



SAD NEWS

Former longtime WIEC lineman passes away

The January edition of these pages was already submitted when we received the sad news that longtime cooperative lineman Randy Sorensen had passed away on Christmas Day.

Randy was actually elected to the board of directors of the cooperative at the annual meeting in April of 1997 and resigned from the board to take a position as lineman when it opened up in March of 1998. He was officially hired on April 6, 1998, and spent the next 15 years helping to keep the lights on for our community. He retired from the cooperative on February 16, 2013.

Prior to his time at the cooperative, Randy spent time as a tool and die maker and then 20 years as a commercial fisherman. After retirement from the cooperative, he worked as field manager for Fragrant Isle here on the Island. He was preceded in death by his wife, Kathy, and is survived by his sons Mac, Jim, and Randall as well as his grandchildren, Story, Grayson, Freya, and Ruthie.

Kathy would usually answer my 2 a.m. phone call with, "Hi Robert, who is out now?" and then Randy, Don, and I would spend many an hour trudging through snow and swamp during the



Randy and Don with Arby crew loading cable in conduit for underground replacement in 2004.

worst of conditions (usually at night) in order to restore power.

I remember one particular time after a substantial snowstorm where wind had drifted the snow in places chest deep. Randy took the handheld radio to walk a section of cross country line to try and find where the lines were down. After Don and I had finished walking our own sections of lines we were waiting for Randy, and he called on the radio and

told us that we were probably going to have to come get him. He had fallen into a perk test hole that was concealed by the snow and was having difficulty getting out.

"Just look for my yellow helmet. It is the only thing you will be able to see," he said.

In the 11 years we worked together, I cannot think of a time that he wasn't up to the task.



Left: Randy charging the bucket truck battery. Right: Randy prepping wire for splicing after a fault with Lee Engstrom in the background and WPS crew members in the trench in 2003.

SPACE HEATER SAFETY AND "OH MY GOODNESS" SURPRISE BILLINGS

The space heater safety column in last month's pages brought to mind another issue that our members and we here at the cooperative deal with every year: surprise billings. The change of our seasonal members to monthly billing will alleviate this to an extent, in that you will see your bill more than three times a year and hopefully in advance of one of these surprises.

In the past, when sending out bills, we would be contacted by members with "There is no way I used that much electricity" or "I shut everything off!" This is a good time to remind our members that there is no such thing as a "small" space heater. It may be physically small, but the amount of electricity it consumes is based on how many Watts it is rated for and how long it is heating.

A few examples of how our investigation into unexpected high bills went: a milkhouse heater in a poorly insulated pump house that while "only" 1,500 Watts was essentially heating 24 hours a day in order to keep up, consuming 36 kWhs per day or 1,080 kWhs per month; a 2,500 Watt baseboard heater in a bathroom, left on with the thermostat



set at 50 to keep the bathroom from freezing, only the bathroom door was left open and that baseboard heater was attempting to heat the whole house, consuming 60 kWhs per day or 1,800 kWhs per month.

We have seen members leave their refrigerator plugged in and running in order to keep a bottle of ketchup cold until they come back the following spring. We have seen thermostats that never actually turn the heater off or thermostats that go "rogue" and are not set where you think they are (we have seen baseboard heaters hot in the summer time because of this).

With our automated meter reading system, we can see total consumption by day and plot it for the member. We have had occasions where the member does not remember that they had a contractor working or painting in the home for a week during the winter, which explained a higher consumption during that time. We have had members who have forgotten to close a window completely, or worse, doors that blew open, allowing the cold winter weather in.

The bottom line in this brief note is that the meter does not advance unless there is current flowing through it. Electric heat is never actually "off" unless you have turned off the breaker in your panel. Devices in the home, such as televisions, clocks, and the like are always drawing some electricity. A television that is turned off but still plugged in is still drawing electricity as it must maintain the ability to sense your remote control. The only way to ensure that your unoccupied home is not consuming any electricity is to turn the main breaker off. In many cases this is not possible or desirable for the member, but the more you know about your home the better off you are.

The electronic meter on your home can be your friend as well. One of the readings that the meter scrolls through is called IKW, which is the load present at the time the meter is displaying it. You can use this to determine what an appliance that is running is drawing. The cooperative also has devices to loan that you can plug an appliance into and see its consumption over time.

So, know your home and how it operates and don't be surprised by high bills (and re-read the safety message in last month's center pages)!

FIBER UPDATE

We do not have a whole lot to report other than we are still on track to begin some work early in the spring and that our grant application with NSight is in the system. This is a highly competitive grant, but while we have no guarantees, we feel we will score well. Information on all the grant applications along with comments and objections related to them can be found on the Wisconsin Public Service Commission's ERF website under docket number 5-BF-2021 or

<https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERFsearch/content/searchResult.aspx?UTIL=5&CASE=BF%20&SEQ=2021&START=none&END=none&TYPE=none&SERVICE=none&KEY=none&NON=N>

We do not expect to hear anything until mid to late February. In the meantime, we continue to work with NRTC on next steps after the pilot and engineering the system so that it is resilient and scalable, serves the needs of the members, and is as future-proof as possible.

WASHINGTON ISLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

We are continuing our perusal of board meeting minutes throughout the years.

