I had a friend who worked at Sega of America and they were looking for artists and they offered me a job.

**What were some of the bigger publications and companies you worked for?**

I've worked for 20, 30, 40 different publications like Texas Monthly, Movieline, Muscle and Fitness, Playboy, The Wall Street Journal. I've also worked for Sega, Nike, Sony Entertainment, Nintendo, and Disney Animation.



**“Look around and appreciate the art that exists”**

**After art school where did you begin your career?**

As soon as I finished school, I started doing editorial illustrations. I was sending postcards out to any publication I could find, hoping for a fax to come in saying they had a job for me. I started getting little jobs once in a while, and the more I did that, I started getting bigger jobs in L.A., New York, Dallas, and Atlanta. As I kept doing these jobs, I realized I didn't like being at home all the time, completely

**What projects did you work on for Nike?**

The art director for Nike at the time saw a painting I had done for Movieline, the magazine, and he asked me to do a job for them. They were doing a series of peechee folders, and the project was called “The Beginning of Sports”. So I did six different drawings of six different sports and the creative team at Nike actually wrote a back-story for each painting I did.

**Why did you make the change to go into software development?**

Doing editorial illustrations for magazines started to change once Photoshop showed up and that's once I noticed the money for editorials started to go down. I knew I could paint and I knew I could draw so for financial security reasons, I wanted to see if I could start to learn the computer side of design and make it in that industry.

**Can you describe some of your work for Disney Animation?**

The first movie I worked on was called Mission to Mars, which was actually a live action movie, and I was a texture painter. I did several live action films where I was a texture painter, painting computer graphic generated elements of the film.



**What made you decide to leave software development and paint full time?**

I missed painting and realized that that was what I was really trained to do and I wanted to see if I could pull it off and make a living [painting]. I went to museums all the time and an instructor of mine always had art shows and I really wanted to do that; he really influenced me to paint. I missed getting my hands dirty and the battle that is painting.

**What are some of the things you are currently working on?**

I met the Mayor here in Navasota, and I didn't know that there was a train history here in this town and so I've started working on some train pieces and some of the architecture in this area. I want to try to make some really beautiful pieces, of what I see and what I find beautiful that maybe someone drives by 100 times but never looks at.

**What places in and around Navasota do you find inspiring?**

The railroad, even though I hear there's not a lot of development. I love that area of downtown. Architecturally, it fascinates me because the buildings are built at an angle to accommodate the angle of the train.

**What brought you to Navasota, TX?**

The opportunity to work here at the Horlock Gallery and be a part of the Residency program. I've never been able to work anywhere and not really have my own place to paint and not have to worry about everything else, finance wise.

**How did you become part of the Horlock Gallery Artist in Residence program?**

This past summer, I stayed at my sister's ranch outside of Abilene, where I painted I think 24 paintings in about eight months and I was constantly looking online entering shows and I came across at the Texas Art Commission that there was a residency program here.



**How long have you been/will you be at the Horlock Gallery?**

I arrived here in the middle of September and will be here until March 1, 2016.

**Tell us about your personal studio.**

It is a place I just set up, I'm comfortable there. I have good lighting, the windows here are beautiful lights, one that faces west and one that faces south. It's a good set up since I only paint by natural light. I try to paint early in the morning and late in the evening. It's a great workspace.

**What are you planning next after you leave the Gallery?**

I'd like to find an agent and find a gallery that is interested my work and would like to represent me, but I'm never going to stop painting. I have too much to do, too much to create; I'll always paint.

**What does being creative mean to you?**

I think it's a talent that I like to express and share with other people. I don't think a lot of people are lucky to have the type of creativity I have, especially to create something with paint; I think it's intimidating. I never worked with paint growing up and color is one of the most difficult things to understand. It's honestly a life-long quest to understand and it fascinates me.

**Do you have any patterns or rituals when it comes to painting?**

Most of my paintings are essentially drawings. I studied Norman Rockwell and they have same philosophy that I do; It's really a sketch and a drawing that you essentially completely finish and you work out all the painting problems with just that sketch. I spend more time sketching a piece than I do painting. I paint very thin, dark to light, and left to right.

**What are you trying to communicate with your art?**

There's a sense of solitude about these pieces. I watched the sun rise over the tracks one day and realized that it's probably something that nobody ever notices. And I noticed that the light composition changes throughout the day and that fascinates me that I could capture that.



**Is there a creative medium that you would love to pursue but haven't?**

Photography' even though I use photography all the time as reference. I just find that you can do so much with it now that it's digital. I like dark rooms and old school film; I just think you can do so much with photography today.

**What is some of the best advice you've received in regards to your art career?**

To always keep a sketchbook with you, especially if you like drawing, because it's not something you can just do once every month, you have to really work, and the more you see, the more you sketch and the more you learn things about perspective, and about ideas, and expression. I have many sketchbooks. Look around and appreciate the art that exists, because it's beautiful.

**What are you passionate about outside of art? Any hobbies?**

I'm a big football fan and I love being with my family and friends. Being in California for so many years I missed a lot of time being with my family so it's nice being back here. I used to ride motorcycles. A friend of mine was telling me about a bike that was being repossessed at a bank and I just had to have it. It was a Honda 750 custom, and I rode that for a while and graduated through bikes from there. I've always wanted a Harley, but never had one, but one day I will.

# WE ARE #YOURCREW

*Spotlighting the linemen in your community who keep the lights on*

**W**hen your lights go out, day or night, we are the ones you call. Our crews, without hesitation, jump into action, and work as hard and as quickly as possible to restore your power to get life back to normal for you and your family. At Mid-South Synergy, we pride ourselves on outstanding member service and strive to play a key role in our community. Our crews interact with our members on a daily basis, as we work for you, our members. We want to put a face to the name; a face to the company; a face to your electric provider. Our commitment to community is why Mid-South Synergy is #YOURCREW.

