

F E R G U S

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ www.ferguselectric.coop

Hans Stokken: Living His American Dream

Story and photos by Charlie Denison,
Contributing Writer

“You want to know his story?” asked Sigrid, Hans Stokken’s wife of 62 years.

Sitting comfortably in a padded chair overlooking the Judith Mountains at her home on Aspen Trail, she pointed to a rack holding eight plates that chronologically told a story of a family who emigrated from Norway to the United States.

I started looking at the plates, wondering if they were made specifically for the Stokkens or by coincidence told a similar story.

Before I had much time to analyze, Sigrid stopped me.

“Not the plates...I’m talking about the carved rack. It was made by a man in Norway. Hans was inspired by the man, and he learned how to carve from him,” she said

That man was Norway’s Jorgen Aker, who became Hans’ friend and mentor.

Sitting opposite his wife, Hans began to tell his story.

“In the late 1990s, when Sigrid and I



Hans holds up a design he constructed. Behind him hangs another piece he did inspired by his Norwegian mentor. Chip carving, he said, is an excellent retirement hobby.

returned to Norway, we went to visit a cousin of mine, and he had a plate holder on the wall with a beautiful rack for the plates,” Hans told me. “I thought ‘if we had a rack like that it’d really look good.’”

Hans went to buy such a rack from Aker and, during their visit, Aker agreed to give Hans lessons.

“He taught me everything about carving,” Hans said. “He was an artist. I feel blessed for having that opportunity.”

Coming to America

Chip carving might be his passion, but there is much more to Hans than craftsmanship.

To know Hans, and to understand his work, one must know his journey.

As a child growing up in Vestby, Norway, Hans had one thing on his mind.

“I wanted to come to the United States,” he said. “In the U.S.,

everything is free. If you have an idea, you can do it. In Norway, the rules and regulations are more restricted. I wanted to come and be free.”

In April 1957, at age 24, Hans made the dream come true, traveling to the U.S.A. with Sigrid, whom he married a month before their emigration.

Fortunately for the Stokkens, the process was not difficult, Hans said.

“At that time, you had to have a sponsor to come to the U.S. We had a family friend who was a farmer in Montana, but had returned to Norway for a visit. I went to talk to him and told him I did not have a sponsor. He said ‘I could sponsor you, but I don’t know you. Why don’t you have your employer contact me?’ I told him ‘why don’t you talk to my uncles?’ When I told him their names, he said, ‘those are your uncles? They are my cousins. You are OK.’”

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**In celebration
of Labor Day,
Fergus Electric
Cooperative’s offices
in Lewistown and
Roundup will close
September 2.**



MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney

New employees

On June 24th the co-op hired three apprentice linemen to replace line workers retiring in the next six months to a year, and to replace foreman, Curt Olson, who has moved to Orcas Island, Washington, where he has taken a job doing line work for Orcas Power & Light Cooperative in the Puget Sound area. I thank Curt for his service of 15 years to Fergus Electric Cooperative, and wish him and his family the best in their new adventure!

I feel fortunate that we have hired three apprentices who want to learn to become top-notch journeymen linemen. Brock Pyrah was hired as an apprentice lineman in the Roundup office, and Collin Sullivan and Dan Rice were hired as apprentice linemen in the Lewistown office. The last two summers Scott Olson has worked for Fergus Electric as a part-time employee in the engineering department, and on May 21, 2019, upon graduating as an electrical engineer, the co-op was fortunate to be able to hire Scott as a full-time staking engineer.

As one of the senior employees at Fergus Electric, it is good for me to see new, young and enthusiastic employees come to work at the cooperative. I encourage all four of our new hires to take advantage of the knowledge and expertise of their supervisors and coworkers before these experienced mentors and teammates retire.

Sam Ohanesian

I want to acknowledge the passing of Sam Ohanesian of Roundup. Sam had willingly served on the cooperative's nominating committee — and its election and credentials committee — from 2003 through 2018. Each year for the past 15 years, the board, staff and committee members looked forward to working and visiting with Sam. I want to thank Sam's family for his many years of service and dedication to Fergus Electric. We will miss Sam!

Metering system

The schedule for our system-wide meter installation is progressing slowly but surely as the co-op is planning to install the metering equipment for Phase 1 in the Hilger area in July and August. The co-op is eager to get Phase 1 installed and communicating properly with NISC, the software cooperative that does the billing for Fergus Electric.

Engineering work for Phase 2 in the Carter, Winifred, Roy and Roundup areas will also begin in July and August. Engineers and line crews will be out doing site assessments after which our line crews will change out any poles that need to be replaced, and install the communication equipment.

Once Phase 1 meter installation and testing is completed, we will move forward with Phase 2, then Phase 3, all the way to Phase 5, and finally completion in a couple of years.

