

IN THIS ISSUE:

- A cooperative connection
- Operation Round Up grants
- Events and activities

A family, a cabin and a cooperative connection

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL



PHOTOS BY DENNIS HILL

When there is a family cabin, it's only appropriate it host a family reunion. Members of the McElwain family gathered at the Hill family cabin on Deepwater Bay to celebrate their family roots. Daryl and Dennis Hill, along with their sisters, Karla Weis and Becky Long, own the cabin. They are great-nieces and great-nephews of Sara McElwain, one of the incorporating members of McLean Electric Cooperative. Sara served on its board of directors from 1945 to 1958, also serving as McLean Electric's representative on Central Power Electric Cooperative's board of directors. Their grandfather, Arnold Hill, also served on McLean's incorporating board.

Two brothers growing up on a Roseglen area farm share more than 70 years of rural electric cooperative industry knowledge

Daryl and Dennis Hill also share a deep passion and love for something that shaped a great deal of their lives – a little spot tucked away as Lot No. 1 on Lake Sakakawea's Deepwater Bay.

When Daryl and Dennis Hill and their sisters, Becky Long and Karla Weis, get together, there aren't many family stories that don't start with, "Do you remember that time at the cabin...?"

Now Daryl, retired Basin Electric Power Cooperative manager of media and communication relations, sits back and smiles at how their children and grandchildren have the opportunity to make their own memories at the cabin.

Their father, Kenneth, bought Lot No. 1 as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opened bidding at an auction when the corps established the site in the 1960s.

Originally, the children slept under the stars sheltered by tarps tied to farm trucks, described Dennis,

retired North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives general manager. They hit the big time in accommodations after moving a farmhouse onto the lot. However, it wasn't until grandchildren came along that the first addition – an indoor bathroom – was completed.

They also hit the big time when the family crafted their very own ski jump. Yes, a ski jump.

The kind someone on water skis sails across, up and over, flying through the air and – hopefully – landing on the water with their skis and not part of their body.

"We were the first and only ones at the cabin site that had a ski jump. I never did make it over, but Dennis did. Several times. Dad built it at the shop on the farm," Daryl described.



Basin Electric Power Cooperative presented **Daryl Hill**, right, with its "Cooperative Spirit Award," the generation and transmission cooperative's highest honor. "I was humbled," he admitted. His brother, **Dennis**, shares the experience with him afterward.



PHOTOS BY DARYL HILL

Trees have grown over the years so the Hill family cabin (left) is tucked a little away from a lakeside view. The cabin is one of only a few of the original 25 lots still in ownership of the original family. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers actually deeded the land the lots were on to the owners and Daryl Hill, Bismarck, has a copy of the deed his parents received.

“Dad was kind of the brains behind that thing. Dennis must have talked him into it.”

The handcrafted thing of beauty wasn’t just a piece of floating wood.

It was waxed – well-waxed. “Man, that thing was slick,” Daryl laughed.



For Dennis and his brother, Daryl, spending time at the lake as children meant boating and spending time on the water, a tradition Dennis continues after retiring as North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives general manager.

Ah, the memories.

Today, though, float tubes and tows replace the ski jump and the Hill “boys” are now pulling their grandchildren behind the boat. Whether the Hill family is out on a kayak, sailboat, pontoon or powerboat simply depends on wind speed and direction, Dennis added.

With a family cabin providing generations of memories, it’s appropriate to be the host site for a family reunion, which in this case was a family reunion on Daryl and Dennis’ mother’s side of the family, the McElwain family.

It’s also appropriate, perhaps, that life’s journeys should take the brothers into the rural electric cooperative industry, communicating and working to advance the industry.

Their great-aunt, Sara McElwain, was one of the original members of McLean Electric Cooperative’s (MEC) incorporating board of directors. She, like others on that early board in 1945, dedicated much of her time, energy and resources into helping bring

electricity to rural McLean County. Sara served from 1945 through 1958.

She would even take her involvement a step further, serving as McLean Electric’s representative on Central Power Electric Cooperative’s board of directors, one of McLean Electric’s transmission providers.

