



30th year 9th Issue

October 2019

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Happy  
Halloween



#### CO-OP CONNECTIONS LOCAL BUSINESS PARTICIPANTS

(CHECK WEBSITE FOR REGIONAL AND  
NATIONAL DISCOUNTS):

- Herren Brothers True Value
- Same As It Once Was
- Country Corner Hair Shop
- Rough and Refined
- Miller Soap Company
- Bloomers



NREA's Grassroots Coordinator, James Dukesherer, recently came to NEA to visit with Directors and employees about political challenges encountered during 2019 and to encourage participation on upcoming issues for 2020.

Grassroots political action's key focus is putting the pressure on politicians from the constituent level, not from the direction of "high power" lobbyists. It works well, but only if the local members are educated and engaged.

Three main areas form the basis of Grassroots; Education and Awareness, Relationship Building and Advocacy Organization. This was the key focus of James' trip out here. With service territory in both Nebraska and Wyoming, NEA will be vigilantly watching and participating where needed, as the statewide and national associations (NREA, WREA, and NRECA) lead on cooperative issues.

If you have not already, take the time to visit [www.action.coop](http://www.action.coop) to sign up for notices of issues that affect the cooperative that you are a member of. They won't busy your email box up much, but will give you a voice on issues that may impact you. Currently, there is a link to support the tax-exempt status of co-ops following natural disasters and other instances where government assistance has been received by the co-op.

## **Tri-State becomes rate jurisdictional to the FERC.**

“Tri-State is rapidly changing to increase flexibility for our members and develop an ever cleaner and greener resource portfolio,” said Tri-State Chairman Rick Gordon. “As we transition, our cooperative will benefit from lower costs and greater efficiency by having a single, consistent rate regulator across all the states in which we operate.”

Public utilities subject to FERC regulation must charge rates that are “just and reasonable” and “not unduly discriminatory or preferential.” FERC regulation of Tri-State would eliminate inconsistent rate treatment across the states. Historically, Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico and Wyoming did not exercise rate-regulation over Tri-State. In recent years both Colorado and New Mexico have exercised rate jurisdiction, which resulted in increased costs, unrecovered revenue and inconsistent rates to its members.

Under the Federal Power Act, FERC regulates the rates of almost all wholesale electric service and transmission providers. The board’s action aligns the regulation of Tri-State’s wholesale rates with the rate regulation of other wholesale power suppliers.

Regionally, the FERC regulates the wholesale rates of Xcel Energy/Public Service Company of Colorado, Public Service of New Mexico, PacifiCorp/Rocky Mountain Power, Black Hills Energy, Southwestern Public Service and El Paso Energy. Across the nation, other generation and transmission cooperatives that are subject to active regulation in multiple states are also FERC regulated.

Under the Federal Power Act, Tri-State had been exempt from FERC rate regulation of its wholesale rates because it was previously a Rural Utilities Service (RUS) borrower or because it was wholly-owned by small electric cooperatives. In 2014, Tri-State repaid its RUS debt. At its July 2019 board meeting, Tri-State’s board voted to add new members to the wholesale cooperative, which eliminates the Federal Power Act exception. On September 3, Tri-State announced MIECO, a natural gas supplier, as a new non-utility member to the cooperative.

Following the board’s action, Tri-State will file a wholesale rate tariff with the FERC. The rate is expected to become effective sixty days after filing.

For the first time, Tri-State will be fully rate regulated. Tri-State would be required to file proposed rates with FERC, and FERC would establish just and reasonable rates through its regular rate setting process.

Any Tri-State member would have the right to participate in that process, including any hearings. In addition, any single member or customer would have the right to file a complaint at FERC over any Tri-State rate or proposed rate.

FERC regulation will not affect resource planning, carbon reduction or renewable energy regulation in the states in which Tri-State operates.

“We look forward to continued engagement with the Governors, legislative leadership, commissions and stakeholders to achieve our shared goals,” said Tri-State CEO Duane Highley. “Tri-State is committed to reducing emissions, expanding renewables, lowering costs to our members and creating opportunities in all the states we serve.”





NEA Board of Director, Everett Kilmer.

In August of this year, a dear friend and esteemed Co-op servant passed away.

Everett Kilmer was elected to the Niobrara Electric Board of Directors in 1963 and served his fellow members for more than 40 years.

One of the longest serving Directors, Everett retired from the NEA Board in 2004, after suffering a stroke.

