

APRIL IS LINEWORKER APPRECIATION MONTH



April is Line Worker Appreciation Month and in recognition of this, we would like to take the time to thank the cooperative's invaluable employees. Not only are they responsible for the day to day operation of the cooperative, but they're the ones who respond under the worst conditions, usually in the middle of the night, to outage calls.



Don Johnson (shown at a line safety demonstration at the school)

Don started working at the cooperative in 2002 after working a wide variety of jobs both on and off the Island. They included working in the uranium mines in Wyoming, commercial fishing, auto repair, and many others.

Mike Jorgenson

Mike started working for the cooperative in 2012. He has and continues to work in excavating. He has also worked in construction on several crews over many years and owned and operated Jorgenson Sanitation.



Mary Andersen

Mary Andersen started at the cooperative in 1985. Prior to working at the cooperative, Mary worked at the CAP (Community Action Program) office.



WPS crew members helping with a main feeder fault on Main Road sometime around 2004.

We would also like to take a moment to recognize the Sturgeon Bay crew for Wisconsin Public Service. These guys have been invaluable to our operation, not only because they restore power to us when there is an issue on the mainland, but they also have spent many hours right here on the Island assisting with underground repairs and most recently, termination work of the submarine cable at all four shore landings. When you see a WPS truck in the county, please wave! They are most definitely friends of Washington Island.

We would also like to point out that there are four former full-time lineworkers here on the Island who should be recognized: Kermit Jorgenson, Randall Sorensen, Larry Young, and Robert Gillespie.



BILLING/ACCOUNTING SYSTEM UPGRADES CONTINUE

As noted in the last issue of this publication, we continue to work towards upgrade and integration of our accounting system with our automated meter reading system. We expect to begin changeover at the end of March, with training in the office in April and complete system/payment rollout by mid-year.

It is extremely important that you, the member, pay the bill by the due date

as with the new system, late charges will be automatically applied after the due date and will not be removed.

It is also extremely important that you notify us of any change of address, as often times we only find out about it when the post office returns undeliverable mail. Also, if you are having the post office forward your mail, please let us know the forwarding address so we can mail direct (this publication

included) as the reliability and timeliness of delivery of forwarded mail is often questionable. This also applies to a return to your regular address and an end of forwarding.

If you want to have your bill emailed to you once we get to that point, it would be helpful if you provided us with an email address now so we can get it into our database. Please call us at 920-847-2541 or email info@wiecoop.com with

SPRING PROJECTS

Although not exactly a spring project since it is already underway, the cooperative will be running lines (poles are already installed) along South Shore Drive. We are doing this to bypass the line that runs along the beach from the Sand Dunes to just northwest of Njord Heim. With high water, these poles are currently in the lake and accessibility is difficult at best. It will take some time to get all the homes in this stretch rerouted once the lines along the road are complete, but long term this will be a good move from a reliability standpoint.

Many times, years ago, routing decisions were made based on saving material and the shortest route between point A and point B. While this made financial sense in the short term, the cooperative has been paying for some of these decisions for years in accessibility and reliability.

In addition to the South Shore Drive project, another area of concern is where the lines cross Arni Richter's swamp. This area is almost inaccessible even when the water is low. In order to correct this, and in conjunction with fiber optic installation, we will be bypassing this area by running new underground primary lines on the south and east sides of Lobdell Point Road. This installation will stretch from Death's Door Fuel all the way to the ferry dock and we expect that rerouting of the homes along here will also take some time. We are tentatively scheduled to do this work the first two weeks of May as we want to get it done before the traffic gets busy along the road.



Primary Lines along the Sand Dunes beach.

HOW ELECTRICITY CAME TO WASHINGTON ISLAND

By Ray Krause, as printed in the *Washington Island Forum*, 1974

Installment 4

We spent about three days in St. Louis and many interesting things happened. We left Sturgeon Bay late in the afternoon and drove all night, arriving in St. Louis early in the morning. About 2 O'Clock the lights on the car went out. I was driving the car when this happened and Herman was sleeping in the back seat. I brought the car to a stop as soon as I could. We found that we were on the edge of a ditch several feet deep. Another few feet and we would have been in this ditch. We could not make the lights work.

We had passed an all-night service station a few miles back. Herman had a large flashlight along and I sat on the hood of his car lighting the way and he drove until we came to this station. It took the operator a long time, but finally the lights came on.