The electric cooperative connection – much like their connection to their treasured lake cabin – runs even deeper: Arnold Hill, Daryl and Dennis’ grandfather, also worked to establish McLean Electric and was another member of its original incorporating board of directors.

At one time, another founder and director, Julius Mattson, recalled how Hill and Mattson personally paid freight expenses for a load of poles delivered by train to Garrison, so they could be unloaded for the fledgling cooperative.

It’s that dedication that founded McLean Electric.

Years later, Daryl and Dennis dedicated their communications careers to that same industry. Daryl worked in Basin’s Electric’s communications department, first hired to communicate with various types of media from throughout the world on what is a state-of-the-art coal-based power plant – Antelope Valley Station north of Beulah. “I was kind of the main informational contact during construction for Antelope Valley,” he added.

Because of that, part of his early duties included hosting tours. “I hosted 1,535 tours of the plant beginning in the 1980s and continuing until I retired. I got to show a lot of people a darn nice power plant and I was proud of that,” he said.

Later, when Basin Electric acquired the Dakota Gasification plant, he helped educate the media from across the world about the groundbreaking work the facility did with carbon sequestration, shipping it to Canada



PHOTOS BY DARYL HILL

*Spending time boating on the water was something Daryl and Dennis Hill enjoyed as children growing up on their rural Roseglen farm. The family spent countless adventures at the Hill family cabin and on Lake Sakakawea. That tradition continues through the eyes of their grandchildren. Left to right, **Cameron, Andrew and Ian Hill** anxiously wait for the line to tighten so they can enjoy being towed on the lake. The boys were 6, 4 and 5, respectively, at the time.*

for use in the oil fields.

Working in the communications aspect of the industry, Daryl saw how much people wanted to know and learn about what was happening in the industry. He was able to present information about the cornerstone of the electric industry – how electricity is generated and transmitted – at one of the nation’s largest generation and transmission cooperatives.

Dennis began his 35-year career at

the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) in communications, as well. Two weeks after joining NDAREC in December 1981 as a staff writer for the monthly publication, the *North Dakota REC Magazine*, he found himself as acting managing editor. “Chub Ulmer (then NDAREC manager) took a chance on a young kid from Roseglen,” Dennis explained. After about six months, Dennis became managing editor,

holding that position until 1987 when Ulmer retired.

Dennis decided to take another chance and applied for NDAREC’s general manager position, a role he held until retiring in 2016.

The family ties to McLean Electric continued to weave through the Hill family. When Dennis became NDAREC general manager, McLean Electric’s board president, Jerry

story continued on page C4

Continuing to serve

The love of Lake Sakakawea and past and present memories of their family cabin is one reason Daryl Hill volunteered to serve on the Friends of Lake Sakakawea board of directors.

The organization advocates for the lake, its recreation, businesses and natural resources on local, state and federal levels. It has been instrumental in leading the fight against aquatic nuisance species, improving lake access and amenities, addressing low and

high water issues, and environmental concerns affecting the region.

“That lake provides a tremendous amount of economic impact to the state of North Dakota,” Daryl described.

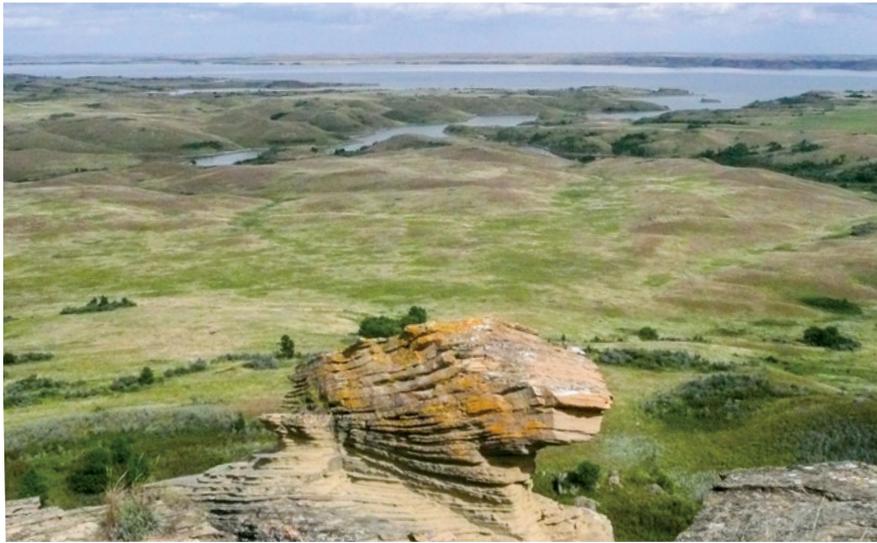
Serving on its board is a valuable connection to learn what is happening on the various levels involving Lake Sakakawea and the Missouri River System, Daryl described. It’s also a way to work on a variety of levels to play a role in its future.