Pole testing continues

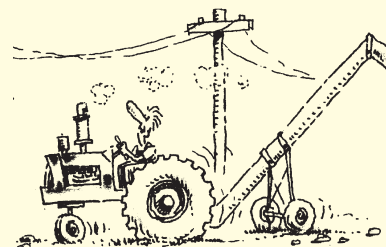
The co-op's line crews are busy this summer testing poles, building new services, upgrading old services, changing out poles and trimming, and cutting trees. The pole testing has been done in the Judith gap and Glengarry areas and, so far, the reject rate has been relatively low at about 2.6 percent, which is good news for the co-op.

Operations and maintenance

Even though there are a few more months left in the year, if you have electrical work that you have hopes of the co-op completing for you in 2019, I would like to remind you that calendars fill up quickly, therefore I recommend that you contact the co-op soon, so that your project can be added to the co-op's work schedule.

Line work such as new services, upgrades and changes to power lines need planning. Stop by the office to discuss your plans with our staking engineers or call 406-538-3465. If you live in the Roundup area, call Don Criswell, assistant line superintendent at 406-323-1602.

Look up and around when operating equipment



Those who live on a farm/ranch know that it is not only hard work, but it can be dangerous, too. Each year farmers and ranchers are injured when large agriculture and farming equipment comes in contact with overhead power lines or poles. Likewise, in winter and spring, snow removal near or under power lines can be hazardous.

Remember the following safety tips before operating equipment:

- Never try to raise or move a power line to clear a path.
- Make sure to have a cell phone or other means of communication in the cab with you.
- Make sure you, your family and employees know the location of overhead power lines and use routes to avoid the lines when moving equipment.
- Inspect farm equipment for transport height and determine clearance with any power lines that the equipment must pass.
- Avoid moving large equipment alone. Use a spotter to make sure contact is not made with a line when moving large equipment or high loads.
- Always lower portable augers or elevators to their lowest level possible — under 14 feet — before moving or transporting; use care when raising them.

What to do if equipment or vehicles come in contact with power lines:

- If your equipment does contact a power line, stay in the cab and call for help. If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path and

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Hans Stokken

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And that was that.

Through some connections at the college Hans worked at, the Stokkens found jobs working at a greenhouse and nursery outside Chicago. This eventually led to positions at nurseries in California and Colorado.

This wasn't exactly what Hans had in mind, but he was pleased with the career, nonetheless.

"I always wanted to be a farmer," he said, "and I ended up a farmer in a greenhouse...that works for me."

Settling in Lewistown

The Stokkens enjoyed working in nurseries, but after more than a decade of it felt ready to have their own.

In 1969, this search brought them to Lewistown.

They well remember that day.

As they drove in from Grass Range and through the divide, Hans said the beauty of the mountains reminded him of Norway.

"I said, 'Sigrid, it looks like we're coming home,'" Hans recalled.

The Stokkens spent a few weeks in Lewistown, and immediately felt a liking to the community. They bought Bower's Floral, changed the name to Alpine Floral, and owned and operated it until 2004, when they sold it to their son. Successive owners have kept the name.



Hans Stokken stands by a rack made by Jorgen Aker, his chip-carving mentor. The rack holds plates sharing a story about a family's journey from Norway to the U.S.

Peace in retirement

As Alpine Floral switched hands, Hans switched careers by putting his chip-carving skills into practice. The more he works, the more comfortable he gets with the craft.

"I've always been interested in working with wood," he said. "It's the retirement plan I was looking for."

Hans has a studio a few yards from his home where he works on his chip-carving every day ... as long as he feels like it.

"This is not a job to make money," he said. "I just enjoy it. That's what I love about retirement. If I don't feel like doing it, I don't do it."

Nevertheless, most days Hans feels like carving, be it hand-carved plates, hope chests, baskets, jewelry baskets, penholders or custom projects.



Hans said he has much work that he's proud of, including this hand-carved plate.

"I make an item, chip-carve on it, stain it, chip-carve through the stain, and then cover it with polyurethane spray," he said.

Lately he's especially into building/crafting hope chests.

"My daughter told me to do them, so I do them, and I've ended up really liking them," he said.

There are all kinds of opportunities with chip-carving, Hans said.

"It's a wonderful hobby. It keeps my mind going and helps me not feel old in my old age."

Hans is 87, but he doesn't feel elderly. However, he does admit he has a tendency to reflect. He caught himself doing so during our visit, while admiring the plates, safely secured by the wooden rack.

His passion for chip-carving started with Aker's rack. The plates, as it turned out, chronicled someone else's trek. Yet, the captivating illustrations displayed on the plates represent Hans and Sigrid's American dream, and a happy ending in Lewistown.

Summer storms and surge protection

Summer thunderstorms produce lightning, which can cause power surges on power lines that ultimately could travel into your home, potentially damaging your electrical equipment. The best way to prevent damage to your electrical equipment, i.e., computers, TVs, electric motors, refrigerators, freezers, stoves, washing machines, dryers, etc., is to install surge arresters.

There are many different products to choose from, ranging from whole-house surge protection to individual plug-in devices. If you own a computer, you may be interested in purchasing a combination surge suppressor/battery backup unit. In the case of a power interruption, the battery backup prevents the loss of unsaved information on your computer.

