



# VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725-1049  
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Web site: [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop)

E-mail: [contact@vec.coop](mailto:contact@vec.coop)

OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

## Remembering Jay

It is with great sadness that we inform our membership of the passing of Jay Nelson. Jay was a trustee on the Vigilante Electric board for 41 years, stepping down in 2009. He was a colorful character, a wonderful storyteller and a genuinely nice man.

Retired General Manager Dave Alberi noted that during their travels together, Jay would entertain and enlighten him with stories and history lessons of the Big Hole and Bitterroot Valleys. Dave also noted that Jay was the king of one-liners and referred to them as "Jayisms."

Jay penned several stories, which appeared in a column featured in the *Montana Standard*. Later these stories were published into books. A lot of history passes on with Jay, but these writings will be a lasting tribute to his memory.

As an organization, we would like to extend our condolences to Jay's family. His dedication and service to our organization will always be remembered, along with his humor and wisdom. He was a truly great man. The following is the tribute written by Jay's family.

### Obituary for Jay Frederick Nelson

Jay Frederick Nelson was born July 3, 1923, in Butte, MT to Fred and Margaret (Woolaghan) Nelson of the Big Hole Valley. He passed away June 1, 2016, at his

home in Jackson, surrounded by his loving family. Jay spent all his life in his beloved Big Hole Valley. In 1941, he married Jean Renz of Dillon. In June 1943 he enlisted in the U.S. Army. He served in the 99th Division that fought in the Battle of the Bulge, and was one of the first to cross the Ludendorf Bridge at Remagen, and was wounded by shrapnel on March 13, 1945. In



November, he was discharged and hitchhiked back to Montana to return to the Big Hole.

He and Jean raised six children — Jenny, Ruthie,

Sherry, Kathy, Mary and Bob. They were married for 56 years when she passed away.

He built the family home in 1950 in Jackson, when his children started school, with materials he logged in the Valley using the sawmill on his dad's ranch to saw the lumber.

He began his building career and did electrical and plumbing work in the Valley, and said "There aren't many buildings in this Valley I haven't put a nail in." He and his brother Tom built more than 50 Beaverslides to be used to put up hay. He also built scale model Beaverslides and donated them to various museums and places where they can be enjoyed by all.

He loved haying in the Big Hole and helped hay for more than 70 years before giving it up.

Jay served on the Jackson School Board and taught hunter's safety to the Valley children for many years. He was on the Vigilante Electric Board for 41 years, helped found Western Montana G&T in 1980, served as chairman of the local sewer and water board, was a charter member of the Jackson Volunteer Fire Department, and served 56 years as commander of Bill Carroll VFW Post 9040. For more than 20 years he took his Beaverslide and two-pole derrick to Bannack to demonstrate how they worked. He loved letting the children do the demonstrating.

Jay has written two books about the Big Hole, *Scrapbook from the Big Hole* and *Big Hole Memories*. A third book, *Love and a Prayer* holds the letters he wrote home during WWII.

Jay belonged to the VFW that hosted the "Old Timers Day" in Jackson for 50 years, honoring the old-timers and settlers. They pit-barbequed beef donated by valley ranchers, served on homemade bread from the women in the valley.

He was inducted into the Montana Cowboy Hall Of Fame in 2014.

Jay taught woodworking to Big Hole kids, and enjoyed seeing and hearing of their success. His wooden baskets, of which he made more than 300, have been shared with friends all over the world.

The last one sold at the Fireman's Ball in Jackson for \$250. He shared knowledge

*Continued on page 6*

## 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  
Gary Ferris .....683-6321  
Cody Tarter .....925-3326  
Charles Wharton ..660-1878

### Weekends

**683-2327 or  
(800) 221-8271**

### Whitehall

After Hours and  
Weekends

Marty Simons .....287-3950  
Chuck Romerio ....287-3144  
Zach  
Maershbecker ...701-290-9265

### Townsend

After Hours and  
Weekends

John Moos .....266-3605  
Chase White .....459-3892  
Marty Simons .....287-3950

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

# Strengthening Our Future

## *Ferris graduates from the Management Internship Program*

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Vigilante Electric Manager of Engineering Gary Ferris for successfully completing an intensive program in electric utility management with the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

The Robert I. Kabat Management Internship Program (MIP) is a series of workshops offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin. The program guides participants through all facets of the electric utility industry, including the many changes occurring around the nation.

Gary is one of only a few electric utility management staff that will graduate from the Management Internship Program this year.

MIP participants go through three 10-day sessions designed to challenge and educate participants in new, innovative management techniques. Participants leave with a better understanding of what consumers want and how to ensure they get it.