Another way to look toward the future, and using his background about power supply, Daryl works with a friend to present energy education classes in

schools across North Dakota..

Dennis isn’t sitting back, either. He continues serving on Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota’s board of directors, a position he was elected to during his tenure with the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives. He is also on the North Dakota Historical Society Foundation board of directors.

However, one of the nicest aspects of retirement is the Hill brothers can enjoy the Hill family cabin throughout the week and not limit their time to weekends. It’s an opportunity well-earned. ■



PHOTOS BY DARYL HILL

The view of Saddle Butte from Saddle Butte Bay on Lake Sakakawea. Deepwater Bay, where the Hill family cabin is located on Lot No. 1, is several miles north across Lake Sakakawea from there. "It's just one of many cruising destinations enjoyed by the Hill family on Lake Sakakawea," Daryl Hill described.

story continued from page C3

Oberg, also served as president of NDAREC's board of directors.

McLean Electric Cooperative – and all electric cooperatives across the United States – often faced major issues on the federal level to fully fund Rural Electrification Administration (REA) programs, now under the Rural Utilities Services department of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

It was critical for McLean Electric to obtain REA funding when it founded in 1945. Funding was a huge issue when Sara McElwain served on the MEC and Central Power boards. Years later, it remained a concern when Dennis and Daryl Hill worked for NDAREC and Basin Electric. "There were repeated threats on reducing or getting rid of the (REA/RUS) program," Dennis explained.

Each time, efforts of organizations such as NDAREC, the cooperatives and members themselves were able to stave off funding and program cuts.

It was also a challenge to keep hydropower as a public utility, Dennis added, which helps electric cooperatives reduce their costs of providing power.

On the state level, NDAREC and cooperatives found themselves defending North Dakota's Territorial Integrity Act in four different legislative sessions. Eventually, legislation allowed electric cooperatives to establish territorial service agreements with private utility companies, once given N.D. Public Service Commission approval.

Dennis and Daryl Hill agree that rural electrification changed rural America and the quality of life for all residents.

Electricity meant they could have running water in that indoor bathroom back at the Hill family cabin. NDAREC, working closely with telecommunications cooperatives, helped bring water, telecommunications, internet, and even hundreds of television channels into rural homes and even to the Hill family cabin in Deepwater Bay, a good distance south of Parshall and west of Garrison.

For years, the Hill family cabin got by with just their electricity provided by McLean Electric. But then, the allure of the convenience of telephone service proved too much. For the Hills, it started with indoor plumbing and electricity. Then came phone, internet, television, and now streaming anything and everything available.

All because someone had a vision to elevate the lives of rural Americans. For Daryl and Dennis Hill, that "someone" hits close to home, from family to their working careers. ■



Cameron Hill enjoys his chance to "drive" the pontoon with Grandpa **Daryl Hill** when visiting the Hill family cabin on Deepwater Bay in 2009. Six years old at the time, Cameron and his siblings lined up, eagerly awaiting their opportunity to command the ship under Grandpa's watchful eye.



PHOTO BY FARM RESCUE

Volunteers help unload the Great Plains Food Bank truck at the Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry. The food pantry was in high demand during COVID-19 and increased their food deliveries to twice a month.

Neighbors helping neighbors: Operation Round Up grants issued

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Operation Round Up continues supporting neighbors in need, and the most recent round of grants helps underscore the program's importance.

Funded by benevolent McLean Electric Cooperative members rounding up their electric bill to the nearest dollar, two of the May grants supported local food pantries. The additional funds help them address increased demands resulting from issues surrounding COVID-19.

