



Robert Cornell,  
Manager

# THE STORMS OF NOVEMBER

(Came in December!)

Winter weather has been a reality here forever. Late fall and early winter storms are nothing new. They are part of the price we pay for living in paradise. Unfortunately, when the lights go out due

to that winter weather, paradise can transition into someplace with a little warmer reputation (without the heat).

Washington Island got slapped pretty hard with winter weather on December 1 and December 30–31. Wet, heavy snow and high winds in the first storm and just the wet, heavy snow in the second made December not only come in like a lion, but go out like a lion as well. Strike that, closer to Tasmanian Devil than lion. However, much like the wreck of the Halstead, we recovered from these storms.

Your crew worked long hours, under extreme conditions, during both storms in order to restore power to numerous locations. During the first storm we also lost power from the mainland, and work done to our backup generators and switch gear ensured that they functioned exactly as they should.

We know that a number of you were out for many hours during and after these storms. We greatly appreciate your understanding. We prioritize restoration by first dealing with issues that are immediate safety concerns, such as wires down

across roads. We then concentrate on areas where we know that we have members who are dependent on oxygen or other medical devices that require electricity. We try to follow a logical progression after this that gets the highest number of members on.

During these storms, it seemed that in many areas, not only was access difficult due to highly snow-loaded trees and blocked rights-of-way, but we would no sooner restore power



The Halstead, on the beach in Washington Harbor after the "King of Storms," which occurred November 13, 1913. She was refloated the following spring.

No electric wires were affected during this storm (of course there weren't any).

and move to the next area when another incident would occur and the lights would go out in that area again.

During an outage, it is important that you call into the cooperative at 920-847-2541 and, if no one answers, select the option to report an outage and our system will call each of the crew's cell phones. It is not necessary to call multiple times unless your power has been restored and has gone out again. Rest assured, we are working hard to get power restored.



You might consider these photos taken during restoration to be pretty. The cooperative crew would beg to differ.

# CABLE PROJECT UPDATE

## RURAL Act passes, protecting disaster assistance

You will recall from the last issue of this magazine, at the time our communication was written, the status of the RURAL Act was unknown as congressional leadership had it in limbo despite overwhelming bipartisan support. This act would protect our (and other cooperatives') tax-exempt status when

accepting grants and aid such as the disaster assistance we are receiving as part of the Wisconsin budget this year. Without its passage, that aid, considered "non-member income," would be subject to federal tax.

We are happy to report, as is reported elsewhere in this publication, that the RURAL Act was included in the federal Spending bill that was passed at the last minute of the session and was signed into law. We will now be able to collect the disaster aid we worked so hard to procure without fear of losing our tax-exempt status and without having to give any of it back to the government in taxes.

# FIBER OPTIC CABLE PROJECT CREATES OPPORTUNITIES

## Grant application completed for Phase II

As an example of making lemonade from lemons (or perhaps light from darkness), the inclusion of a fiber optic cable in the manufacture of the replacement submarine cable has the potential to open up great opportunities for Washington Island.

The cooperative has been working with NSight, the parent company of Cellcom, in order to try and capitalize on this opportunity. Fiber was included in the cable that ran from Northport to Plum Island, then run underground on Plum Island where it will join a section of fiber that was run this fall from Washington Island to Plum Island. This



additional cable from Washington to Plum was run because the fiber in the submarine cable was damaged during

the manufacturing process.

Phase II of this project has been developed and a grant has been written by NSight to extend fiber from Gills Rock to Northport and from Lobdell Point on the Island to the Cellcom tower on Little Mountain. The route will take it past all the island anchor institutions including the cooperative. Provisions are also included in this project for a pilot "fiber to the home" run around the Green Bay Road/Lobdell Point Road loop.

This is a more than \$1 million project and the grant with the Public Service Commission is certainly not assured, but if we are able to progress, the opportunity for further expansion to other areas of the island is there. Many of you supported the grant application with letters of support or by signing the petition that was available at Mann's Store and at the annual town meeting. Keep your fingers crossed!



Left: The fiber arrives at Plum Island.

Right: Laying fiber from Washington Island to Plum Island on Tom Jordan's barge.