By also covering the unique principles that govern the operations of electric cooperatives, the program helps the co-op analyze other



*Gary Ferris with Gary Pfann of National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

business ventures it may want to enter, as well as enhancing the core organization. Only rural electric cooperative CEOs and top-level management participate in the program. This allows greater emphasis of study on management challenges and the aspects of consumer-ownership that cooperatives enjoy. Participants learn to focus on member value as part of day-to-day decision making.

Gary has completed one of the most exclusive educational programs in the nation for electric cooperative management. We congratulate Gary on this accomplishment and thank him for his dedication to our organization.

business ventures it may want to enter, as well as enhancing the core organization. Only rural electric cooperative

## You are a member, not a customer

*That's the co-op difference!*

By Adam Schwartz

Many businesses use the word “member” to describe their customers. Places such as Sam’s Club or Costco, and even American Express, like to refer to their customers as members. You pay a fee to buy their goods and services, but that is really all you get for the “membership,” no right to vote for the board of directors or to participate in any meaningful way in the organization.

In cooperatives such as Vigilante Electric, membership really does mean something more than just the right to buy electricity. Co-ops of all types are founded on seven cooperative principles that give us guidance and strategic direction.

Membership also gives you rights as an owner of this co-op.

Brett Fairbairn is the director of the Center for the Study of Cooperatives at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada. He makes the case that member relations is not just part of what co-ops should be doing, but in fact is the fundamental core business of the cooperative.

He further lays out the three strategic concepts that any co-op must get right in order to survive and thrive:

### **Economic linkage**

Vigilante Electric is connected to you. There is a business relationship that serves you (the member) and the co-op. Since co-ops are solely owned by the people they serve, they have a mutu-

al interest to ensure that both the co-op and the member do well and prosper.

### **Transparency**

As an owner of the co-op, you have a right to know how it operates and how decisions are made that directly impact you. If the co-op is transparent and combines this trait with integrity and fairness, it will build trust with the members.

### **Cognition**

In this case, cognition is best defined as how your co-op thinks. It includes the current and historical identity, the mission and the sense of shared values with co-op members. Research, education and training are critical functions that Vigilante

Electric must conduct on an ongoing basis to ensure that we always have the best information to make decisions.

The cooperative business model is the best one on earth, but like any enterprise, it is up to the human beings who work at the co-op, who serve on the board and the members like you to ensure that the principles and values do not fade over time.

First and foremost, Vigilante Electric strives to be thought of as a member-owned cooperative that gives you the best value of any utility. If we succeed, our community thrives and you will always value being a member — not a customer.

# LESA

## *A new approach to irrigating*

Today, with the dynamic nature of energy efficiency, it is challenging to stay abreast of current and emerging practices.

Currently, we are monitoring a research project that could have a drastic impact on crop irrigation. This project goes by the acronym LESA, it is funded by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), and is showing promising results.

LESA stands for Low Elevation Spray Application. Over the past several years, BPA has partnered with researchers at Washington State University and the University of Idaho on a demonstration pilot to assess the viability and suitability of LESA irrigation technology for broader deployment in the Northwest.

Irrigation pivots typically spray water over the top of a crop, about five or six feet off the ground; this is called Mid Elevation Spray Application (MESA). The LESA system uses the same pivot infrastructure, but modifies it with spray heads approximately a foot off the ground. Hoses are equipped with low-pressure sprays and are spaced four and a half to five feet apart. The goal is to get the water below the canopy, where it is needed.

At the test sites, one span of the pivot (typically one in the middle) is converted to LESA, where the number of drop tubes doubled and spray heads are approximately 12 inches off the ground. The section under the LESA application is considered the test section, and one of the adjacent sections is the control. Soil moisture monitors are placed in both spans at varying depths and data is collected for the irrigation season.

The results from past test sites show that LESA irrigation will improve sprinkler system application efficiency by reducing direct evaporation, reduce moisture loss from wet leaves and reduce energy consumption at the pump due to lower operating pressure. It may also reduce fertilizer requirements and crop diseases, and has the potential to improve crop quality and yields.

In Idaho, farmers who participated in area pilot projects were so pleased with the results that many of them are converting their entire pivots to LESA. BPA also likes the results from test sites and is now offering incentives on the hardware needed for this conversion. The big question for us is: Will it work in our service territory given the varying soil types and terrain?

In February, Dick Stroh, agricultural engineer with BPA, was invited to address irrigators attending a maintenance program in Dillon about LESA irrigation. Dick's presentation created serious interest from some of the irrigators in attendance. With BPA approval, we now have three test sites in our service territory, two south of Dillon and one out of Twin Bridges.