The Garrison Area Resource Center and Food Pantry, which launched in January, received \$2,500 to help offset operating costs of purchasing additional food. Another grant award of \$1,000 to the Great Plains Food Bank, which helps provide food for many food

pantries across North Dakota, assists in funding the network of food pantries within McLean County.

The Operation Round Up board awarded a total of \$8,000 in its most recent round of requests. Other grants awarded by the volunteer board of directors:

- Max Public School, \$1,000 to help fund construction of an outside student commons area.
- Farm Rescue, \$2,500 for row cropping planting equipment expenses.
- Mercer Community Center, \$500 to assist in updating the facility's sound system.
- Guardian Protective Services, \$500 for computer and software equipment.

Operation Round Up funds go into a trust fund with grants available to 501(c)(3) federal tax-exempt status organizations or through those organizations on behalf of qualifying people in need of financial assistance for personal or family emergencies. Organizations could include community-based education, health, charitable, scientific or safety programs or projects.

Its board of directors is comprised of seven people from McLean Electric's member advisory board. McLean Electric board of directors appoints three McLean Electric Cooperative consumers from their district to serve on the cooperative's volunteer member advisory board. The advisory board then elects one person from each of the cooperative's seven districts to serve on the Operation Round Up board.

McLean Electric's only role is that the cooperative is the funding mechanism allowing its members to contribute to the fund.

About 75 percent of McLean Electric's consumers participate in the program, with contributions typically averaging about \$6 annually. The maximum amount that could be rounded up throughout an entire year – 99 cents per month – would be \$11.88.

Two grants rounds are held annually with the next round in the fall of 2020. Applications are due Sept. 30, with grants awarded in October.

Call McLean Electric Member Services Director, Sonja Moe, 463-6700 or 800-263-4922 or go to the cooperative's Operation Round Up website, mcleanelectric.com/content/operation-round, for more information or to download an application. ■



Overhead power lines are necessary to deliver electricity to hardworking farmers and ranchers, but those same power lines can also be deadly if not treated with respect. While you need to focus on the field and your machinery, McLean Electric Cooperative urges you to also watch for electrical hazards around the farm or ranch.

Look up for hazards on the farm

BE AWARE

Always keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines on all sides. Field cultivators and sprayers can often reach as high as 12 feet in the air.

Use care when raising augers or the bed of a grain truck. It can be difficult to estimate distance, and a power line may be closer than it looks.

USE A SPOTTER

Avoid moving large equipment alone. Have

someone watch as you move equipment to ensure you are clear of power lines.

REALIZE THINGS CHANGE

If you have purchased new equipment, be aware of antennas or other attachments that may pose new hazards. A newer, bigger piece of equipment may no longer clear a line. In addition, shifting soil may also affect whether or not machinery avoids power lines from year-to-year.

Power lines also may

sag over the years. If power lines on your property are sagging, contact your electric cooperative to repair the lines. Never try to move a power line on your own.

EDUCATE THE CREW

Look over work areas carefully for overhead power lines and utility poles. Make sure you, your family and employees know the location of overhead power lines, and use routes to avoid the lines when moving equipment.

Do this every year, as equipment sizes and soil conditions may change.

LOOK AROUND, TOO

Overhead power lines are not the only electric hazard on the farm. Pole guy wires, used to stabilize utility poles, are grounded. However, when one of the guy wires is broken, it can become charged with electricity. If you break a guy wire, call the cooperative to fix it. Don't do it yourself. ■

Renting? You can still save!

Reducing energy use in a rented house or apartment can be accomplished with a few simple tips from McLean Electric Cooperative.



HEATING AND COOLING

- Turning down the heat at night and while you are at work can result in significant savings. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, you can save as much as 1 percent on your heating bill for every degree you set back the thermostat for an eight-hour period.
- Replace filters regularly in forced-air furnaces. Do not clean and reuse disposable filters.
- Reduce heat to rooms that are not used, and keep doors to those rooms closed.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

- Inexpensive heat-shrink films can be installed over windows to create a pocket of insulating air and reduce air leaks.
- Add window blinds or curtains to reduce energy use. Lined fabrics or honeycombed blinds generally are better insulators.

