



# BIG FLAT NEWS



February 2024

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## Thoughts from BFEC president

COLUMN BY **ALAN WASSON** | BIG FLAT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BOARD PRESIDENT

**F**IRST, I want to wish all of you the great, prosperous 2024 that you all deserve.

We really appreciate our grass roots followers. We don't call on you often but when we need you, we really "need you". Check with our staff to get on our call list.

A little about sharing our manager with our neighbor, NorVal Electric Co-op. About 10 months ago, the board president from NorVal Electric approached me about interest in sharing the manager position. After visiting with our directors and Manager Gretchen Boardman, we



worked out a trial agreement. Six months into it and, after quite a few minor changes, we think it is working well.

We didn't go into this as a cost-cutting measure, but rather as a helping our neighbor thing. Having said that, there looks like there will be some savings there.

It wouldn't work if we didn't have the experienced and caring staff that we do. Don't be afraid to give me a call if you have questions.

We hope the holidays were good to you and we appreciate your support. RM

- Alan Wasson



## SCHOLARSHIPS

### Trade School Scholarship available

**B**IG Flat Electric Cooperative is offering \$500 scholarships. High school graduating students whose primary residence is served by Big Flat Electric may apply for one of these \$500 scholarships.

The Trade School Scholarship is being offered to students of any age who are or plan to attend a

trade school. Up to \$1,000 will be awarded to a selected applicant whose primary residence is served by Big Flat Electric.

Applications can be found at our office in Malta, on our website: [www.bigflatelectric.com](http://www.bigflatelectric.com), and at the local school's guidance counselor office. RM

### ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Area rugs are an easy, cost-effective solution to cold floors. Adding area rugs to hard-surface flooring can add warmth to any room and keep your feet cozy on cold winter days.

Choose rugs made from wool or other natural fibers and plush or high-pile textures for the most insulation. Place rugs in areas where you need additional warmth, like the foot of a bed or under a coffee table. Area rugs can enhance the aesthetic of your home and keep you cozier.



# BFEC WINNING ESSAYS

Blaine Downing and Dawson Hammond win a trip to Washington, D.C.

**E**ACH year sophomores and juniors from the schools within our service territory have the chance to win an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., by submitting an application and writing an essay. This unique trip is truly the trip of a lifetime as youth watch history come alive as they explore the museums, memorials, monuments and so much more with other students from across Montana and the nation. They will also gain a personal understanding of American History and explore their role as U.S. citizens by meeting their state's representatives and senators.

Big Flat Electric Cooperative had several excellent appli-

cations this year and selected two winners for the 2024 Washington, D.C., Youth Tour. Blaine Downing, son of Shawn and Kelly Downing, from Saco High School and Dawson Hammond, son of Nate Hammond and Kari Hammond, from Malta High School, will represent Big Flat Electric in Washington, D.C., this June. Congratulations, Blaine and Dawson.

**ESSAY QUESTION:** *If you could have dinner with one prominent Washington, D.C., figure, whether from the present or past, who would that person be and why? What would you ask them?*

Below and on the next page are their winning essays.

## THOMAS JEFFERSON

ESSAY BY **BLAINE DOWNING** | SACO

**"**COULD you please pass the French fries, Tom?"  
"Why certainly? Would you like to try some tomatoes?"

Thomas Jefferson, a pivotal figure in American history renowned for drafting the Declaration of Independence and serving as the third president of the United States, fits all the characteristics as a prominent Washington, D.C., figure. Jefferson's legacy is embedded in the very foundations of this nation. The concepts I believe would be discussed in our conversation would consist of his legacy, his different ideas and how he was influenced, contributions to governance, and the complexities that emerge when ideas are met with the historically accurate reality.

Because Jefferson was a boundless reader and thinker deeply influenced by inspirations like John Locke and Montesquieu, we would have a rich starting point for our conversation. As a result of Jefferson being such a developed thinker, he had many brilliant ideas that shaped the government as we know it today. We would dive into how these concepts shaped his vision for a new nation and informed his fluidity and understanding of the fundamental principles inscribed in the Declaration of Independence ("Thomas Jefferson"). Understanding the relation between Jefferson's ideas and how he was influenced would instigate conversation about how these concepts contributed to governance.