He was also a valuable and hard-working representative on the Tri-State Board of Directors for many years.

*-In loving memory of a quality man who served his Cooperative with distinction.*

This month I would like to defer my column to a former manager at NEA, Tony Anderson, to share his memories of a former director, Everett Kilmer. Continued on page 4.



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employer."**



**Touchstone Energy<sup>SM</sup>**

## Office Hours

**Monday—Thursday**

**7:30 am—5:00 pm**

**Fridays 7:30 am—  
4:00 pm**

**Electrician Department**

**6:00 am—4:30 pm (M-TH)**

**Outages** ....1-800-322-0544  
or 307-334-3221

Phones are answered 24 hours a day. Phones will be answered by Niobrara Electric Association during office hours and the Niobrara County Sheriff's office will take all other calls and dispatch NEA personnel.

I have been blessed to cross paths with many great co-op people over the years. One of these people was Everett Kilmer who passed away on July 29, 2019. I met Everett for the first time when I interviewed for the General Manager position at Niobrara Electric Association in Lusk, Wyoming on a hot August day in 1991.

I was a young man who had never led an organization of any kind. Everett was one of the nine men who gave me that opportunity. Everett made me feel at home. He always had a kind word, a smile on his face and a joke to tell. More importantly, he also made my wife and family feel welcome. He never failed to chat with Mary or ask about the kids. His friendship felt genuine and sincere because it was.

Everett was there to support me as I went through many career firsts. He was with me at my first Tri-State Generation and Transmission Cooperative board meeting, my first National Rural Electric Association (NRECA) annual meeting and my first legislative trip to Washington, DC. Everett, a long-time member of the NRECA resolutions committee was also the one to introduce me to this important process.

I will never forget walking into US Senator Alan Simpson's office with Everett (on more than one occasion). Senator Simpson truly disliked co-ops and actually told us so almost annually. Once, I asked Everett why we were wasting our time on a Senator who clearly wasn't going to support any bill that benefited a co-op anywhere. His simple reply was, "The Senator needs to know that we will never stop coming back." When I tire of the legislative grind, I think of Everett. Then, I go back.

He also taught me to not judge anyone by their appearance. My friendship with Everett began after he turned 61 years of age. By then, he had added some weight like we all do and had the aches and pains from years of farming and ranching. He talked about riding horses and working cattle but the young me never knew if this was real or just another one of his many stories. Well, one day, I found out.

He invited me to help him bring in some cattle on his ranch. In my head, I thought, "How hard can this be? If this old guy is going along, it must be just a couple hour ride." Well, I about messed my pants when he pointed his horse off a plateau and down a steep deer trail into a canyon. With no urging from me, my horse followed along. I just prayed and hung onto the saddle horn for what seemed like forever.

As we found the cattle throughout the day, I watched him sit atop his horse with ease, with a smile and with an eye out for my safety. My imagined easy 2 hour ride was actually 6 or 8 hours of real riding like I had not ever done before or since. I feel fortunate to have known the man who could face down Senator Simpson in DC, could ride all day in rural Wyoming and look equally comfortable doing both.

I last shook his hand, saw his smile and sat in his home in June 2018. Physically he was struggling but the spirit was still inside the failing heart. When I was elected Secretary-Treasurer of NRECA in March of 2019, with tears in my eyes, I made one singular phone call that day. On one of the best days of my career, I just wanted to hear his smile one more time.

While the spirit passes over, the true tale of a life well lived lies in those it touches along the way. Thank you for the lessons, the jokes and the smiles. R.I.P. – Everett Kilmer.

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## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### District

John Hester	1	Keeline, WY	President
Andy Barnette	2	Lusk, WY	
David Keener	3	Marsland, NE	Sec./Treas
Bill Wilson	3	Harrison, NE	
Jack Hammond	1	Lance Creek, WY	
Jim Dunn	3	Harrison, NE	
Neal Wurdeman	2	Lusk, WY	
Andy Greer	1	Lance Creek, WY	
JD Wasserburger	2	Lusk, WY	Vice President

## Board Minutes

- Manager Kenny Ceaglske reported on annual salary review, upcoming large loads and donation requests.
- Line Superintendent Rick Bridge reported safety and training topics, personnel and work plan updates.
- Director Keener spoke on NREA business.
- Director Greer spoke on WREA business.
- Director Hammond spoke on Tri-State business.