



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725-1049
 (406) 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271
 Website: www.vec.coop
 E-mail: contact@vec.coop

VETERAN'S DAY 2021

Elaine Davies

Honoring a member and a veteran

Story by ROD SIRING | Vigilante Electric Member Services

WITH Veteran's Day being in November, I thought it would be interesting to do a story on one of our members who served our country in the military. It's my experience, however, that many veterans are not comfortable speaking about their time in the military, especially those who served in combat. Struggling with who to approach for this article, the ideal person was presented to me by a fellow employee, and that person is retired Marine Corps Col. Elaine Davies.

While I knew which branch of the military Elaine had served in, I wasn't too sure what to expect from this 87-year-old Marine Corps veteran, but as the saying goes: once a Marine, always a Marine. During our entire conversation, she demonstrated attributes you would expect from a Marine: pride, confidence and dedication to a cause. Plus, the clarity of thought and articulation of those memories were remarkable.

Raised in Flint, Michigan, Elaine went on to graduate college and pharmacy school. Her first job was in a hospital pharmacy in San Diego, where she worked for four years. Elaine relished her time there, "San Diego was a great place for a young bachelorette." It was here that she befriended several female Marines and, according to Elaine, "they hooked me and brought me in."

Her decision to join the Marine Corps



Retired Marine Corps Col. Elaine Davies.
| PHOTO COURTESY OF ELAINE DAVIES.

didn't set well with her dad. He was upset, thinking she was sacrificing too much financially. As a pharmacist, she made \$1,300 per month, and as a lieutenant in the Marine Corps, \$330 per month. She didn't believe it was a sacrifice, explaining that the Marine Corps provided a lot that was not reflected in her pay.

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VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 624

Total Contributions: \$10,796.46

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

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

IT'S A MATTER OF (CO-OP) PRINCIPLES

By ANNE PRINCE

FOR me, this is a time of year for reflection, and topping my list of things I'm grateful for is our wonderful communities. I know I speak for all Vigilante Electric Cooperative employees when I say that we are thankful to be in such an incredible place. We are fortunate to live in the same place where we work, which makes our ties to this community that much stronger.

You may recall that last month, my column touched on the first three Cooperative Principles, so this month, I'd like to tell you about the remaining four principles. The Cooperative Principles are essential to the co-op business model and benefit all members of the co-op.

The fourth principle, Autonomy and Independence, means that the co-op operates in an autonomous way that is solely directed and guided by its members, reflecting the values and needs of our local community. This means the co-op is not being influenced by leaders or shareholders several states away. Instead, the co-op is led by the local members it serves.

The fifth principle, Education and Training, focuses on enhancing the knowledge of co-op employees and

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board members, which enables them to contribute to the development of the co-op.

By investing in continuous learning for our employees and board members, our co-op is making a commitment not just to individual professional and personal growth, but to the future of the co-op and the high quality of service our members expect and deserve. It's a win-win situation.

We also strive to inform our members (that's you!) and the public about the mission and operations of the co-op. In fact, that's why you receive this magazine every month, so we can share the latest co-op news and updates, as well as energy efficiency and safety tips.

Cooperation Among Cooperatives is the sixth principle, and it fosters the way co-ops work together to address bigger challenges. While this principle applies to all types of cooperatives, it is especially relevant in the energy industry. In our case, we put this principle in action after major storms and disasters that cause widespread power outages. When this happens,

we call on nearby co-ops to come to our aid and assist with restoration efforts – and we, of course, extend the same help to them when they need us. I can't think of a better example of Cooperation Among Cooperatives.

In addition, because we are part of the national electric co-op network, we connect and collaborate with other electric co-ops to tackle industry-related challenges, such as cybersecurity and an everchanging energy landscape.

The seventh principle, Concern for Community, is essential to who we are as cooperatives. We serve our community not only by being an essential service, but by helping to power our local economy. Whether through economic development, volunteerism or donations to local causes, we invest in this community because it's our home.

I think you'll find that most cooperatives bring good people together to make good things happen in the community. We hope you feel that way about us, your local electric co-op.

On behalf of everyone at Vigilante Electric, we're thankful for your membership, and we hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving. 



HAPPY
Thanksgiving

Vigilante Electric office will be closed
Thursday, Nov. 25 and Friday, Nov. 26.

★ VETERAN'S DAY ★

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

— ★ ★ —

Vigilante Electric office will be
closed Thursday Nov. 11



VEC Leadership Award

Application period is open

At Vigilante Electric Cooperative we have a long history of providing young people with funding to further their education. Whether it be college or trade school, all the statistics point to the importance of having continued education after high school. However, the path one takes is often not a clear one, so if you must choose, choose wisely.

A review of college enrollment statistics indicates 69 percent of high school graduates attend college, yet 40 percent of them will not complete a degree. One-third of those that graduate end up in jobs they could have had without a four-year degree.

As for the money. The average cost of college in the United States is \$35,720 per student per year. The average cost has grown at a 6.8 percent over the last 20 years. The average in-state student attending a public four-year institution spends \$25,615 for one academic year. The average federal student loan debt is \$36,510 per borrower. Total outstanding federal student loan debt: \$1.59 trillion.

