




VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

75 YEARS AND COUNTING

Retiring GM helped shape cooperative's history

With the retirement of General Manager Dave Alberi approaching, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to him. To our members, Dave's tenure might be simply that he has overseen a successful business operation and that we had low electric rates during his time here. For most managers this would be a pretty good career, but Dave's influence and leadership benefited far more than just the membership at our utility.

If you have spent any time with Dave, you likely found him to be a private, humble man. This created a bit of an obstacle to writing a tribute article, but fortunately some of Dave's peers (and friends) were more than willing to help me.

Since 1997, Vigilante Electric Cooperative's rates have been the envy of many. Dave was a key contributor in the contract negotiations between Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the members of Western Montana G&T. The G&T general manager at the time was Bill Drummond. Bill is now the deputy administrator for BPA, and is one of three candidates in the running for the top spot in that organization. Bill had these comments about Dave's role in those low rates:

"Dave leaves a tremendous legacy at Vigilante. Viewed purely from the power supply



Dave Alberi

side, his recommendations to the board and their subsequent decisions were nothing short of spectacular. Between the diversification contract that ran from 1996-2011, to the Hungry Horse contract from 2001-2011, the Vigilante members enjoyed some of the lowest rates in the country, and lower than virtually any other Bonneville customer.

"I want to especially recognize a suggestion he made during the negotiations of the Hungry Horse contracts. While all the Western Montana G&T members wanted to freeze Bonneville's power rates at the 1996 level, Dave alone championed freezing the billing determinants by which that rate would be applied. Subsequent changes in Bonneville's rate design proved the value of his argument, and Vigilante and the

other Hungry Horse contract holders saved millions of dollars as a result."

Dave has many attributes that made him successful at his job — one of his strongest is leadership. On two separate occasions a group of cooperatives in Montana made a run at purchasing the assets of the former Montana Power Company. On both occasions, Dave was asked to lead these efforts. One of the individuals that worked closely with Dave during this process was Doug Hardy. At the time, Doug was the general manager at Park Electric Cooperative. He currently is the general manager of Central Montana G&T.

"Having come through operations to the general manager's job, Dave brought the respect he earned over the years with him. This was best demonstrated when a group of Montana cooperatives stepped up to purchase Montana Power's (MPC) utility assets in Montana. The managers and trustees made the logical decision to have as one of the top leaders in the project, Dave Alberi. Dave's calm methodical leadership served this project well. When, ultimately, we could have made the purchase if we upped the risk factors, Dave was the one who stressed the impacts on the customers, both cooperative and those of MPC. He

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Outage Notification Numbers

M-F 8 A.M. TO 5 P.M.

683-2327 or
(800) 221-8271

Dillon

AFTER HOURS

MON. - THURS.

Dan Snellman.....683-6222
Tim Myllymaki683-6369
Charles Wharton....660-1878

WEEKENDS

683-2327 or
(800) 221-8271

Whitehall

AFTER HOURS AND

WEEKENDS

Marty Simons.....287-3950
Wayne Lemrick287-5800
John Moos266-3605
Justin Bair266-3351

Townsend

AFTER HOURS AND

WEEKENDS

John Moos266-3605
Justin Bair266-3351
Marty Simons.....287-3950
Wayne Lemrick ..287-5800

75 YEARS AND COUNTING

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had the willpower to say “no” if the deal was not in the customer’s interest. With all of himself that had gone into the exhaustive research and internal negotiations in this project, it would have been tempting to up the risk to close the deal, whether it was in the customers’ interest or not, but that was not Dave Alberi, he stayed true to his beliefs and rejected a potentially ‘bad deal.’

“A few years later, Northwestern Energy filed for bankruptcy. Dave had put so much of himself into the previous attempt to purchase MPC, his appetite to lead another arduous process was minimal. What was evident to the others involved is that Dave’s leadership style and knowledge was needed, especially with the proposed partnership of Montana-Dakota Utilities, Basin Electric and South Dakota Cooperatives. Dave reluctantly stepped up and Montana was again served well. Dave impressed

the partners immediately and Montana quickly earned the other cooperatives’ respect and was looked to for an approach to ‘get it done.’ Again, rather than cause existing cooperatives harm to close the deal, Dave did the right thing to look at customers’ best interests rather than empire build. Dave’s efforts in the project, although emotionally draining, built respect for Montana from other cooperatives in the nation, respect that has benefited Montana cooperatives behind the scenes in many ways.”

