

F E R G U S

FEATURES

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

Better late than never

George Apple receives French Medal of Honor for World War II service

Story and photos by
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Contributing Writer

When George “Corkey” Apple’s daughter told him he was to receive the French Medal of Honor for his service during World War II, the 95 year old didn’t know what to think.

“I told her I wasn’t interested, but my daughter said, ‘Dad, you earned it. You need to go ahead and get it,’ so I did,” Apple said.

In July, Honorary Consul of France in Montana Laurence C. Markarian pinned the medal on Apple at Lewistown’s Veterans Park in front of friends, family and fellow veterans.

“I am here today because men like you did your duty,” Markarian told Apple. “You saved France and Europe from the worst misery.”

Napoleon Bonaparte established the French Legion of Honor in 1802. It is the highest decoration bestowed in France. With this medal, Apple is made a knight of the Legion of Honor. It is comparable to receiving a Congressional Medal of Honor.

“Courage and bravery are precisely the qualities Napoleon wanted to honor when he created the Medal of Honor,” Markarian said.

Although pleased to receive such recognition, Apple said the badge is a little late. He was drafted into the Army at age 19. On June 6, 1944, he landed on Utah Beach, one of two allied landing zones in Normandy, France.

“That happened 70-some-odd years ago,” Apple said,

“and I’m getting it now? I earned it at 22 and got it at 95? That takes away some of the importance for me. To be honest, if I never got this, it wouldn’t make a difference. I did the best job I possibly could, and I don’t figure I had to be awarded for it.”

Nevertheless, Apple said he enjoyed the ceremony and appreciates the medal, but he is saddened to know there are many just as worthy who didn’t receive the medal.

“There were 1,200 men in my unit,” Apple said. “I was one of the younger soldiers. To my knowledge, there are only five of us left.”

An honor to serve

For Apple, receiving the French Medal of Honor at 95 is just more confirmation that serving in the Army was the best thing he ever did.

“I’ve said all my life when a young person gets out of high school they need to do a stretch in the Army,” Apple said. “They will be a better person, they’ll have direction in their life and they will have some discipline.”

Such discipline has been a part of Apple’s life philosophy ever since he was drafted.

“I love to work,” he said, “and I do everything to the best of my ability. If I could I’d still be working 12-15 hours a day, but I’m slowing down... I don’t like getting old, but it beats the alternative.”

Apple said he feels fortunate to have



George “Corkey” Apple stands in front of his home on Cottonwood Creek Road wearing the French Medal of Honor he was awarded earlier this summer.



a granddaughter in the Navy, who is seeing the many rewards involved with serving her country. It makes him happy to think of the career she has lined out. It also makes him reflect on his days in the service. There was a sense of responsibility that came with it, which he misses.

“You were told to do something, and you did it,” Apple said, “and, if you didn’t, you were in trouble. You had no alternative. I always did what I was told.”

Feeling lucky

During his time in the Army, Apple climbed the ranks, receiving much recognition from his supervisors.

“One thing I’m very proud of is my
Continued on page 5



MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney

Carter to Hilger transmission line rebuild

Fergus Electric Cooperative has signed a contract with Rocky Mountain Contractors (RMC) to rebuild seven miles of the 50kV transmission line from the Carter Substation north to about three miles south of Hilger.

The original transmission line was constructed in about 1950, and the poles are old, and the conductor is small. The new line will have the advantage of a static wire on top of the poles to help protect the power line from lightning and larger conductor will be installed to improve power-line loss, and help keep voltage stable during peak demand times when the weather is especially cold or hot.

Rocky Mountain Contractors plans to begin construction of the power line rebuild about October 15, with the work being completed by March 31. The rebuilt line is being constructed in the existing right-of-way. I thank all our members along the right-of-way for working with the cooperative and enabling us to rebuild this important power line, which serves all our members north of Lewistown.

Scheduled outages during transmission line rebuild

In general, during the transmission line rebuild the new poles will be installed with the power line energized to minimize power outages. However, RMC is currently planning three separate

power outages, each one approximately eight hours in duration, to safely string the new conductor and install switches on the line. The rough estimate for the three outages is for the first to occur in early November, the second in early December, and the third in January or February. The co-op is requiring that planned power outages occur only when the minimum temperature during the outage period is above 35 degrees Fahrenheit in order to keep member's water lines from freezing. Fergus Electric Co-op will notify affected members in advance of each planned power outage. I understand that these outages will be an inconvenience for our members in the Hilger and Winifred areas and I genuinely want to thank you in advance for your patience and understanding.