Fergus Electric Cooperative sells a surge protector that safeguards the whole house. In addition to installing whole-house surge protection, you may also install individual surge protectors on your electronic equipment. Surge arresters can be installed at your house, irrigation pump or any service. If you are considering installing surge protection for your electric equipment, please call our Line Superintendent Dale Rikala at 406-538-3465 for more information.

Look up

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- electrocution may be the result.
- Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until Fergus Electric Cooperative's line personnel arrive to make sure power to the line is turned off.

What to do if fire or other danger forces you out of the equipment:

- If the equipment or vehicle is on fire, the proper action would be to jump

clear of fallen lines with both feet together — hitting the ground at the same time — and without touching the vehicle.

- Take care not to fall back toward the vehicle, poles or power lines.
- With your feet together, continue to hop or shuffle to safety.
- Once away from the equipment or vehicle, do not go back until Fergus Electric Cooperative personnel give permission to do so.

2019 Annual Meeting Prize Drawing Winners

\$25 Gift Card from Stockman Bank & Travel Cup & A Tile from Hill County Electric.....	Al Eickhoff
\$100 Gift Certificate to Steel Etc., donated by Steel Etc.	Mike Smith
DeWalt Drill Set donated by Electrical Consultants, Inc.	Bill Steele
\$50 Gift Card donated by Northwest Public Power Association	Rosie Foreman
Keurig One-Cup Coffee Pot donated by Anixter.....	Wilson Stulc
\$32.50 Credit to cover base charge from Fergus Electric & a \$25 Amazon Gift Card from NRTC	Marilyn Stahl
Glass Water Bottle donated by Anixter & \$25 Home Depot Gift Card donated by CFC.....	Larry Gill
Instant Pot donated by Anixter	George Dengel
\$50 Cash donated by McFarland Cascade.....	Barb Sanford
22-inch Electric Griddle donated by Michael Weible with Altec.....	Kolstad Livestock
\$100 Gift Certificate to Steel Etc., donated by Steel Etc.	Ken Maki
Travel Coffee Mug donated by Anixter & \$25 Amazon Gift Card donated by RESCO	Monte Harrison
Double Blade Pedestal Fan donated by Michael Weible with Altec	Martin Dawson
Mag-Lite, Extension Cord and a Lantern	Jim Foran
\$50 Credit Certificate on power bill from Fergus Electric Cooperative	Tim Hahn
Black and Decker Garden Shears.....	Stephen Gilpatrick
6-Pack Solar LED Pathway Lights	John Swanz
\$50 Gift Card donated by Northwest Public Power Association	Ken Siroky
\$25 Gift Card from Stockman Bank & Travel Cup & A Tile from Hill County Electric.....	Gene Couch
Craftsman Sabre Saw donated by Michael Weible with Altec.....	Dan Balster
Bose Soundlink Portable Speaker donated by Electrical Consultants, Inc.....	T. Neil Glennie
Artic Air Ultra Cooler donated by Michael Weible with Altec	Jane Gregory
\$100 Gift Certificate to Steel Etc., donated by Steel Etc.	Jayson Shobe
\$75 Credit Certificate on power bill from Fergus Electric Cooperative	Ron Holland
Travel Coffee Mug donated by Anixter & \$25 Amazon Gift Card donated by RESCO	Karen Moseman
\$100 Visa Gift Card donated by Superior Business Equipment	Mike Sweeney
Backpack donated by National Information Solutions Cooperative	Randall Lund
Glass Water Bottle donated by Anixter & \$25 Amazon Gift Card donated by NRTC	Paul Grensten
Keurig One-Cup Coffee Pot donated by 360 Office Solutions.....	Dwight Ayers
45-Quart Pelican Cooler donated by Anixter	Joan Gill

Correction to July 2019 Scholarships

Jessica Horan received a \$1,000 scholarship from Fergus Electric Cooperative and Anna Slivka received a \$1,000 scholarship from the cooperative's power supplier, North Dakota's Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

Identify Account Number*

Win a \$32.50 credit

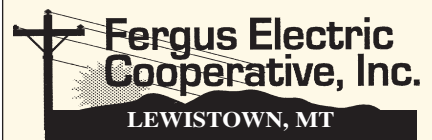
If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number.

**Account 317042 • Account 349262
Account 395091 • Account 360012**

You will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.

Linda Harney of Moccasin was last month's winner.

**Numbers are drawn monthly.*



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

FOR OUTAGES

First: Check the fuses or breakers in the building in which the electricity is off.

Second: Check the breaker below the meter.

Third: If electricity is still out, call a neighbor to see if they have electricity.

Fourth: Call 406-538-3465 day or night or:

Dale Rikala	406-366-3374
Bret Ophus	406-366-7523
Guy Johnson	406-366-9170
Scott Sweeney	406-538-7218
Don Criswell (Roundup)	406-366-3465
David Dover	406-366-1975
Melanie Foran	406-462-5650

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Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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