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OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

By **JACK HAMBLIN** | *Manager, Southeast Electric Cooperative*

TWENTY-ONE years ago, Miss America and I came to Montana from Wyoming with a touch of apprehension and a little trepidation. After all, we were leaving our life-long hometown and coming to a place people had told us to stay away from.

Our home was a place of mountains, rivers and forests. With an elevation of about 7,000 feet, the winters were harsh and long, and the growing season was short. About all you could raise were cattle. Celinda grew up on a ranch, and I grew up working on ranches. We loved the mountains, the lakes and the rivers, and the fishing and the hunting. We loved the cattle, the horses, the rodeos and the parades. It's a place where our families homesteaded and lived. Our families went back generations in the valley where we were raising our own children. It was our home-sweet-home, and we thought we'd never leave.

"You don't want to go to eastern Montana. It's in the middle of nowhere. There's nothing there." And our friends were telling us this as if they really knew. But despite all their negativity about where we planned to come... we came anyway. And oh, we found quite the contrary to what we



were told. There's much more here than all my naysaying friends could ever imagine.

For the first time in our lives, we saw lush, green grasslands flowing on almost forever before us. We saw miles upon miles of open country, not flatland like we were told. But beautiful vistas we had never before beheld. Of course, we saw the beautiful "Big Sky" of Montana, with clouds so immense they stagger the imagination. We witnessed sunsets beyond comparison anywhere that totally defy description. We've seen places where buffalo still roam, where deer and antelope still play. We've shared our walks on the Plevna road with all kinds of friends. Rabbits, fox, coyotes, rattlesnakes, hawks, eagles and buzzards have kept us company every day.

Making things grow in the high elevations of mountainous Wyoming was always a challenge to Miss America. She always had a garden, but it wasn't always good. The topsoil is only a couple inches deep and covers mostly rocks, some of them very large.

There is only about 7-8 inches of annual rainfall, so if you don't irrigate you have no crop at all. Alfalfa will grow on some years and only a single, short crop. Wild hay does pretty well if you can get water to it. So, imagine Miss America's delight to plant

things here and have them grow, and grow, and grow. In our first year we harvested watermelon and cantaloupe, strawberries and more tomatoes than we could put in bottles.

A cottonwood tree she planted 15 years ago is now nearly 40 feet tall. Golden willows planted in Wyoming took 20 years to get 10 feet tall. Her challenge now is trying to decide what needs to be cut back and what she should leave to grow more. Miss America is in seventh heaven when in her yard and garden.

I should go back to some of those people who told us not to come to this remote, good-for-nothing country. I should haul them up here to see for themselves the beauty and charm God has given this place. I believe they would all change their minds and eat their words.

Twenty-one years ago, it was very hard for us to come here. Now, we consider this our new home-sweet-home, and we're finding it very difficult to think we will ever leave. BM



Be aware of electrical danger after a car accident

“WHEN people are involved in a car accident, electricity is usually the last thing on their minds,” explains Molly Hall, executive director of the Energy Education Council’s Safe Electricity program. “We’re usually more concerned about whether anyone was injured or how badly the vehicle is damaged. We can forget that by exiting the vehicle, we’re risking exposure to thousands of volts of electricity from downed power lines.”

If you are in an accident with a utility pole, your vehicle may be charged with electricity. If this is the case and you step out of the car, you will become the electricity’s path to the

ground and could be electrocuted. Loose wires and other equipment may be in contact with your car or near it — creating a risk for electrocution if you leave the vehicle.

While downed lines can sometimes reveal they are live by arcing and sparking with electricity, this is not always the case. Power lines do not always show signs that they are live, but they are just as lethal.

After an accident, stay in the car, and tell others to do the same. If you come upon an accident involving power lines, do not approach the accident scene. If you see someone approaching, warn them to stay away.

Call 911 to notify emergency personnel and utility services. Do not leave your vehicle until a utility professional has told you it is safe to do so.

The safest place to be is almost always inside the car. The only circumstance when you should exit the vehicle is if it is on fire. If you must exit the vehicle, jump clear of it with your feet together and without touching the vehicle and ground at the same time. Continue to “bunny hop” with your feet together to safety. Doing this will ensure that you are at only one point of contact and will not have different electric currents running from one foot to another, which can be deadly.

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DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Free books for kids

DOLLY Parton's Imagination Library is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting books, free of charge, to children from birth to age five, through funding shared by Dolly Parton and local community partners in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Republic of Ireland. Dolly's goal is to put books into the hands and hearts of children across the world.

Inspired by her father's inability to read and write, Dolly started her Imagination Library in 1995 for the children within her home county. Dolly's vision was to foster a love of reading among her county's preschool children and their families by providing them with the gift of a specially selected book each month.

"When I was growing up in the hills of East Tennessee, I knew my dreams would come true. I know there are children in your community with their own dreams. They dream of becoming a doctor or an inventor or a minister. Who knows, maybe there is a little girl whose dream is to be a writer and singer. The seeds of these dreams are often found in books and the seeds you help plant in your community can grow across the world," Dolly Parton said.

Southeast Electric Cooperative and Ekalaka Public Schools have joined forces to bring Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to Southeast Electric's service territory in Carter and Fallon counties. The impact of the program has been widely researched and results suggest positive increases in key early childhood literacy metrics. Register your child TODAY at www.imaginationlibrary.com. 