The Roy and Carter

October is Co-op Month Spread the Word

Help celebrate Co-op Month! Complete this form and return it to Fergus Electric Cooperative, 84423 U.S. Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457 by October 31.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Your name will be entered in a drawing for an electric credit of \$50. Three winners will be contacted in November.

substations can be switched to different feeds, so Hilger and Winifred substations are the areas where the power outages will occur. In the long run, the design of the rebuilt power line will provide improved reliability, increased capacity, and many, many years of quality service to all our members north of Lewistown.

New mechanic hired

On September 4, we welcomed Jason Deffinbaugh of Lewistown to the co-op as our new mechanic. In this month's *Fergus Features* section, Jason is introduced to the co-op's members. We want to offer our congratulations to Jason as he begins his new career.

Meet District 2 Board Director Brett Maxwell

On April 26, 2018, the Board of Directors appointed Brett Maxwell to fill the vacant seat in District 2 and serve as its board director for the two years remaining in the current term. Brett has spent the last five-plus months becoming familiar with his role as our co-op's newest director.

In the current *Fergus Features* section, co-op members can learn more about our new board director, whose district includes the Glengarry, Kolin and Straw substation areas, as well as the Nihill West area, which includes members west of Highway 191 and north of Highway 12 in Wheatland and Meagher counties. Welcome, Brett.

TIMELY TOPICS

The value of electricity continues to shine

Vangie McConnell, Editor



As electric cooperatives across the nation mark National Cooperative Month, it's a good time to review the value of electricity.

How many of us remember dropping into Fergus Electric's office with our parents or grandparents to pay the light bill? Today, whether you do that in person, by mail or online, paying your monthly bill does a lot more than just keep the lights on.

Electricity keeps us connected to our modern world. Count your televisions, desktop, laptop and tablet computers,

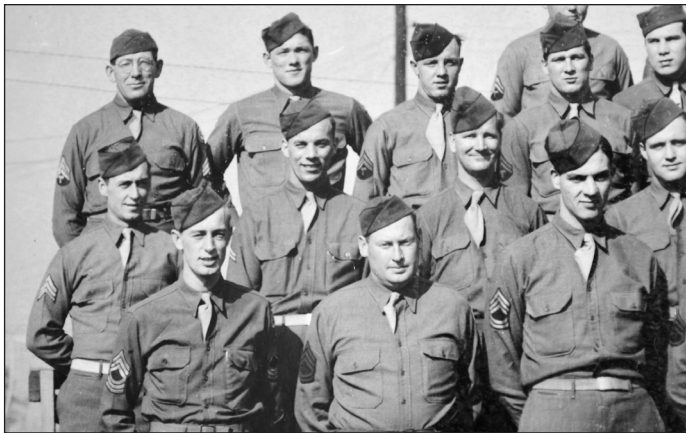
printer, gaming consoles, music and video players, and personal assistant devices. Whether they get used every day or just occasionally, the electricity that keeps them working comes from Fergus Electric Cooperative.

Have you looked around your kitchen lately? Between the coffee maker, toaster microwave, a lot of us have added other modern small appliances.

If you've got a craft nook or workshop, the power tools and machines you use to

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George Apple *Continued from page 3*



George Apple, center left, prepares for active duty in the third infantry in 1944. Some artifacts saved from World War II include a paper announcing the end of the war, a box camera, a photo of his training camp in Wilmington, North Carolina, and a Luger he took from a German soldier.

promotion from a private to a buck sergeant," he said. "I did what I was told, I did it right away, and I did it well."

Apple said he very much enjoyed the service and was planning on making it a career.

"I even had an opportunity to be a master sergeant if I were to return," Apple said.

But something happened when Apple came home to Grass Range after a three-year deployment: a certain female caught his eye.