Moving beyond the realm of ideas, we would turn our attention to Jefferson's practical contributions to governance. Jefferson was a firm believer that a government should never withhold liberties such as religion, speech,



and assembly, and every American should have the right to prevail. Questions might revolve around his perspectives on the lens of government, the protection of individual rights, and the balance between federal and state authority. The dialogue would aim to uncover how Jefferson translated his ideas into policies during his presidency. It would be fascinating to enter the mind of someone who experienced the challenges and problems of establishing an immature nation.

After celebrating Jefferson's commitment to the notions of liberty and equality, our conversation would most likely take a darker turn to look at Jefferson's ironic issue regarding slavery. Jefferson, a slaveholder himself, faced a moral situation that challenged the very ideals he believed so heavily in. Jefferson owned over 600 slaves during his lifetime, more than any U.S. president ("Slavery at Monticello"). We would converse back and forth about his thought process between advocating for freedom whilst participating in a system that denied it to others. Questions regarding Jefferson's moral dilemmas and personal reflection would reciprocate across the dining table. In this examination, I would seek to understand how Jefferson navigated these contradictions and the implications for his legacy.

In the imagined setting of a dinner conversation with Thomas Jefferson, we explore the mind of a well-educated statesman. The dialogue describes the intellectual thought process that informed Jefferson's vision, examines the practical challenges of governance during his presidency,

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## REP. RYAN ZINKE

ESSAY BY DAWSON HAMMOND | MALTA

**A**s an American yourself, what qualities of a man or woman would lead you to believe that they are a true, patriotic American? I think most people's answer to that would have something to do with bravery, respect and responsibility. This is why, if I were to sit down for dinner with any past or present Washington, D.C., figure, it would be Ryan Zinke. Because of his Montana roots, his bravery, and his willingness to serve others, Mr. Zinke represents everything that a citizen of the United States should be.

Born a fifth-generation Montanan, Mr. Zinke knows a thing or two about his home country and the standards it beholds. Coming from a blue-collar family, Ryan learned respect and hard work from the get-go. His dad, Ray Dale Zinke, was a plumber, and his mother, Jean Montana Harlow Peterson, worked in real estate. It's safe to say they raised him the right way. He was actively involved in high school and college academics and athletics while growing up, and he learned the value of important qualities such as greater responsibility, accountability, leadership and future success. These qualities are ones I also value as I look to build relationships and opportunities for my future.

Not only is Mr. Zinke a respectful man, he is as brave as it gets when it comes to risk and sacrifice. A vast reason for my selection of Mr. Zinke has to do with him being a former Navy SEAL of 23 years. Life as a SEAL is one of the most physically and mentally challenging jobs known to man. Someone who is able to not only meet those difficult requirements, but to also succeed and lead others for the good of our country is a true hero to me. I would enjoy listening to his most memorable and most difficult memories in his travels around the world protecting our country. Those conversations would help me gain a greater perspective of how fortunate United States citizens are to have dedicated military personnel protecting and leading our country. After a long military career, Mr. Zinke retired in 2008 at the rank of Commander, another huge accomplishment. A man that is willing to put his own life on the line to protect the life of others, is a man that I would be proud to have dinner with.

After his military retirement, Mr. Zinke continued to dedicate his life to serving others in various capacities in the Montana and federal legislatures. He made me proud when



he became the first Montanan selected to serve in the presidential cabinet, as Secretary of the Interior. I feel this shows that no matter where a person comes from, anything is possible with hard work and dedication. Mr. Zinke currently serves as a U.S. representative for Montana's first congressional district. It amazes me that after all he has accomplished, he still feels the responsibility of helping to lead our nation.

Being a politician has to be challenging, yet he remains strong in his own beliefs and strives to make Montana and our nation a better place day after day.

If I were blessed enough to have a dinner with Mr. Zinke, in addition to learning about his military and political experiences, I would ask him a question that pertains to his life, and how I may pattern my own life. I would ask, "How can current and future Montanans protect and carry on the ways and traditions of rural Montana farms and ranches?" I would love to ask him this question because I, myself, am working to ensure the longevity of my family's farm and ranch, which is becoming more and more difficult as years go by. I love to spend my summers helping my dad and grandpa with all the work that needs to be done, as well as enjoying the outdoors and rural way of life, and that allows me to see and understand their dedication to hard work and sacrifice. As a proud 4.0 student participating in three sports while also involved being in various clubs and organizations in my community, I am determined to put forth my best effort in everything I do. I feel it is important to do everything I can to help ensure that one day I will be a respected adult helping my community thrive, and a successful fifth generation leader of a small-town Montana farm and ranch. The advice that I could receive from Mr. Zinke would be invaluable in helping me pursue these dreams of mine.

