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A 75th Birthday Bash

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

A couple months ago in Billings, I ran into an old acquaintance whom I had met about 15 years ago. I say “old” in the literal sense, as he was probably now in his 90s.

I re-introduced myself and he introduced his wife — of 68 years, whom he was pushing in a wheelchair. At one point during our brief exchange, I said to him, “Sixty-eight years together. Looks like Celinda and I have a way to go?” He smiled and softly replied, “Yes, you do.” Later, when I told Miss America of the encounter, I repeated the same observation to her. “Well, honey. Looks like we DO have a way to go yet.”

This year we are celebrating 75 years as a co-op. And I think that’s a milestone to celebrate. In August, 1946, Southeast Electric Cooperative was incorporated under the laws of the state of Montana.

It all began with a handful of residents sharing a dream of electricity to every home and ranch in the area. Signatures were gathered, membership fees collected and soon the people of Carter and Fallon counties were in a position to apply to the federal government, namely the Rural Electrification Administration, to obtain low-interest loans to build power lines where no power lines existed.

In the early 1950s poles and wires started going in and electric lights began to glow throughout southeast Montana. It was a thrilling and wonderful time.

When electricity came to homes and ranches, peoples’ lives changed virtually overnight. Oil lamps were replaced with light bulbs, and ice boxes gave way to refrigerators. Water flowed into the house pumped from wells, not drawn and hauled by hand. Clothes could now be washed automatically and dried with electric clothes dryers. For this part of the country, electricity brought a new level of

comfort, even a new standard of living normally enjoyed only in the city.

I have been in the rural electric industry for well over 40 years but have never known a day in my life when electricity did not come on at the flip of a switch. I know most of us are the same. We have always had the luxury of electricity on demand. But I have also talked with some of you who were there when the lights came on for the first time. You remember that momentous occasion.



See **BASH** on next page

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

ANNUAL MEETING, CELEBRATION IS JUNE 11

Join us in celebrating our 75th Anniversary at the Southeast Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting on June 11. The meeting will be held in our large truck shop. The linemen will be grilling steaks and we will have salads, baked beans and dessert. Two trustee positions are up for election. District 6, currently being held by Karen Kreitel, and District 3, held by Mike Hansen. A special feature this year will be the Hamblin Family. They will be entertaining us for the first time in 20 years. Two \$500 cash prizes will be awarded again this year, along with some awesome door prizes and attendance gifts. You must be present to win. There will be a bouncy house for the kids to enjoy. Come and learn more about your cooperative. We look forward to seeing you all again!

BASH

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I envy you for that experience, but am also grateful I didn't have to do much the hard way – without electricity. But there are too few of you left who know first-hand of a life without this sometimes taken-for-grated commodity.

I applaud you.

So, here we are, 75 years old as a co-op. We'll make proper celebration during our annual meeting this year. Friday, June 11 is the date, beginning with registration at 4 p.m.

We will hold it outdoors behind our office in Ekalaka. We will be serving steak and all the fixins', there will be activities for the young ones and some great prizes. So please mark your calendars and plan to join us for our 75th Birthday Bash.

This will be my last annual meeting as your manager. At our 2000 annual meeting, when I had been here just a few months, Miss America and I agreed to provide some musical entertainment during the meeting. A few of our children were here and we had a little Hamblin family concert.

This year, during a brief lapse of good sense, or a moment of nostalgia, I agreed to provide some music again. We have sent word out to our grown children, and as many as can will join us. And it's very likely some grandchildren will show up also. How many we won't know probably before June 10. But it should be a good time.

Remember. June 11 at 4 p.m. Seventy-five years is a good-long time, but as my friend told me, we do still have a way to go. See you all there. RM

Southeast Electric Co-op awards 2 scholarships

SOUTHEAST Electric Cooperative encourages students and members to keep learning. Scholarship funds are a good way to help with this goal. In the last 10 years Southeast has awarded more than \$63,000 in scholarship funds. We consider it an investment in the future of our cooperative. This year the Scholarship Committee received more than 20 applications, which made the decisions very difficult. Congratulations Claire and Trinity!

2021 Southeast Electric Essay Scholarship



Claire Callahan

The 2021 winner of the Southeast Electric Essay Scholarship, in the amount of \$1000, is Claire Callahan, daughter of Laurice Callahan. Students were asked "What will you tell your grandchildren was the best thing about 2020, and the worst thing about 2020?" Claire expressed that the most disappointing thing about 2020 was that the pandemic robbed her of her college experience. No activities, no campus time and, most of all, all virtual learning. She did however say that 2020 taught her to be more patient and to slow down. She also realized through the pandemic that spending time with family is the most important thing. Claire will be attending her junior year at Middle Tennessee State University, majoring in allied health science. She hopes to be accepted into a dental hygiene program.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship

The Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship, in the amount of \$1000, has been awarded to Trinity Rieger. Trinity's plans are to attend Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington, and study business administration. She hopes to become an entrepreneur and open a sustainable, eco-friendly business that supplies consumers with affordable but environmentally safe products. Trinity is the daughter of John and Teresa Rieger of Plevna. RM



Trinity Rieger

