

BIG FLAT — NEWS —

August 2021

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Rick Starkey retires after 41 years at Big Flat Electric

The smile on the face of Rick Starkey says it all. Rick will be retiring from Big Flat Electric after four decades of service to the cooperative. Rick worked under managers George Hoynes, Bill Henderson, Jeanne Barnard, and Gretchen Boardman.

He started out as the material clerk and retained that job title throughout his time at Big Flat Electric. He maintained the warehouse and was in charge of work orders, with a bit of building maintenance thrown in. “Over the years, I think I may have done everything but climb a pole,” Rick said.

When asked how his work has changed over the years, Rick said, “Everything changed from hand written to computers. Technology has made some things easier, but I don’t think it has always made everything more efficient. The cooperative on the whole is not quite as laid back as it used to be. Society has become so ‘instant

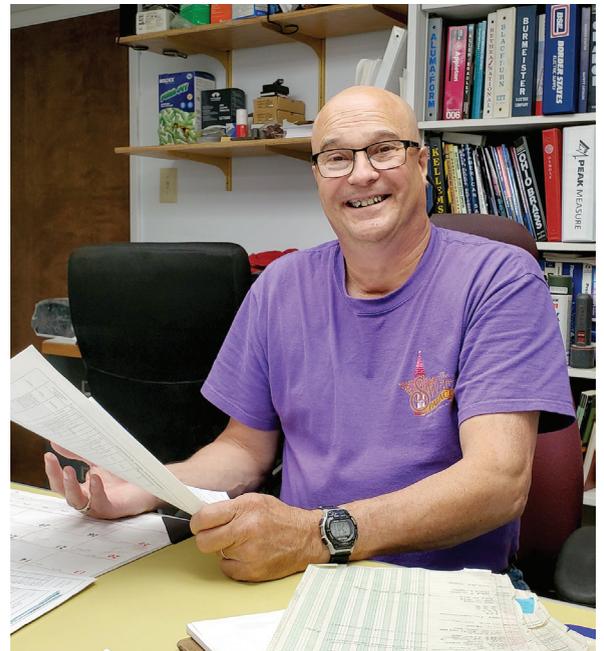
gratification’ it seems people expect things now.”

Rick continues to give lectures and the importance of attitude as it relates to safety on the job. Rick was severely burned on the night of April 15, 2008 while on an outage call. He said, “That night I broke all my personal safety rules. And it only takes one moment of inattention to change your life forever.”

Rick was asked what he will miss when he retires from Big Flat Electric. “I will miss the challenges of anything from finding the right materials on short notice for storms to finding out why the yard sprinklers aren’t working. Anything with a challenge was fun,” he said.

A lot of honey do projects are on the horizon. Rick said, “I have a shop full of projects, multiple grandkids, and a wife who likes to travel.”

Rick wants to thank former Big Flat Electric Secretary/Director Bud Johnson for telling him to apply for the



As of July 31, 2021, Rick Starkey will no longer be working at the desk that he’s occupied for the last 41 years.

position at the cooperative. Bud mentioned it to his Dad. “Between those two and George Hoynes hiring me the day I stopped in and talked with him, I wouldn’t have been here.”

Big Flat Electric wishes to congratulate Rick on his retirement and good luck with all those projects he has lined up. There will be an open house on July 30 from 1:00 to 3:00 at the headquarters in Malta. Everyone is welcome to stop in for cake and coffee and wish Rick well.

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Director's Day

Big Flat Electric's Board of Directors toured the system in the Hogeland and Turner areas. This year's Directors Day included a stop at the Klindworth Farm and the Air Force Memorial where two C-141Bs collided after refueling and crashed nine miles north of Harlem in 1992.

The tour continued to Whitewater and back to Malta going past Forks Hall to Cole Ponds, then back to Malta.

Pictured left to right are: Alan Wasson, Kevin Koss, Betty Campbell, Roger Solberg, Duane Klindworth, Alan Van Voast, and Patty Quisno.

Understanding power surges and blinks

By Abby Berry

Have you ever noticed your lights blink during a thunderstorm? Or perhaps you've noticed a blinking microwave clock when you arrive home. When this happens, you've likely experienced a brief disruption to your electric service, which could result from a power surge or blink. While the symptoms of surges and blinks can appear similar, what's happening behind the scenes can be quite different.

What's a power surge?

Power surges are brief overvoltage spikes or disturbances of a power waveform that can damage, degrade or destroy electronic equipment within your home or business. Most electronics are designed to handle small variations in voltage; however, power surges can reach amplitudes

of tens of thousands of volts—this can be extremely damaging to your electronic equipment.

Surges can be caused by internal sources, like HVAC systems with variable frequency drives, or external sources, like lightning and damage to power lines and transformers.

Big Flat Electric encourages all members to install surge protective devices (such as surge protector power strips) to safeguard your sensitive electronics. If you're experiencing frequent surges in your home or business and you believe the cause is internal, contact a qualified electrician to inspect your electrical system.

