

SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC Cooperative



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Manager's Notes - By Jack Hamblin

BBQ Season, Too-Done Steaks and a Well-Seasoned Staff and Crew

After more than 40 years as husband and wife, you'd think Miss America and I would have all our differences resolved, that we'd have nothing left about which to disagree or argue. You'd think life would be a smooth sail on calm seas going forward. And we do completely agree on the big things such as politics and religion. It's just the little things; the things that don't mean anything really. And it's brought to bear about this time each year. I will explain.

A couple years ago we bought this nice outdoor grill. We are not die-hard "grillers," but do love a good barbeque occasionally. I am usually the cook. And I never get it right . . . for her. For instance, she does not like to marinate steaks before grilling. I love the extra flavor. And for how we like our grilled meat cooked, I am a medium-rare steak guy and she cannot have even a shade of pink in the cooked meat. She likes very little seasoning on her steak while I like a fully loaded, well-seasoned steak to hit my plate. If I season both steaks the way I like it, she will hardly eat hers. So, I never marinate a steak, and I never season both our steaks the same, nor cook them at the same time. It's very confusing and I'm in a constant state of barbeque stress when grilling steaks for both of us. But, on the rare occasion I do exceed her expectations and if both steaks are grilled correctly, she will end up with a dry, somewhat bland-tasting steak while I get a delicious, juicy, well-seasoned, melt-in-your-mouth masterpiece.

"Well-seasoned" refers to people also, and usually in a work or business sense. It's a positive description given

to an employee or group of employees who have been at their jobs for a while and perform their work in a timely manner, with efficiency. They are the ones whom the boss is not afraid to assign new tasks to because they have proven, usually over many years, that they are capable of handling difficulties on their own. Because of well-seasoned employees, businesses usually run more smoothly with better service and everyone — especially the client, consumer or MEMBER — is happier.

And that describes the staff and crew at Southeast Electric Cooperative. Including the manager, the front-office staff represents nearly 100 years of experience in the distribution co-op business. They are highly trained, even cross-trained in most of their individual tasks. So when one is gone, the others can get the job done. They make life very easy for me and are a joy to work with daily.

On our line crew, we have six competent, hard-working journeyman linemen, and a pole-tester who is equally competent and hard-working. Their cumulative years of experience at this co-op add up to well over 100 years. I began my career in this business nearly 40 years ago as an apprentice lineman, and have worked with and beside many linemen. I know a good, hard-working crew. I have seen the best, and our crews are the best. Working 30 or 40 feet in the air, sometime standing on a pair of tiny "hooks" strapped to your boots, with thousands of volts of electricity at your fingertips requires physical and mental toughness, and a high level of knowledge all gained over many years of experience to do it effi-

ciently and safely. Sometimes it requires doing these things in the most adverse weather conditions. And these guys do it willingly, without complaint. Becoming a "well-seasoned" lineman is not easy. Being a journeyman Lineman means you have developed all these characteristics and have applied them for many years. A well-seasoned crew is invaluable and we all should be very grateful.

This combination of a well-seasoned staff and crew translates directly to better service for you, the member. And with a board of directors who also represent many years of experience, you can be assured that the co-op is in good hands and will run properly, even when problems arise.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Albert Paul, President
Mike Hansen, Vice President
Karen Kreitel, Secretary-Treasurer
Dave Hayden
Leroy Jardee
Doug Gardner

EMPLOYEES:

Jack Hamblin, Manager
Jerry Kalstrom, Line Foreman
Mike Dalzell, Lineman
Greg Erlenbusch, Lineman
Jake Hammel, Lineman
Adam Kuntz, Lineman
Bill Kalstrom, Lineman
Sam Erfman, Lineman
Dave Johnstone, Groundman
Robin Kuntz, Office Manager
Rita Williams, Office Assistant
Vicki Fix, Member Services
Terri Buck, Custodian

SECO Safety Corner

What did that pole ever do to you?

Placing a sign on a utility pole could endanger a life

What do yard-sale signs, basketball hoops, deer stands, satellite dishes and birdhouses have in common? They're often found illegally attached to utility poles. But this isn't only a crime of inconvenience. Safety issues caused by unapproved pole attachments place the lives of linemen and the public in peril.