We could find no place to stay in St. Louis; every hotel was filled up, and many soldiers returning home were sleeping on the floors. We drove back about 10 miles to some cottages that we saw, had breakfast and waited for someone to check out.

We met a very famous doctor from Panama at one of the hotels. He was on his way to meet with Dr. Trudeau in New York. He could find no place to stay and his English wasn't too good, so we took him along to the cottages. Later he sent us pictures which he had taken.

One day we met on the street of St. Louis Mr. Verne Williams who was in St. Louis on business. We went into a place nearby for refreshments and a visit. This was John Herschberger's grandfather.

Herman was wearing an old suit, but his wife forgot to put his new suit in the car, so he had to sit at the tailor's in his shorts while his suit was being pressed and cleaned.

We were hungry all the time in St. Louis. There wasn't much to eat. I suppose we didn't know where to go to get a good meal. On the way home at a small town we got a real good plate lunch for about \$0.50, so we ordered the same again and ate

two meals at once.

We found out that Waushara Electric Co-op had a diesel generating unit for sale. I went there with a Door County truck and trailer and brought it back to Sturgeon Bay. Our Town trucks took it from there to Washington Island. We paid \$4000.00 for it. We still use it at times. At first it was installed in the back of our present office.

As soon as the poles started to go up, we had many requests for electric service, as now those opposed to electricity believed that it was a reality.

We hired Leonard Jorgenson and Conrad Schmidt as our linemen. Conrad quit to go sailing and Leonard has stuck with us through thick and thin, sometimes quite thin. We sometimes had to wait until money came in to draw our pay. Since Conrad Anderson and Clifford Vogel were gone, Oliver Bjarnarson and Dr. Farmer were elected as Board members.

This was a difficult time. The lines were being built, the machinery installed, the houses being wired, etc., all at the same time. I had to be at the office every night also for some reason or other. I could never have done it all, if my dear wife had not come along to help.



The cooperative in 1947—Construction of the plant started in 1946 and you will note that the block is not even painted yet. The Venn Severin Engines (stay tuned for more history!) were not operational until 1948.



Meet Your Director

Robert Bjarnarson

Robert Bjarnarson was first elected to the board in 1982. When his term expires in 2022, he will have served for 40 years and is the longest serving board member the cooperative has had. The cooperative has had quite a number of long-term board members, but Robert is definitely number one in this regard. The next closest is Norbert (Okey) O’Connell serving 33 years. Oliver Bjarnarson and Arni Richter come in third, with each of them serving 30 years.



Robert’s grandfather Kari emigrated from Iceland sometime prior to 1900. After high school, Robert graduated from the Milwaukee Institute of Technology. He owned and operated the lumber yard for 35 years, providing the majority of material for homes built on the Island during those years. He repaired TVs and appliances for many years.

Robert served on the Community Center Board, the Community Action Program board, was a volunteer for the Washington Island Fire Department and Rescue Squad for 25 years, was active in scouting, and has always been an avid hunter. He continues to be active in the Bethel Church.

Of note, in addition to being the longest serving board member in cooperative history, Robert has played more “Flying Dutchman” at Island events and wedding dances than probably anyone. He played in the “Island Band” along with his brother and parents for many years.

When you see Robert, thank him for his many years of service to the cooperative and the Island Community.

ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULED

Per the bylaws, the board has selected Saturday, June 13, 2020 for the date of the annual meeting. It will be held at the Community Center Gym at 10 a.m. and will be followed by lunch. Financial statements and items of interest will be included in the June issue of this publication rather than being mailed separately. We will include a reminder of the meeting in the May edition as well.

Robert Cornell, Manager

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Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME FOR NEW WELCOME BANNERS

In 2013, the cooperative spearheaded a project to install welcome banners in select locations around the Island. These banners were based on the Washington Island Flag, which was designed by Henry Conedara as part of a Lion’s Club contest during the 1976 bicentennial celebration.



The cooperative built the pole brackets that are used to display the banners. After seven years, these banners have held up quite

well, but six months-plus of constant exposure to sun, wind, and weather each year have taken their toll and the banners are very faded and need to be replaced.

When we initiated the project we asked for donations from Island businesses and individuals and we had an excellent response. We are once again hoping to get contributions towards the cost of replacement banners and, in addition to this notice, will be sending out a solicitation letter. You can stop into the office if you would like to donate towards banners.



Washington Island flags can be purchased by contacting a Washington Island Lion’s Club member.

