



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Pictured is Vigilante Electric General Manager Rollie Miller presenting Jim Petersen with the Northwest Public Power Association President's Award, which recognizes outstanding service and work on behalf of our industry. | **PHOTO COURTESY OF VIGILANTE ELECTRIC**

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Dist. #9
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Rollie Miller – General Manager

REMEMBERING JIM

Retired trustee and friend will be deeply missed

By **ROD SIRING** | *Member Services, Vigilante Electric*

It is with heartfelt sadness that we inform our membership of the passing of our friend and retired trustee, Jim Petersen. A fourth-generation farmer/rancher, Jim's belief in the value of agriculture and his commitment to the economic health of rural America was evident in his dedication to rural electrification, and to Vigilante Electric Cooperative.

During Jim's tenure, he served Vigilante Electric with distinction as president, vice president and trustee. He also represented

our interests as president and trustee of Montana Energy Alliance, a propane subsidiary owned partially by Vigilante Electric. Jim was also an integral part of the advancement of Vigilante Electric's safety program, having served as a board representative on the Safety Committee.

"Jim was president of the cooperative when I was hired. He was not only a thoughtful trustee of the cooperative's

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Guided by optimism

Get your essays in for the 2021 Youth Tour in D.C.

By **ROD SIRING** | Member Services

In the midst of COVID 19, uncertainty appears to be the new norm. With no real light at the end of the COVID tunnel, it is hard to imagine what you will be doing nine months from now, let alone make major plans. Yet, here we are, looking for two students that want to travel, meet new people and participate in a one-of-a-kind event: the NRECA Youth Tour to Washington D.C.

For 55 years, the Youth Tour has educated and entertained tens of thousands of participants. For many, their experience on the Youth Tour changed the course of their life. Over the years, we have asked the participants who have represented Vigilante Electric Cooperative on this tour to write of their experience. The following are just a few of the comments that we have received illustrating what this tour has meant to those that experienced it:

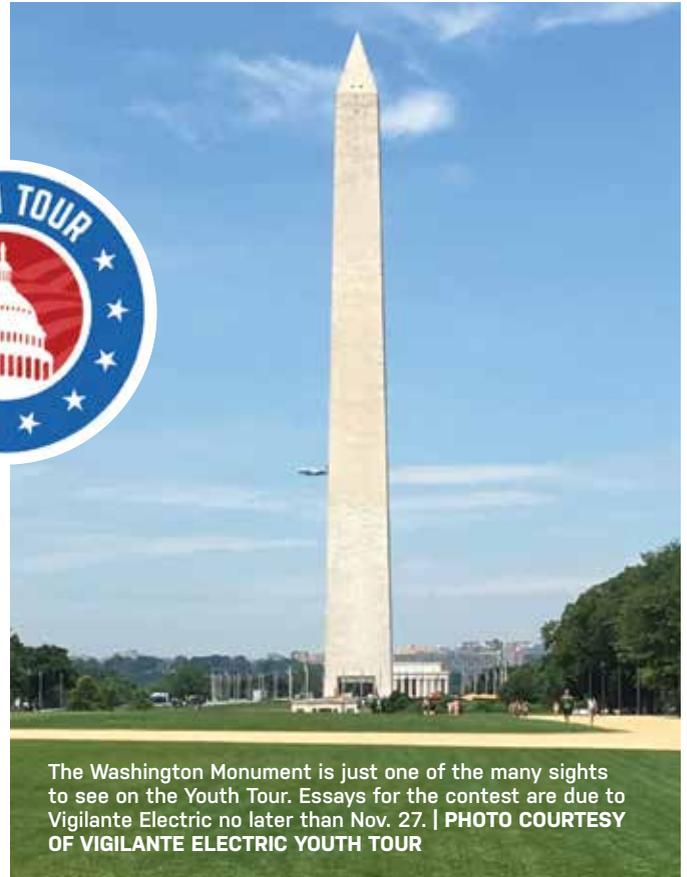
"The Youth Tour was the greatest experience of my life. I learned life lessons, American history and how to give back to my community. I hope everyone can see our nation's capital and history like I did. On the tour I made lifelong friends and memories that I will never forget." **Jordan Peterson** – Beaverhead Co High School

"This was truly a trip of a lifetime, and I will never forget all the amazing experiences, along with all the wonderful people I met. I'll have long-term friendships with many of them, and I'll also remember and appreciate our great chaperones who put up with all of us. I want to encourage any sophomores or juniors to apply for this unforgettable trip." **Macie Martinell** – Lima High School

"D.C. exceeded my expectations and made me dream bigger, think outside the box and walk in a zigzag rather than a straight line. I feel an empowerment that can best be described by Henry David Thoreau, 'What lies before us and what lies behind us are small matters compared to what lies within us. And when you bring what lies within out into the world, miracles happen.'" Kjersten Sandru – Twin Bridges High School

While the 2020 Youth Tour was canceled due to the pandemic, and there is a lot of uncertainty in planning the next tour, we remain optimistic that we can make it a reality. Last year's winners, Kyie Salerno and Samuel Konen, will have the opportunity to go in 2021, along with two applicants selected this year.

