

September 2012

# The Hartselle

# Connection

Serving Hartselle's People, Building for Hartselle's Future

## Ferrell Vest Retiring After 40 Years of Public Service

Hartselle Utilities General Manager Ferrell Vest will retire in September.

The Morgan County High School graduate started his career with the Jacksonville, AL Police Department while still attending Jacksonville State University. Upon graduation, Vest received his Army Commission, and reported to Fort McClellan the day after graduation.

His military career spanned nearly two decades as he rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Vest served in Military Police units at several locations, including Augsburg and Munich Germany; Fort McClellan, AL; Patrick Air Force Base, Satellite Beach, FL, Fort Carson, CO, and Ft. Irwin, Ca.

While serving as the Operations Officer for the Office of Provost Marshal at Fort Carson, Vest was chosen for the Army's Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth, KS. The 10-month CGSC course is a graduate school for officers, and being chosen is an honor. "It's something you want to be selected for," Vest admits.

After graduating from CGSC, Vest became Provost Marshal at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, CA, before being assigned to the Allied Forces Southern Command (AFSOUTH) in Naples, Italy. Initially, he served as project manager for computer-simulated warfare, but "this was interrupted," he says, by the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During that conflict, he served five rotations in Bosnia as the Liaison



At the August 20 Hartselle Utilities Board Meeting, Alabama State Senator Arthur Orr (pictured, left) presented retiring General Manager Ferrell Vest with a resolution passed by the State Senate commending him for his distinguished professional achievement.

son Officer for the Commander in Chief of Allied Forces Southern Command (AFSOUTH) and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) during Operation Deny Flight.

After retiring from the Army in early 1995, Vest served as Hartselle's Police Chief for six years before becoming City Administrator. He joined Hartselle Utilities in 2003 as HU's Business Development Manager, and was named General Manager in 2005.

Asked about his greatest accomplishment in his career, Vest has several. "When I was in Bosnia, we were on a 'real-world' mission, and doing what you've trained for gives you a great sense of accomplishment. It was a tragic time to be in Bosnia; less than 10 years after the 1984 Winter Olympics were held in Sarajevo, there was no government in the country to speak of."

During his time at HU, Vest is proudest of the 2008 Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan, in which all departments worked together to look at projected growth and HU's infrastructure needs and develop a plan to keep the utility strong and viable for the future. "The Capital Improvement Plan kept us focused on the things within our infrastructure that needed to be done. With Board support, we've been able to accomplish most of the Plan in every department," Vest says.

HU has started a new Capital Improvement Plan for the next five

*continued on back*

## HU Lineman Smith Helps Save Man Trapped Underwater

Early in the morning on June 12, Hartselle Utilities' line crews were working in front of Regions Bank on Main Street. Luke Smith, a lineman for 13 years at HU, barely noticed as a young man on a zero-turn John Deere riding lawnmower worked around him.

"Suddenly, I heard a metal-on-metal sound, like a car wreck, and the mower was gone," Smith remembers.

The 22-year-old had driven too close to the edge of the ditch, and the lawnmower had rolled. He landed facedown in the ditch in about a foot of water, with the 750-pound lawnmower on top of him.

Smith quickly climbed down the 12-foot bank. He first tried to drag the young man out from under the lawnmower, but his ankle was caught. "I picked the mower up enough to let him get a breath, and then I saw some women in dress clothes going into the bank."

Smith yelled for help, and got the attention of Regions Bank em-

ployees Gayla Smith and Cynthia Stewart. Climbing into the muddy water, the three rescuers were able to pick up the lawnmower so that the man could breathe until more help arrived.

They enlisted help from other bystanders, including bank customers, and were able to lift the lawnmower off the man. Uninjured, the man did not have to go to the hospital.

Smith, who went back to work once they determined the man was not hurt, is reluctant to talk about the incident. "I did it, and then we had work to do, so I went back to work," he explains. "It really wasn't a big deal - I was just doing whatever I'd want done for me."

But Stewart calls Luke Smith a hero. "If Hartselle Utilities didn't happen to be there that morning," she told the Hartselle Enquirer, "no one would have seen him. You couldn't have seen it from the road. That man could have died if it wasn't for Luke seeing it happen."

# Bethel Road Construction Update

The City of Hartselle has obtained an \$880,000 state grant to pay for widening and repaving Bethel Road in the area around the new Hartselle High School, says Mayor Dwight Tankersley. The grant is from the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program, an ALDOT administered federal aid highway program. The program requires 20 percent matching funds for funded projects, and this will be paid from the school's construction budget. Total cost for Bethel Road construction will be \$1.1 million.