To kick off our #YOURCREW series, we couldn't think of a better person to feature than Larry Finley. Larry is one of our many talented foremen on staff here at Mid-South Synergy. Having worked in the industry for over 15 years, Larry has spent the past five years working for us in our new construction department for overhead transmission. Larry's infectious personality and attitude has spread throughout our company to lineman and office personnel alike. Larry has been such a positive influence on our younger linemen, setting examples for them as they grow in our program. He has a passion for being involved in and giving back to our community and providing the best service he possibly can to our members. Larry is a loving husband and father of three sons. Not only is Larry proud to be a Mid-South Synergy foreman, he is proud to be #YOURCREW.



**WHERE ARE YOU ORIGINALLY FROM?**

I was originally born in Denver, Colorado and grew up in Littleton, [Colorado].

**WHAT WERE SOME OF YOUR INTERESTS GROWING UP IN COLORADO??**

Of course in Colorado, I snow skied growing up, I played football and was on the wrestling team for Bear Creek Senior High School. Other than that, I enjoyed hunting and fishing.

**WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO TEXAS?**

My uncle passed away and when I came down for his funeral, I ended up staying down here and went to work.

**WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO GO INTO ELECTRICAL WORK?**

When I came back for my uncle's funeral, I began working for a contracting company, Finway Inc. I worked in and around Conroe for a while and actually ended up working for my family's company, where I ended up on an underground construction crew.

**WHEN DID YOU START WORKING FOR MID-SOUTH SYNERGY?**

We contracted for Mid-South Synergy for about ten or fifteen years. They were familiar with me and some of the guys I worked with. I've been here five years, last April.

**WHAT ARE SOME POSITIVES YOU LIKE ABOUT MID-SOUTH SYNERGY?**

Mid-South Synergy really takes care of their employees. We don't go without tools as they invest in making sure we not only have the right equipment that is up-to-date, but enough equipment as well. Our safety program is top notch and in the five years I've been here, that is one of the biggest things I've noticed. They just care about us and everyone is working together for one common cause.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU LIKE ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY?**

I live Northeast of Huntsville now, but have lived in Montgomery most of my time in Texas. I like the fact that our community and specifically our members are genuinely excited to see us when we come out to work and are friendly and want to talk about their power and the quality of service that we provide. I didn't get that from other places I've been and that's one thing I like the most about our community and service territory. We get to interact with our members and provide them with the best service possible while we work to keep their lights on.

**WHY IS BEING A LINEMAN SO IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

For me, I think that being a lineman is not something that everyone wants to or can do. But for the individuals that want to learn a trade that will always be here, this a great line of work. My father and uncle were in the industry their whole lives and it means a lot to me to be able to carry on their legacy and pass on what they taught me. I remember riding around in the trucks with them as a kid as they went from job to job. Line work is just what I do and I'm happy to do it.



**WHAT WAS YOUR RELIEF TRIP TO HAITI LIKE?**

Bo Williams [VP of Operations] asked me if it would be something I would like to do and I figured it was an opportunity that I wouldn't want to pass up. A team of us traveled to Haiti and worked for a local construction crew, building power lines into a village that has never had power. I wouldn't say everything went just right, there were definitely some bumps in the road, but we were able to do some good things for the people of Haiti. Just to know that those peoples' lives will be changed forever is a pretty exciting feeling.

**WHERE IS YOUR FAVORITE FISHING SPOT?**

A little creek on Lake Livingston that I used to fish with my step-grandfather. It's called Indian Creek. We used to catch crappie and white bass around that area.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR HOBBIES?**

I have three boys, 2 of which are raised up now so I try to spend as much time as I can with them. My youngest son is a senior in high school, so football, baseball, and basketball keeps my wife and me hopping around.

To see more from our interview with Larry, visit us on online at [www.midsouthsynergy.com](http://www.midsouthsynergy.com), or on any of our social media outlets.



WISHING YOU PEACE  
AND PROSPERITY  
IN THE NEW YEAR

- Mid-South Synergy  
Board of Directors



# the Synergy SPOT



## Board of Directors Official Notice:

Mid-South Synergy is governed by an eight-member Board of Directors that serves as the governing body of our cooperative. Mid-South Directors are members of Mid-South Synergy who meet certain qualification criteria set out in the Cooperative Bylaws. Directors are elected on a staggered basis to serve four-year terms. To be considered for nomination, interested persons must submit written notice of their intent to be considered as a candidate to the nominating committee with proof of meeting the qualification criteria.

The Mid-South nominating committee will be meeting on or about April 7, 2016 to consider eligible candidates interested in participating in this year's election. Two director positions are available, which will serve Districts 5 and 6 respectively. Qualified candidates must reside in their respective districts.

PLEASE NOTE: Prospective director candidate applicants should contact the Cooperative well in advance of the April 7, 2016 date to obtain an application and qualification criteria to insure that paperwork is filed timely. For more information, please call Mid-South's main office at 936-825-5100 and ask for the Executive Secretary or send an e-mail to [nc@midsouthsynergy.com](mailto:nc@midsouthsynergy.com)

## Recipe of the Month

### Sweet and Sour Pot Roast

- 3 pounds boneless beef chuck roast
- Cooking oil as needed
- 1 large onion, cut in rings and separated
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 3 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper

1. In a heavy pot with lid, brown beef in a small amount of oil, then drain and remove. Sauté onion in meat drippings
2. Add remaining ingredients and stir until sugar dissolves. Return beef to pot and spoon onion mixture over top.
3. Cover and cook 1 hour on low heat.
4. Add carrots and potatoes, if desired, and cook until veggies are tender.



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Find this and more delicious recipes online at  
[TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM](http://TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM)

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