Rest assured our primary focus will be the safety of all participants, then to create as fun and informative trip as



The Washington Monument is just one of the many sights to see on the Youth Tour. Essays for the contest are due to Vigilante Electric no later than Nov. 27. | PHOTO COURTESY OF VIGILANTE ELECTRIC YOUTH TOUR

possible. The dates for the 2021 Youth Tour to Washington D.C. are June 20-26, with a mandatory orientation meeting in Great Falls on June 19. To be eligible, the student's parent or guardian must receive electricity from Vigilante Electric. The student cannot be a prior participant and must currently be a sophomore or junior in high school.

Winners are selected through an essay contest. This year's topic is:

"How has reliable electricity benefited you and your community through the COVID-19 pandemic?"

Essays are due to Vigilante Electric no later than November 27, 2020. Complete details are available at area high schools or on our website at www.vec.coop/content/youth-tour.

I have chaperoned the Montana delegation twice, and in my opinion, this is the best program that we support as an organization. If you know an adventurous soul that would be interested in such a legacy event, please encourage them to apply. RM

Is history repeating itself?

20-year anniversary of the Western Energy Crisis

By **KURT MILLER** | Director of Northwest RiverPartners

IT feels strange to use the word “crisis” in the face of a pandemic and international outcry against racism. Yet, it’s an incredibly appropriate description of where our region’s energy grid has been, and where it could be headed.

For those who weren’t here 20 years ago, the Western Energy Crisis brought great uncertainty. California was experiencing rolling blackouts and its grid operator was purposely blacking-out different parts of the state to ration the much-needed electricity. If you don’t think blackouts are a big deal, imagine living through the recent stay-at-home orders without electricity.

The Pacific Northwest didn’t experience blackouts, but the region still suffered from the extraordinary efforts taken to avoid them. Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), which supplies energy to utilities across the West Coast, had to raise rates by 45 percent. Portland General Electric, the utility I worked for at the time, was forced to hike rates by 33 percent. Thousands of jobs were lost across the Northwest as electricity bills sky-rocketed.

Looking back, analysts blamed short-sighted energy policies, growing demand, a lack of new generation, and giant energy companies as the major contributing factors.

History repeating itself

Disappointingly, it seems that some policymakers have not learned from the past. Although she has taken the exceptional measure of issuing an executive order to rein in carbon emissions, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has twice called for the breaching of the lower Snake River dams.

These dams produce enough carbon-free electricity to power a city the size of Seattle.

In Washington state, the Department of Ecology, under Gov. Jay Inslee, recently issued a permit requiring dams on the lower Snake and lower Columbia rivers to meet water temperature standards that are unattainable.

They’re unattainable because the Environmental Protection Agency found that the water entering the state from

Canada and Idaho is already too hot to meet these temperature standards, even if the lower river dams weren’t in place.

By reducing access to hydropower, these policies threaten to undermine the region’s ability to reach its clean energy goals, and set us back in our climate change fight. Just as worrisome, they could result in billions of dollars of added energy costs for electricity customers across the Northwest at a time when every dollar matters to homes and businesses.

Notably, these costs don’t include the potential fallout of a new energy crisis. A report from the Northwest Power Pool indicated that the region could experience electricity capacity shortages as soon as this year due to the early shuttering of thousands of megawatts of coal-fueled generation.

Steve Wright, BPA’s acting administrator, during the 2000-2001 period, shared the emotional and physical toll that communities suffered as a result of the last energy crisis. Every job lost tragically results in higher instances of physical abuse, suicide and heart disease as people lose hope and their sense of worth.

Hope for a better outcome

We absolutely have the ability to avoid a potential energy crisis, but it will require a thoughtful and honest discussion. We need policies that are aspirational in nature but are also founded in reality. By that, I mean that policymakers must understand the physical constraints on the grid, how long it takes to add new generation resources, the role those resources need to perform and what the costs are for the communities.

These types of concerns have led to the creation of the first regional “reliability consortium” in the Northwest consisting of nearly 400 energy industry leaders and policymakers. Many of these leaders are warning of the risk of regional blackouts, and drawing parallels between the energy crisis of 2000 and current conditions.