It should come as a surprise to no one that this industry is highly political. We have representatives whose jobs are to stay abreast of what is going on in the political arena and wage battles against bills that would make electric service unaffordable or unreliable. While Dave leaves those battles in Helena and Washington, D.C., to others, he did step up and help in his own way. From Doug Hardy:

“On the legislative front, Dave made a difference. Although Dave had the good

judgment to stay away from legislative hearings, his abilities served us well. Local legislators respected Dave, and a call on an issue to a legislator from Dave made the co-op core team’s job in Helena that much easier. When Dave spoke at MECA’s (Montana Electric Cooperatives’ Association) legislative committee meetings people listened, again his common-sense positions and the respect he earned from his colleagues showed and, here again, he made a positive impact on the outcomes of MECA’s very successful legislative efforts.”

I had the privilege of traveling with Dave to many meetings with our members, and in every meeting it was a good bet that Dave would bring up our mission. Our goal is to provide the most reliable service at the lowest possible cost. By adhering to this, we are doing what is right for the customer. To do right, sometimes you have to take a philosophical approach to find the right answer. One man that has seen this often from Dave is Ravalli Electric Cooperative General

Manager Ric Brown.

“We’ve been friends for 20-plus years, and traveled a lot of roads together for both work and pleasure,” Brown said. “The two big attributes that stand out: He never gets flustered—even under the toughest situations he keeps a cool head and works through the issues. Calm and level headed always. The second is his patented saying after we have discussed a tough issue: ‘On the flip side,’ which means have we really looked at everything before we make a final decision.”

There is more that could be shared about Dave and what he accomplished in rural electrification, but I think the point is clear. Dave had an unquestionable impact on the people he served and the people he served with. Dave has many attributes, but the one that I appreciate the most and will miss is that he is a great listener. To borrow a quote from Bishop Robert South, “If there be any truer measure of a man than by what he does, it must be by what he gives.”

Many of us can be thankful for what Dave gave.

2013 DISTRICT MEETINGS

With Vigilante Electric Cooperative’s annual meeting approaching, it is time to announce the dates, locations and times for the 2013 district meetings. District meetings serve two important functions: it is where nominations are made for district trustee, and it provides a forum for open discussion about the affairs of the cooperative.

Vigilante Electric’s service territory is divided into nine districts. Each district has an elected representative on the board of trustees who serves a three-year term. Terms are staggered to maintain six

experienced trustees at all times. District meetings provide members interested in running for the board the opportunity of securing a nomination. The actual election is held in conjunction with the annual meeting.

This year’s district meetings also provide those who

are not able to attend the annual meeting the opportunity to meet the cooperative’s new General Manager Rollie Miller. Because the district meetings are less formal than the annual meeting, they provide the member with an excellent opportunity to interact with the manager and

staff members in attendance.

Members residing within these districts are notified by mail regarding the meeting for their district. If you would like further information regarding the district meetings on running for district trustee, please call us at (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327.

This year’s district meetings are as follows:

District # 1 Cardwell/Whitehall/Three Forks

January 14, 2013 – 7 p.m. Cardwell School Gymnasium

District # 2 Silver Star/Waterloo

January 15, 2013 – 7 p.m. Super 8 Motel

District # 6 Dillon North

January 17, 2013 – 7 p.m. Vigilante Electric Cooperative

TOUCHSTONE ENERGY

Last month we announced that Vigilante Electric Cooperative had joined Touchstone Energy (TSE). Touchstone Energy is an alliance of more than 700 electric cooperatives who are committed to the core values of integrity, accountability, innovation and a genuine commitment to community. However you may be asking, “what does this mean to me?”