# HOW ELECTRICITY CAME TO WASHINGTON ISLAND

By Ray Krause, as printed in the *Washington Island Forum*

## Installment 2

About this time, 1935, REA (Rural Electrification Association) was started. I found out that Beaver Island had gotten a loan from REA and installed a small Diesel Generating Unit. I wrote many letters to Beaver Island and received many replies. About 1936 I drove to Charlevoix and took the ferry to Beaver Island, 3½ hours of rough weather both ways. As soon as we got out of the harbor the crew put tin pails here and there on the boat. There were only a few passengers. The crew, myself and a Catholic Priest were the only ones that didn't get sick. On the way back to Charlevoix, the constable was taking a prisoner to prison. The constable said he had an uncle on Washington Island, John Larson.

I was sure that if Beaver Island, with about half the population of Washington Island, and about one-third of them Indians, could get a loan from REA that we could also. I kept trying REA but received a letter from W. M. Kline that we must have 100 miles of lines with at least three members per mile to make a feasible project. Shortly after, I received another letter from the REA Director C. O. Falkenwald himself in which he quotes, "Unfortunately we do not feel that we will be able to aid you."

The same tank as above being lifted out of the water by the cooperative's A-Frame truck that was purchased used from the Waushara Electric Cooperative that same year.



One of the fuel tanks used to store diesel fuel for the engines being delivered by the freighter *American Girl*. The 10,000-gallon tank was floated to the Island approximately 1959.

We sent letters to Senator Robert La Follette and Congressman Joshua Johns. Shortly after, a Washington D.C. news item appeared by Joshua Johns stating that he was advised by REA that the Washington Island project was not feasible. We still didn't give up.

More people wrote letters, the American Legion, the Lions Club, local businessmen, etc. Many citizens thought I was crazy to keep at this, that the town would be bankrupt, that I was getting paid somehow for all this, etc., or that I wouldn't do it. I was criticized severely and called every mean name you can think of and some you can't think of.

About this time I took another trip to Beaver Island for more information, this time with Cecil Anderson and his father Jack Anderson on the old "Diana." They were delivering oil to various Coast Guard Stations and Beaver Island was one of them. I remember this as being in the month of August with warm weather and very smooth water, hardly a ripple.

Another agency was started in Madison, the "Wisconsin Development Authority." I went there for help. Through their efforts REA sent up here a M. Lee Lloyd. He held a public meeting, but offered us little hope.

More and more people became interested in this enterprise, so REA sent up a Mr. Guy Keffer, who stayed here several days and held several public meetings. He was great at telling jokes and stories and soon had the audience laughing and singing songs. He said that we should get more signers and that there was a possible chance. Not long after, we received word from Senator Robert La Follette that REA would grant us a loan.



## Meet Your Director

### Lee Enstrom

Lee Engstrom was first elected to the Washington Island Electric Cooperative Board in 1993 and has been serving as secretary-treasurer since Jake Ellefson retired from the board in 2003. Lee



has a long family history on the Island going back to late 1896, when Torger Engelson, Lee's great-grandfather, first came to the island. The Engelson family founded the Pine Beach Retreat (now Sunset Resort), which Lee and his family still own. His grandfather, William Engelson, was a member of the first board of directors after the cooperative was incorporated in 1940.

Lee worked for Dana Corporation for 30 years until his retirement, when he moved back to the island to help in the family business, Sunset Resort.

Lee has a long history of community involvement that goes beyond serving on the cooperative board. He has been a member of the Washington Island Volunteer Fire Department, is an EMT and a member of the Washington Island Rescue Squad, was the golf coach for the Washington Island School, and has served on several boards.

Lee is the one who is always there when you need a helping hand. During storms such as the ones discussed on page 15, he worked with yours truly for approximately 14 hours during the first and nearly as many during the second to help restore power. There have been times when we've arrived at the cooperative in response to an outage and Lee has beaten us there and was waiting. When you see Lee, thank him for his service not only to the cooperative, but to the entire Washington Island community.



Space heaters are a great way to warm up specific small areas of your home without having to crank up the thermostat, but using these devices doesn't come without risk. Follow the tips below to help keep your home safe.

- Use a space heater with an automatic shutoff in case the unit tips over, or you forget to shut it off when you leave the house.
- Plug your space heater directly into the wall outlet. Don't use an extension cord, which can cause the unit to overheat and can also be a tripping hazard.
- Keep the space heater at a safe distance (at least 3 feet) from children, pets, and flammable items such as curtains or drapes.
- Place the space heater out of high-traffic areas and on a hard, level floor surface.
- Keep your space heater in low-moisture rooms. The moisture in a bathroom can damage the unit, which could cause it to malfunction.
- Don't leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.

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