Outside of the minutes, we should note that sometime in 1979 the Island Energy Conservation Office was created. This was an effort that was headed by Thorsten Williamson, who was also responsible for getting the Community Action Program started on the Island. You cannot miss the wind generator that is installed at the cooperative, which was done through the efforts of this group. They had an office in the back of the existing cooperative and employees over the time of the operation were Thorsten Williamson, Bernadette Rainsford, Willy Clayton, Susan Sanders, Pam Goodlet, and Mark Nerenhausen. We plan to do an article about their time in existence in one of the coming month's center pages.



Henry Nelson, unknown, and Thorsten Williamson in front of the cooperative in 1979. If you recognize the person in the middle, let us know!

1979 Having served the cooperative well, the board decided to retire the 1946 International truck and sell it to the highest sealed bidder. It was sold to Mark Rainsford for \$511.21.

Norbert O'Connell, Jack Welsby, Arni Richter, Kirby Cor-

nell, Nathan Gunnlaugsson, Hannes Andersen, and Howard Young Jr. were elected to serve as the board of directors for the cooperative.

Ray Krause officially retired and a retirement party was held for him. The cooperative presented him with a new recliner so that he could properly relax after all his years of dedication to the cooperative and the community.

Kermit Jorgenson was hired as lineman.

Contract discussions for purchased power requirements were initiated with Wisconsin Public Service at the same time as bids were being sought for the planned submarine cable. The board approved and accepted the feasibility study provided by Engineer Carl Crane and requested bids for the submarine cable, its installation, and the purchase and installation of the express feeder cable underground from the shore landing. Bids were also sought for a substation, its equipment and installation at the cooperative to accommodate the different voltage supplied by Wisconsin Public Service.

This was a long, drawn-out process with many stops and starts and rejected bids and objections by bidders. In the end, Okonite's bid for the submarine cable, Gallagher Marine's bid for its installation, RESCO's bid to supply underground cable, Hooper's bid to install the underground cable, and EPL's bid to install and supply the substation were accepted, and manufacturing of the new submarine cable was initiated.

There were actually many parallels between this initial project and the replacement that occurred in 2018, and we will detail those in a future article.

The old truck garage, which was the location for the first generator on the Island, was remodeled at a cost of \$1,600 in order to accommodate the new Island Energy Conservation Office, and Thorsten Williamson was approved as the director of the office pending grant funding. The office, being an independent operation, was organized and hold harmless agreements were signed between the cooperative and the energy office.



VETERAN'S MEMORIAL UPDATE

Since we first highlighted the Gislason-Richter Legion Post 402's efforts to restore the Veteran's Memorial that will be 100 years old this year, there have been a few developments. You will recall that we asked our members to donate to the restoration efforts that are estimated to run \$20,000. The Washington Island Lion's Club had pledged \$5,000 and the Washington Island Electric Cooperative had pledged \$2,000. Since that time, the Jessen Foundation has pledged \$3,000 and numerous smaller donations have come in, bringing the Post to 75% of the \$20,000 goal, per Dick Purinton. This is excellent news and an indication of our members' concern for community and the history behind it. Please, if you are able, consider a donation to this cause and push the Post past its goal. We are almost there!



LION'S CLUB FISH DERBY

In keeping with this magazine's Wisconsin Favorites theme, we would like to highlight the annual Lion's Club Fish Derby.

This will be the 44th year of the Derby, and it will begin on February 6 and run through noon on the 14th. While the details of the normal brat and chili feed and bingo that are normally the culmination of the derby have not been worked out, and in speaking to Jeffrey Andersen and Jeff Heal, under the circumstances are likely to be very different than other years, the Derby will go on. As usual, there will be prizes for the largest fish determined by weight in the categories of Lawyer, Salmon/Trout, Perch, Northern, and Walleye as well as a first prize only for Whitefish. In addition to a fun competition that has been occurring for 44 years now, this is one of the Lion's Club's major fundraisers of the year and is generally enjoyed by everyone who participates, whether they are fishing or just enjoying the good food available on the final Sunday.

The rules of the Derby are as follows:

1. All fishing must conform to Wisconsin fishing laws.
2. Fish must be weighed at Nelsen's Hall the day of the catch.
3. Derby runs from Saturday, February 6, through noon on Sunday, February 14.
4. All fishermen must register at Karly's, The Middle Bar, Nelsen's Hall, KK Fiske, or the Mercantile prior to fishing.
5. All fish must be caught with a hook and line.
6. All fish must be caught in Washington Island waters during the time and dates of the Derby.
7. All fishermen winning a prize must sign an affidavit stating they caught the fish registered.
8. No gang fishing.



Fishing Derby 1978 on the ice in Detroit Harbor. Pictured are Russ Nelson (first place Lawyer that year), Johnny Johnson (Lion's Club president), Tammy Jorgenson (1978 Island Queen), Tim Jessen (Derby chairman), and a fine bunch of Lawyers and Trout caught for that year's Derby. (Bob Bell Photo)

Over the years, the final-day festivities have been held at a number of locations on the Island: Jackson Harbor Dock, on the ice in Detroit Harbor at the end of Main Road, at the airport, and for the last number of years at Nelsen's Hall. Even under the circumstances, which may change the venue or the usual parts of the Sunday event, we hope our members will participate as they are able and support not only the Derby, but the local Lion's Club that does so much for the community.

At the time of this writing, there is no ice suitable for ice fishing except perhaps on Little Lake and that is iffy. Perhaps the ice will come in in time for the Derby, but regardless, we hope all those who participate remain safe and do not become members of the Island Car Wash Club.

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