What's a power blink?

Power blinks are also brief service interruptions, but they're typically caused by a fault (short circuit) on a power line or a protective device

that's working in reaction to the fault. Faults can occur through a variety of instances, like birds or other small animals contacting an energized power line; tree branches touching a power line; or lightning and other similar events.

Any of the events noted above can cause your power to blink, but you may also experience a brief interruption when protective devices that act like circuit breakers are working to detect the fault. Believe it or not, these brief power blinks caused by protective devices are actually good because that means the equipment is working as it should to prevent a prolonged outage.

Any time you experience repeated disruptions to your electric service, please let us know by calling the Big Flat Electric office at 654-2040.

Craig and Conni French earn conservation award

Near the banks of Beaver Creek in southern Phillips County, Craig and Conni French have taken a new approach to the way they run their Black Angus cow/calf operation. Rooted in the local homestead community (Craig's father Bill French served 64 years on the Phillips County Conservation District board), they have always strived to be good stewards of the land they live and work on. Awhile ago, that stewardship took a new turn and they implemented holistic grazing techniques.

The Frenchs recently received recognition for the care they take of their land, livestock and wildlife on their ranch. They were nominated and received the 2020 Montana Leopold Conservation Award®. They received \$10,000 and a crystal award for being selected. Much of that they donated back to the local community.

Having attended workshops with NRCS, Ranchers Stewardship

Alliance and Ranching for Profit, the Frenchs continue to educate themselves with books, videos, and seminars.

If you drive 20 miles south of Malta on the Sun Prairie road, you will see temporary electric fencing that allows the Frenchs to use forages they never did before.

Other conservation efforts include limiting access to reservoirs and creek bottoms and watching out for soil and insect health on their land. Conni said, "We feel very fortunate to win this award. We never felt like it was



Craig and Conni French earned the prestigious Leopold Conservation Award for 2020, receiving recognition for their holistic approach for grazing cattle.

just our award. RSA, NRCS, and other people helped. Ranching and conservation go hand in hand. It always has. And it's heartening to see that recognized."

Congratulations, Craig and Conni French on being recognized with the Leopold Award.



Ted Olszewski

Former Big Flat Director Ted Olszewski dies

Ted Olszewski passed away on June 19, 2021, having lived most of his life in the Hogeland, Montana area. He was elected to serve the Big Flat Electric membership as a board member in 1985.

Ted retired from the BFEC board in 2003, after 18 years. He served as Board President the last nine of those years.

Ted is survived by his wife of 70 years Mary Ann Olszewski, of Great Falls, MT; son Gary Olszewski, Hogeland, MT; daughter Mary Lou Olszewski, Wichita, KS; son Pat (Brenda) Olszewski, Lethbridge, AB; daughter Teddi Olszewski (Jeff Bankman) Northampton, MA; 8 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Big Flat Electric sends condolences to the family of Ted Olszewski.

Committee will meet to nominate co-op directors

Big Flat Electric's Annual Meeting will be held on October 9, 2021. Plans are being made for the cooperative's 74th Annual Membership Meeting. Big Flat Electric holds a committee meeting once a year to nominate directors for the upcoming election.

A meeting of the nomination

committee delegates will be held on Sept. 2, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. at Big Flat Electric's headquarters building on 333 South 7th Street in Malta, Montana. Elections will be held for District 1, District 3, District 5, and District 7.

Being nominated is one of two ways that names may be printed on the ballot at

the Annual Meeting. If the nominating committee has already met, a member may turn in a petition, signed by at least 15 members, and turned in to the cooperative not less than 15 days before the Annual Meeting. Nominations may also be taken from the floor during the meeting.

Nominating Committee Members

District 1 Hogeland Area

Wallace Beck
Bonnie Harmon
Gene Billmeyer

District 3 Loring/WW/Saco Area

Mark Arnold
Jason Erickson
Pete Lumsden

District 5 Malta Area

George Anderson
Jeanne Barnard
Tim Bruckner

District 7 Missouri River Area

Steve French
Jay Southwick
Frank Wiederrick

Save the Date

Big Flat Electric's 74th Annual Meeting

October 9, 2021

Malta High School

Registration 9:00 AM

Rolls & Coffee served

Meeting starts at 10:00

Sack lunches will be passed out after the meeting.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District 1	Duane Klindworth
District 2	Alan Van Voast
District 3	Alan Wasson, President
District 4	Betty Campbell, Sec/Treas.
District 5	Roger Solberg, Vice President
District 6	Patty Quisno
District 7	Kevin Koss

General Manager Gretchen Boardman

Line Supt Darren Demarais 654-7261

CONNECT WITH US

OPEN WEEKDAYS 8 AM - 5 PM

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AFTER HOURS OUTAGE: 654-7400

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