While these numbers are a bit grim, there are a couple of ways we can look at this. The numbers still prove that some form of post-secondary education vastly improves career earning. However, a student may not be ready for college right out of high school, and may benefit with some years in the work force before they are ready. Plus, college is not for everybody, and that is OK.

More students would be well served to consider trade school instead of college. Trade schools across the country are providing

students with employable skill sets. Many trades are in high demand and tend to pay very well. Plus, the total cost of attending a trade school are less than one year of attending college.

There are scholarship opportunities available that students are not taking advantage of. Applying for scholarships is an opportunity to use the generosity of organizations, such as ours, to offset some of the cost of a post-secondary education.

Vigilante Electric will once again pair our Leadership Award with the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) Memorial Scholarship, giving qualifying students the opportunity to fill out one application and potentially be awarded two scholarships.

With the Vigilante Electric Leadership Award, qualified applicants can use the funding to attend any type of post-secondary education.

The application process is simple, and over the past eight years every qualified applicant for the Leadership Award has received a scholarship.

The application period for the 2021 Vigilante Electric Leadership Award/MECA Memorial Scholarship is open. All the elements of the application must be completed and returned to our office no later than January 25, 2022. Applicants must be the dependent of a member of Vigilante Electric. Past recipients are not eligible, and the funding must be used in the 2022-23 academic year.

Applications are available at area high schools and on our website at vec.coop.

VETERAN'S DAY 2021



Thank you Chase White

We would like to take this opportunity to recognize Vigilante Electric Cooperative Lineman Chase White, a veteran of the United States Army. Chase, thank you for your service to our country and our organization.



VEC Board Member Dean Hanson was crowned 2021 PRCEA Montana Circuit Finals champion steer roper. | PHOTO COURTESY OF RODEOREADY

Congrats Dean!

We would like to congratulate Vigilante Electric Board Member, Dean Hanson! Dean recently competed at the Montana Circuit finals in steer roping. He was 65.5 seconds on four-head which placed him number one in the average. He was crowned the 2021 PRCA Montana Circuit Finals champion steer roper. Congrats Dean!!

VETERAN

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It was at this point that Elaine's adventurous nature showed through. At the start, her plan was not to make the Marine Corps her career, but to do just a couple year commitment. She noted, "it was a fling, join the Marine Corps and see the world."

Elaine enlisted in 1959 and completed basic training in Quantico, Virginia, in 1960. Listening to Elaine describe her early years in the Corps was fascinating, and I believe it is where this "fling" became her calling. Her first duty assignment was at Paris Island, South Carolina, training women recruits.

She loved this job, remembering that many of the enlistees came from very poor backgrounds.

"The culture of the training was to make these ladies glad they were alive, that they were in the military, and that they are of value." While every bit a Marine, the compassion in her voice was striking, leaving me with the sense that she undoubtedly inspired countless people in her command.

In 1968, while stationed in Hawaii, Elaine requested to be sent to Vietnam. Again, because of her adventurous nature, she wanted to go to Vietnam out of curiosity. Her commanding officer was against the idea; however, the motto for women Marines at the time was "free a man to fight." She persisted and was approved to be the second female Marine in Vietnam.

Throughout our conversation, Elaine mixed in some humorous anecdotes, albeit with a bit of dark humor.

"My troops back in Quantico used to joke that I needed to get wounded so they could brag about me. They would say I should get wounded in the butt. I had no intention on getting wounded, so while riding in the helicopters, I took the precaution of sitting on a flak jacket."

She provided colorful accounts of what Vietnam was like for her. She talked about getting food from street vendors where you had to pick out the bugs, suspecting that your Vietnamese driver by day was killing U.S. troops by night, and about a night when two ammunition ships were attacked in the harbor. As Marines do, she learned how to survive.

She sees her time there as fun, scary at the time and interesting. She wouldn't trade the experience for the world, but said she would not want to do it again. As much of an emotional roller coaster as this interview was for her, her worst memory was of her return stateside.

She was flown into San Francisco, where she was confronted by three war protesters (followers of Hare Krishna). One took an egg and smashed it into the ribbons on her uniform. It wasn't the indignity of the act that bothered her the most; it was the fact that nobody came to her aid.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CATHY COTTON

Elaine's career continued at 29 Palms Marine Base, where a serendipitous event occurred. While reviewing a list of Marines returning from Vietnam, she saw the name Lawrence Davies, and joked that she was going to marry this guy. "After all," she explained, "my father's name was Lawrence, his father was Lawrence and I had several cousins named Lawrence."

They met and realized they probably had crossed paths several times in Vietnam. The connection was strong, and when Elaine transferred back to Quantico to be the executive officer of the training battalion, Larry wanted to transfer with her. He couldn't because at the time, they weren't married; eventually, they did marry.

They both had long and distinguished careers: Elaine served 28 years and Larry 34, both retiring as colonels. Once in retirement, they quickly realized that California life was not for them, so they bought property north of Dillon. This was a homecoming of sorts for Larry, who was raised in Butte, and attended Carroll College.

As Elaine talked about Larry, you could tell he was her soulmate. She was moved by his trusting nature and admired his sense of humor. Elaine and Larry shared almost 40 wonderful years together at the time of his passing.

For me, meeting with retired Marine Corps Col. Elaine Davies was an honor. We would like to thank her for her service to our country and for the time spent with us. This month we hope you will join us in honoring all veterans for their service, and for making this the greatest country in the world. RM