Installation of hardware and test equipment was completed at the end of May. Each site has a precipitation gauge set at ground level and two soil moisture monitors, with each monitor having three moisture probes. Probes are placed at 12 inches, 18 inches and 24 inches. Monitors are equipped with cellular technology so that data can be collected remotely and viewed on the Internet. The soil types at the three test sites will give us a good

representation of the conditions we would see throughout our service territory.

Depending on soil type and terrain, LESA is likely to work well in some locations and may show no benefit in others. For the areas where this will be of benefit, LESA would mesh well with Scientific Irrigation Scheduling (SIS), which is also supported with incentives from BPA.

With water and energy being extremely valuable, we need to find and implement ways to use both as efficiently as possible. We have high

hopes for the data collected from these sites. As the irrigation season progresses we will use these pages and our website to report the results.



*Top: Shane Ripley, metering technician, Bonneville Power Administration programs soil moisture monitoring equipment. Middle: LESA test site. Above: Shane Ripley; Dick Stroh, ag engineer, BPA; Rich Norquist, ag engineer, National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), retired; and Ole Berkram, soil conservation technician, NRCS prepare the test site.*

**Jay Frederick Nelson**

*Continued from page 3* of his wartime experience with the Jackson school children.

In December of 2015, Robin Baker of Senator Steve Daines Office interviewed him for the Veterans History Project and sent his *Love and a Prayer* book to the Library of Congress. The DVD finally works in his DVD player and we can share it now with all. Jay loved making horseradish and picking gooseberries, and taught his family how to do the horseradish, which was shared by all or sold at the Family Reunion Auction.

Special thanks from the family to Dr. Ron Loge, who took exceptional care of Dad and also the hospice team, who were amazing help to us these past few months. Words can never express how wonderful your care made us feel.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Fred and Margaret; wife Jean; brothers Tom and Bill; son-in-law Bill Metzger; and grandson Jordan Rangitsch.

He is survived by children Jenny (Virgil) Anderson, Ruthie (Gilbert) Little, Sherry Metzger, Kathy (John) Johnson, Mary Rangitsch and Bob Nelson; grandchildren Doug (Sally) Anderson, Laura Smith, Jeff (Jaime) Robinson, Mike Robinson, Brian (Kim) Harrison, Kyle Metzger, Steve (Anner) Johnson, Connie (Jody) Roark, Stacy (David) Parks, Shawn (Antonia) Rangitsch, James (Krista) Rangitsch, Jason (Dawnnele) Rangitsch and Jessica Batson — and 29 great-grandchildren.

Donations may be made to the Jackson Fire Department, or the Big Hole Valley History Book Organization at Box 847, Jackson MT 59736 or the Beaverhead County Museum, 15 S. Montana St., Dillon, MT.

# Use caution near co-op equipment

By Abby Berry

As you find yourself spending more time outdoors this summer, Vigilante Electric Cooperative reminds you to exercise caution near electrical equipment maintained by the co-op.

Substations and power lines carry extremely high voltages, and if contact is accidentally made, the results can be dangerous — or even deadly.

Never climb trees near power lines. If you make contact with a tree that is touching a power line, your body could become the path of electricity from the line to the ground. If you encounter an animal trapped in a tree near power lines or inside a substation, do not attempt to remove it — no matter how furry and cute! Call Vigilante Electric or 911 for assistance.

These days we are seeing more remote-controlled toys, such as drones and airplanes, which can be a great way to have fun outdoors. But these gadgets also bring new safety concerns. Remote-controlled



*A cooperative substation.*

toys should never be flown near power lines, substations or other electrical equipment.

Remember these safety tips when flying a remote-controlled toy:

- Keep a safe distance from electrical equipment when you fly. If contact is accidentally made with a power line or a transformer inside a substation, many members of your community could be left without electricity.
- Keep the remote-con-

trolled toy in sight at all times.

- Avoid flying if weather conditions are unfavorable. High winds could cause you to lose control of the remote-controlled toy.

Here at Vigilante Electric your safety is important to us. We hope you will share the message of electrical safety so that you and others can enjoy plenty of summer days filled with fun! Visit [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop) for more electrical safety tips.

**Affordable. Innovative. Member Focused.**

It's hard to predict the future, but one thing seems certain— **new government regulations will increase the cost of electricity.**

We want to work with you to keep your electric bills **AFFORDABLE**. We're controlling costs and no matter what the future holds we'll continue to put you, our members, **FIRST**.

**Vigilante  
Electric  
Cooperative**

Find out how we're *Looking Out for You* at [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop)

Looking Out  
for You