- Open blinds or curtains on the sunny side of the building to allow the sun to heat the room for free in the winter and reduce the need for additional lighting. Close the blinds and curtains at night to retain the heat.

LIGHTING AND APPLIANCES

- Simply turn lights and appliances off when not in use.
- Install energy-efficient light bulbs.
- Use energy-saving modes on electronic devices. On dishwashers, do not use the dry feature, and ensure computers and video games go into sleep modes if you are not turning them off.
- Even appliances that appear to be off may be using electricity. Unplug appliances when not in use or use a power strip to stop the flow of electricity to appliances that are used infrequently, such as computer printers.

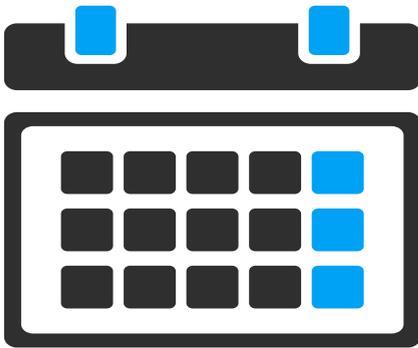
- If you have a washer and dryer, wash only full loads, and consider hanging clothes to dry or partially dry them in the dryer, then hang them to complete drying. This may add humidity to the home in the winter, when humidity is needed.

WATER HEATING

- Check the temperature of your hot water heater; if it is above 120 degrees, you can save money by lowering the temperature.
- When washing clothes, use detergents made for cold water.
- Install a low-flow shower head.
- Run the dishwasher only when full.

OTHER TIPS:

- Set the refrigerator temperature to 36 to 39 degrees.
- Set the freezer to 0 to 5 degrees.
- Turn off the water while shaving and brushing teeth.



McLean County community calendar:

Events and activities to see and do

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Please visit McLean Electric Cooperative's website, Facebook page and your *North Dakota Living* local pages for an announcement of the upcoming 75th anniversary celebration, date and other details, which was postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines.

McLean County food pantry distributions:

- **Community Cupboard of Underwood:** 4-6 p.m. Aug. 6, 10 a.m.-noon Aug. 15, and 4-6 p.m. Sept. 3, 208 Lincoln Ave.
- **Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry, Garrison:** Aug. 27, noon-2 p.m., 5-7 p.m., back door, former Lazy J's building.
- **Our Saviors Lord's Food Pantry, Max:** Aug. 17, noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., Max City Hall, 215 Main St.
- **The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake:** 2-4 p.m. Aug. 13, 10 a.m.-noon Aug. 22, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St.

- **Wilton Food Pantry, Wilton:** "Mini" distributions every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone; full distribution 4-6 p.m. Aug. 20, Wilton Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave.

Tentative June events:

PLEASE NOTE THAT SCHEDULED EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE PENDING COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS AND MANDATES. PLEASE FOLLOW HEALTH GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTACT EVENT SPONSORS FOR DETAILS AND UPDATES.

- **Aug. 1:** Max Rodeo, Max Rodeo Grounds.
- **Aug. 1:** Club de Skinatique Water Ski Show followed by Lighted Boat Parade, 5-10 p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison. Contact the park, 701-337-5576, for details.
- **Aug. 3:** Northland Health Centers Clinic, Turtle Lake, sports physicals day, back-to-school wellness exams (with

vaccines) and optional free COVID-19 testing. Contact the clinic, 701-448-2054, to schedule an appointment.

- **Aug. 22:** Beach Party, 5-11 p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison. Contact the park, 701-337-5576, for details. ■

McLean County organizations and communities can contact Patricia Stockdill, (stockdill.patricia@gmail.com) or telephone 701-337-5462 to submit community events.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Larry Gessele, president
701-447-2461
District 7, Mercer

Darcy Klain, vice president
701-448-2408
District 4, Ruso

Rod Stockdill, secretary-treasurer
701-337-5462
District 3, Garrison

Clarence Behles, asst. secretary-treasurer
701-337-5362
District 2, Garrison

Troy Presser, director
701-447-2855
District 5, Turtle Lake

Karen Hanson, director
701-448-2636
District 6, Washburn

James Odermann, director
701-743-4415
District 1, Parshall

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