It may seem innocent, but a small nail partially driven into a pole can have deadly results around high-voltage electricity.

Southeast Electric Cooperative line crews climb utility poles at all hours of the day and night, in the worst conditions. Anything attached to utility poles can create serious hazards for our line personnel. Sharp objects such as nails, tacks, staples or barbed wire can puncture rubber gloves and other safety equipment, making linemen vulnerable to electrocution.

Linemen with electric co-ops have reported poles used as community bulletin boards, satellite mounts, and even support legs for deer stands, lights and carports. Not only do these attachments put line crews at risk, anyone illegally placing these items on poles comes dangerously close to energized power lines with thousands of volts of energy pulsing overhead. It's always wise to keep any structure at least 10 feet away from utility poles.

Unauthorized pole attachments violate the National Electrical Safety Code, the accepted manual containing guidelines for safe electrical engineering standards. Utilities strictly follow this code, which includes a section that reads, "Signs, posters, notices and other attachments shall not be placed on supporting structures without concurrence of the owner (the utility is the owner of the pole). Supporting structures should be kept free from other climbing hazards such as tacks, nails, vines and through bolts not properly trimmed."

Please help us keep our linemen — and our community — safe. Don't attach any of these unauthorized and dangerous items to utility poles. Fixtures not belonging to the cooperative or another utility will be removed by co-op line personnel; the co-op is not responsible for any losses if an item is damaged or destroyed during removal.



Positive Choices ... that is what it is all about

Positive Choices is a non-profit organization that brings guest speakers to Baker, Montana, to speak to students about making positive choices. Positive Choices reaches students in Baker, Ekalaka, Wibaux, Plevna, MT as well as in Marmarth, ND.

Topics have included drug and alcohol awareness, bullying awareness, gaming awareness, texting & driving, Internet safety and tips on how to be financially responsible. The program began more than 20 years ago when there were drug/alcohol/tobacco prevention grants available to schools. Area schools decided to combine their money to help students make positive choices. For numerous years, the eighth grade would play the "Real Life" game. They learned skills on how to get a job, pay bills, manage expenses and budget. Grades five, six, and seven attended a general session or breakout sessions on different topics. These were led by different counselors and teachers, and assisted by students in FCCLA or National Honor Society.

When the funding through grants ceased, support from community businesses was solicited to provide speakers/workshops. Some of the many speakers/programs were: 2007 – Ryan Moran, 2008 – Thadd O'Donnell, 2009 – Jeff Yalden, 2010 – Teen Truth Live, 2011 – Tim Piccirillo, 2012 – Loops of Life, 2013 – Laymon Hicks, 2014 – Monte Selby, 2015 – Rusty May.

2016's speaker, Leonard Sax, wrote the following on his Facebook Page after his visit for Positive Choices:

"I was recently in southeastern Montana, where I visited three schools: in Baker, in Plevna, and in Ekalaka. I met with students at

each school and — as I often do when I meet with students — I asked them to share their favorite free-time activity. The most common answer I hear from students across North America is video games (for boys) and social media, especially Instagram and Snapchat (for girls). But not a single student in Ekalaka mentioned video games or social media, although they all have video game devices and Internet access on phones and other devices. Their favorite activities were, in no particular order: Riding a goat, riding a goat backwards, riding a sheep, riding a baby cow, picking weeds to feed to the chickens.

My hosts explained that there is a whole subculture devoted to kids riding sheep: it's called Mutton Busting (or Bustin). Who knew? I didn't."

Positive Choices has invited Kevin Honeycutt, a technology integration and staff developer from central Kansas, to speak to the students this year. He will be speaking about cyberbullying and leaving a digital legacy. He will share stories, tools and ideas to help students make great choices that can lead to their success.

Southeast Electric Cooperative has donated \$1,000 to help fund this program. With the help of Co-Bank and Basin Electric Power Cooperative matching funds, the program will receive a total of \$3,000. We feel that a donation to Positive Choices is a donation toward our future.