This summer, HU crews replaced 30-year-old sewer mains along Bethel Road in preparation for the new Hartselle High School.

The grant is part of the federal highway program, says Mayor Tankersley, and must follow federal highway guidelines. "These guidelines call for a change in our original plans along with extra environmental testing, which will push the construction phase to next spring," he explains. "The road improvements will not be finished when the school is scheduled to open, but the school superintendent knew this, and we all felt that the funding freed up for school construction was worth the inconvenience."

The project, which the mayor stresses was designed for the safety of students at both the new Hartselle High School and the existing F.E. Burleson Elementary School next door, will add right turn deceleration lanes along with a center left turn lane. In addition, a turn lane will be added at the Main and Bethel intersection.

HU is completing Phase 2 of planned sewer repairs in the area in preparation for the new school. Last summer, HU crews repaired sewer main at 25 locations along Bethel Road. During the second phase of that project this summer, says HU Engineering Services Manager Glen Partlow, HU crews replaced 2,000 linear feet of eight-inch sewer main and eight manholes. The project cost \$193,000.

HU staff kept the planned widening and repaving of Bethel Road in mind when planning the final phase of the sewer repairs, Partlow explains. "We needed to restore capacity to the sewer mains in the area to accept the flow from the high school. The existing pipe was probably 30-40 years old," he says. To hopefully avoid having to cut through a newly paved road in the near future, "we decided that a total pipe replacement would be more beneficial than point repairs."

## 32nd Depot Days Festival

This month Hartselle celebrates the history of the railroad and its contribution to the area with a week-long Depot Days Festival. The fun begins with a pageant on Saturday, Sept. 8, then a Community Worship Service on Sunday, Sept. 9. Other events will be held throughout the week, ending with the traditional Depot Days Festival on Saturday, Sept. 15. Activities that day include a 5K and 1 Mile Fun Run; Car, Truck & Motorcycle Show; Craft Show; Art Shows; Children's Rides & Games; Karaoke Contest; and an Antique Tractor & Gasoline Engine Show. For more information, visit the Hartselle Chamber of Commerce website at [hartsellechamber.com](http://hartsellechamber.com).

## Ferrell Vest Retiring ... continued from front

years, and Vest expects it to be completed for the Board to review before he retires.

"In a utility, you have to work on your system all the time, every day, to keep service reliable and safe. Our customers have an expectation that their electricity, water and gas are uninterrupted," he explains. "And while there are some things, like the weather, that we can't control, our job is to keep our services running. A lot of this job is about working with people, trying to solve their issues. Sometimes we can, sometimes not, but that's part of the challenge."

"This is a good company, with good people," Vest says. "I'm looking forward to retirement, but I don't like the thought of not coming in here every day and seeing everyone. This is one of the best groups I've had the opportunity to work with."

Vest's last day at HU will be September 30.

## Line Clearing Scheduled

Electric Superintendent Jonathan Hampton reports that crews from W.A. Kendall & Co. will be working in the northwest section of the electrical system from mid-August through mid-November.

Crews will work in the right-of-way from Rhodes Street south to Nance Ford Road, west of Highway 31.

"They will be clearing the lines along the right of way to reduce line loss," Hampton explains. "When the lines are clear, we have fewer problems with trees and vegetation on the lines when bad weather comes."

In addition, crews from Osmose will be checking and treating poles in the right of way from Valley View to Main Street east of Highway 31 from September through December.

"Contractors will notify customers, when possible, ahead of time if they are going to be in their yards," Hampton says.

HU contractors always carry identification. If you have a question about any contractor who contacts you on behalf of HU, please call Customer Service Manager Terri Harris at 773-3340.

## Southeast Gas Loop Postponed

Later this year, HU natural gas crews will install a new main on Craze Road, and upsize the main on portions of Brown Road and South Johnson Chapel to serve existing demand, says Engineering Services Manager Glen Partlow. The South Johnson Chapel portion had been planned as part of the southeast gas loop.

HU had originally planned to complete the southeast gas loop this year to allow for future natural gas demand, says Partlow. "Unfortunately," he says, "with natural gas revenues down due to the mild 2011-2012 winter, we have postponed the project due to our budget."

When complete, the southeast loop will follow Isley Road at Highway 36 to Hopewell Road, around Sharpley Road and South Johnson Chapel Road back to Danville High School. Last year, HU crews completed about half of the planned loop.

Mark Your  
Calendar  
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Caring Day:  
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