Ultimately, I believe Ryan Zinke has the qualities every American citizen should strive for. Not only is he a son, a father and a husband, he is also a former Navy SEAL, a former Eagle Scout and a current U.S. politician. There truly are only so many things a man can do with his life, and I believe Mr. Zinke has definitely made the most out of the opportunities that this world has presented to him. Because of these qualities, there is no doubt in my mind that if I had the opportunity to sit down for dinner with any past or present Washington, D.C., figure, it would be Mr. Ryan Zinke. RM

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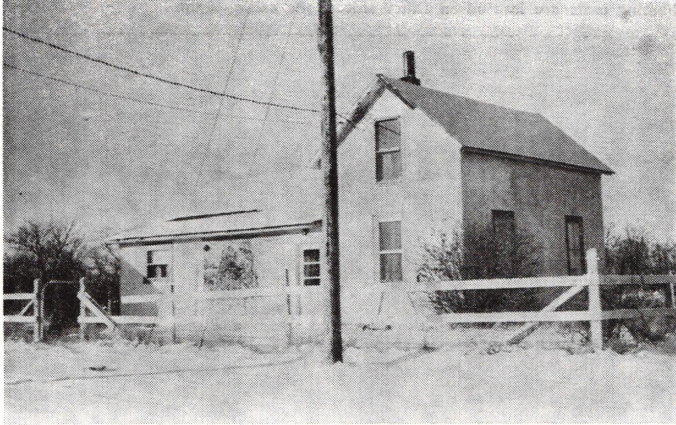
confronts the complexities of slavery within his legacy, and shows the impact of his ideas. This imaginary conversation represents a small understanding of the elaborate mind of a Founding Father and the ideas that continue to shape the

American country today.

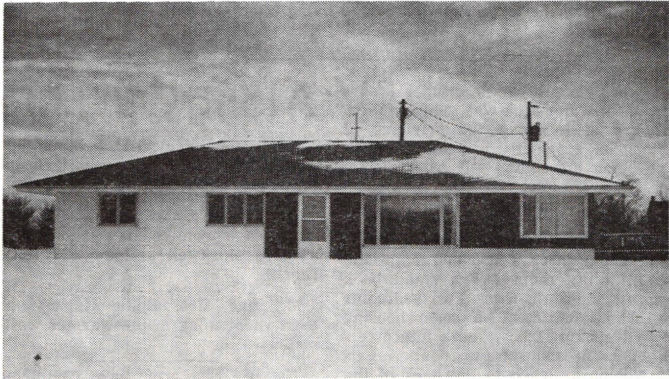
"No tomatoes for me. Don't you know they're poisonous?!"

As Jefferson takes a bite of the tomato, he responds, "Nonsense, that's just a myth" ("Four Foods Jefferson Helped Popularize in America"). RM

## FROM FEBRUARY 1967: *BFEC NEWSLETTER*



A view of the former home of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Depuydt. This home has approximately 900 square feet of heated floor space.



The Depuydt's new all-electric Gold Medalion Home containing 2,280 square feet of living floor space.

### *Along Our Lines*

Installation of electric heat in the labor house at the Miles Tuma farm north of Wagner has been completed.

The Line Utilities Contractors of Billings have completed a short tap to serve a stockwell at the Stever Holman ranch.

Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Harmon have been vacationing in the warmer weather states.

The Big Flat crew have completed tap service the stockwell for J. Harry Taylor in the Loring area.



The above picture was taken shortly after Mr. and Mrs. Del Stout and their three children were removed from their car which was struck by a westbound Great Northern freight train at the Savoy crossing on January 28.

Mr. and Mrs. Stout were hospitalized at the Fort Belknap Agency Hospital for treatment for several days and then transferred to the Sacred Heart Hospital in Havre. Mr. Stout is being treated for a broken ankle and thumb. Mrs. Stout is suffering from five broken ribs, a badly cut eye and an injured leg.

The children were released from the Fort Belknap Hospital after being treated for loss of teeth and minor cuts and bruises.

Mrs. Stout is the daughter of William Kalkman, a former employee of the Big Flat Electric Cooperative.

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