We hope that the Northwest Power Pool’s regional effort will be closely followed and listened to. To learn more about this effort, go to nwpp.org/adequacy. 



Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 354

Total Contributions: \$5,996.58

To apply, contact our office at
(800) 221-8271 or 683-2327

An online application is available at www.vec.coop.

TRIBUTE

Continued from page 5

interests, but a trusted and respected friend. He is missed for sure. Speaking for the entire Vigilante Electric team of trustees and employees, we want to express our deepest sympathies and condolences to the entire Petersen family," General Manager Rollie Miller said.

The following is the loving tribute from Jim's family:

Farming and ranching were two driving forces in Jim Petersen's life, and he was committed to developing and maintaining the family's farm. He was born May 28, 1945, to May Selway Petersen and Elmer Petersen, and was the fourth generation on the original Selway site.

Jim passed away on September 9, 2020, surrounded by family.

Another commitment made by Jim was to his family. He was a kind and generous husband, father and grandfather. Jim was thrilled with the accomplishments of his children and grandchildren, and was proud of each of them.

Jim was a 52-year member of the Dillon Elks' Lodge. He was a member of Montana Grain Growers and the Dillon Chamber of Commerce. He held offices in the Canyon Ditch Company, the Danish Brotherhood and Montana Energy Alliance. As a 43-year member on Vigilante's Board of Directors, Jim served in several capacities. In May 2018, Jim received the Northwest Public Power Association President's Award for his dedication and service to Vigilante Electric.

Guns, cars, snowmobiling, skiing, camping (in later life) and fine dining were some of his interests. He liked to drive around to check out the fields and Dillon developments. Highlights in his life were trips to Hawaii, especially those with all of his family.

Jim and his wife Janie were married in June 1967, and immediately joined the family operation, which grew and emerged as Grandview Ranch. They worked to prosper and become a respected farm/ranch business.

Jim was preceded in death by his mother and father (May and Elmer), a brother (Bill), mother-in-law (Beth) and father-in-law (Glenn), brother-in-law (Jim), and some close friends. He is survived by his wife (Janie), son Tod (Bozeman) and his wife Amber – their three children Kade, Kelli and Ashley; son Jed (Dillon) and wife Amy – four children Kyndall, Lauryn, Sydney and Jed, Jr., son Troy (Creswell, Oregon) and his wife Elizabeth – three children Jake, Kate and Luke.

Special thanks to Dr. McIntyre, the staff at Pioneer Care and Rehabilitation, and Missy Westman, who helped us all so much. Memorial suggestions are for Dillon Home Health Care, Barrett Hospital Foundation or Grace Methodist Church.



Get heating help

By **ROD SIRING** | Member Services

THERE are sources in the news that are predicting a snowy, cold winter. If you are like me, this is not what you want to hear. A long, cold winter coupled with the pandemic issues is concerning, and for low-income families, the cost of winter energy bills can be overwhelming. Fortunately, there are organizations that can help.

The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) is federally funded and helps people in need by paying part of winter energy bills. Equally as important, qualified LIEAP applicants are eligible for the Weatherization Program, which helps improve the heating efficiency of homes. The application period is October 1, 2020, to April 30, 2021. LIEAP/Weatherization eligibility will be determined based upon the circumstances at the time of the application. If you think you qualify, or are experiencing current hardship, call for an application. Each office serves specific counties, so contact the office nearest you.

LIEAP FINANCIAL GUIDELINES

FAMILY SIZE	INCOME LIMITS						
1	\$26,616	4	\$51,184	7	\$69,098	10	\$79,620
2	\$34,805	5	\$59,373	8	\$70,634	11	\$86,340
3	\$42,995	6	\$67,563	9	\$72,900	12	\$93,060

LIEAP CONTACT NUMBERS

Action Inc, Butte (800) 382-1325 (406) 496-4975	Rocky Mountain Development Council LIEAP Office, Helena (800) 356-6544 (406) 447-1625	District IX HRDC Bozeman (800) 332-2796 (406) 587-4486
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Concern for community is a core principle of cooperatives and since 1998, Vigilante Electric Cooperative has helped qualified members receive credit on their accounts to help with winter heating needs. Our applications are available Oct. 1, and need to be returned by Nov 20. We follow the same income guidelines as LIEAP, however our funding is limited so we strongly encourage those in need to apply for federal assistance. Applications are available by contacting our office at 683-2327 or 800-221-8271.

Another source of help is Energy Share of Montana – a private nonprofit organization whose primary purpose is to help Montanans faced with energy emergencies meet their needs and move toward self-reliance. Requests for this assistance can also be made through the state offices above. RM