Vigilante Electric is part of several alliances, all of which help us serve our membership. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is our national association, and it provides business services to the cooperative and lobbies on our behalf in Washington, D.C. The Montana Electric Cooperative’s Association stays abreast of the political climate at the state level and battles bills that could raise rates or make the delivery of electricity less reliable. We also belong to Western Montana G&T, which works on issues such as our power supply contracts.

So what does Touchstone Energy do for the cooperative? Touchstone Energy has a variety of unique programs and resources, all designed to help us help you.

One of the program benefits that you may already be aware of is the Together We Save program. This campaign represents the utility industry’s first national energy efficiency campaign. The campaign gives very specific

directives, accompanied by real savings calculations, on how members can take control of their energy costs.

Seeking to build member loyalty, Touchstone Energy created Co-op Connections, a member identity and benefit card that offers product and service discounts at participating retail businesses. This provides members with a sense of belonging to the cooperative and provides them access to valuable discounts online and across the nation, including a pharmacy discount program. We will discuss Co-op Connections in much greater detail in the coming months.

Touchstone Energy first and foremost helps us fulfill our commitment to you. TSE provides valuable services that we would be hard-pressed to do on our own. TSE will help us assess how we are doing as an organization by measuring member satisfaction, safety, reliability and cost. It produces high-quality educational and outreach materials, along with programs, to aid our member’s homes and businesses. Plus, it makes available a wealth of resource materials that we can access and use as we need.

In all, Touchstone Energy offers more than 50 unique member benefit programs to help us serve you better and help you save money. As we progress forward as a TSE member, we will focus on individual programs and how they can benefit you.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections

Renters Have the Power to Save Electricity

If you rent your home, it often seems that you can’t do much to control your electric bills. But in reality, there are lots of low- or no-cost tricks that you can put into place to cut down on electricity use.

“Usually leases forbid renters to make alterations to a structure, so your energy-saving solutions have to be simple,” says Brian Sloboda, a senior program manager specializing in energy efficiency with the Cooperative Research Network, an arm of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Electronics and Appliances

The notion that regularly powering down your computer will shorten its life is outdated. Nowadays, computers tend to become outdated themselves before frequent shutdowns cause any damage. The U.S. Department of Energy consumer website *EnergySavers.gov* offers this guideline: If you won’t use your computer in the next 20 minutes, shut off the monitor; if you won’t use it in the next two hours, shut the whole thing down.

Most electronics feature a glowing light when turned off — that means they’re still drawing electricity. A quick fix for this “vampire,” or phantom, load involves plugging various devices into a power strip. Simply flip the switch on the power strip when you won’t be using the devices.

While your hands are most likely tied when it comes to the types of major appliances installed, if one needs to be replaced, lobby your landlord to purchase an ENERGY STAR model. Visit *energystar.gov* for more information on particular products.

Weatherizing

A roll of weather stripping and a tube of caulk can go a long way in saving energy and money. Check for gaps around doors and windows.

Can you see daylight? If so, ask your landlord if you can seal cracks and reduce air flow.

The Air Sealing section on *EnergySavers.gov* offers tips on the right types of weather stripping and caulk for your residence. While you’re talking to your landlord, ask if he or she will pay the cost if you do the labor.

Look to your windows for additional savings. Of course, you probably can’t replace them, but if they’re drafty in the winter, try sealing kits you can purchase at any home improvement store. These plastic sheets fit over your window to block drafts. Curtains can also help — close them in the summer to block sunlight, and open them in the winter to let the warmth in.

Useful Tips

A few more simple tips can help shave your electric bills:

- When lightbulbs burn out, replace them with compact fluorescent lamps. If they have an ENERGY STAR label, these bulbs typically last up to 10 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs and use 75 percent less electricity.
- Use your vacuum to clean coils in the bottom panel of your refrigerator.
- Similarly, keep your dryer vents clean. Clogged refrigerator coils and dryer vents will cause your appliances to work harder and increase the risk of fire.
- Don’t allow furniture to block air vents, and shut the vents in rooms you don’t use.
- Check the temperature on your water heater. These devices don’t need to be set at more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit for daily showers and chores.

When you’re trying to save energy and money, it’s good to know you’re not alone. Call or e-mail Vigilante Electric Cooperative at 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271, or contact@vec.coop.