"I had a friend at Grass Range High School, and he had a sister who was about four years younger," Apple said. "I was back on a 90-day discharge and was looking forward to returning to service, but then I saw that girl, Annabelle, and she was absolutely beautiful. She changed my whole world."

Apple and Annabelle got married and stayed in central Montana, where he became a rancher 12 miles outside Lewistown on Cottonwood Creek Road. They lived at the home together just short of 30 years.

"She passed away at 49 after a battle with breast cancer," Apple said. "She had seven operations in eight years."

Life has not been easy for Apple, as cancer also took his mother when he was 13.

"That cancer is terrible stuff," he said. "Don't ever get it."

But Apple has learned to bear heartaches. At 95, there are times when he feels a little lonely, but he's grateful

to be alive, grateful for his service and grateful to have married the love of his life.

He still feels quite lucky, especially when he recalls how close he once was to an early demise.

"I saw a lot of chaos on Utah Beach," Apple said. "I was blown out of a foxhole, and I remember praying to the Lord begging him to let me live five more minutes, and, look, here I am, receiving the Medal of Honor."

Timely Topics *Continued from page 4*

cut and shape your projects are either plugged in or recharged from the outlets connecting your household or outdoor wiring to Fergus Electric Cooperative. Ranch-related security lights, tank heaters and security systems are also necessities requiring electricity from the cooperative.

The good news is, even as we rely more on electricity, it's still a bargain.

Since 2011, medical care, residential rental rates and education have increased three percent or more a year. Butter, meat and egg costs have been up by more than one to two percent annually, and even bread costs more.

When it comes to value, electricity is a clear winner, and we're always looking for ways to work with you to make it even better. That's why Fergus Electric urges energy efficiency, encourages you to look for ENERGY STAR appliances and promotes technology designed to give members more control over their electricity use.

Energy performance dashboards, programmable thermostats and power strips, and appliance settings that shift most water heating, laundry and dishwashing outside of peak-rate

periods help reduce the co-op's overall power demand. They also give you opportunities to control or even trim your monthly utility bills.

That's good for families, couples and individuals trying to live within a budget. And it's going to become even more important as digital devices and Internet-connected technologies become even more important in our lives. Contact Fergus Electric's engineering department (538-3465) for help with electricity usage.

The average home now has 10 Wi-Fi connected devices. That number is expected to explode to 50 by 2020. Technology and the gateways that keep it working use electricity, so you'll depend upon Fergus Electric Cooperative for more than the power that keeps the lights on.

As we celebrate National Cooperative Month, remember that Fergus Electric Cooperative is always working to provide service that's reliable, affordable and more valuable to our member — you, your family and neighbors.

Statistics from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

New faces in new places

Director

Brett Maxwell's appointment to the Fergus Electric Board fills the vacancy created by David Dover who became Fergus Electric Cooperative's assistant manager.

Brett is the owner/operator of a family-owned cow/calf and hay operation. He was born and raised on the same ranch that he calls home today, nine miles southwest of Lewistown. He is a graduate of Fergus High School and has a certificate in livestock technology from Dawson Community College.

In addition to ranch duties, Brett just completed eight years on the Fergus County Fair Board. He has served as treasurer and vice president of the Fergus County Livestock Association, served on the advisory board for the Lewistown branch of the Bank of the Rockies, and is currently proudly serving his fourth term on the Moore Farmers Oil Board as secretary.

His wife Jennifer works for the State of Montana at the Office of Public Assistance. They are the parents of Megan (14), Kate (12), Thomas (10), Emmett aka Knute (3).

Brett says, "It is an honor to be selected for this position and I look forward to the challenges and opportunities to broaden my horizon



Brett Maxwell



Jason Deffinbaugh

and to preserve this great co-op."

Mechanic

Fergus Electric Cooperatives's new mechanic, Jason Deffinbaugh, comes to the co-op from the Montana Department of Transportation in Lewistown, where he was a mechanic/machinist for 17 years. Previous employment includes a technician position with Fergus Equipment which is now Torgerson's.

Deffinbaugh has an associate degree in diesel technology and applied service management from Wyoming Technical Institute. He has taken professional courses covering leadership

enhancement and management development.

Jason attended the rural Cottonwood Creek School through eighth grade and then graduated from Fergus High School, where he was student body president.

He coached Junior Rifle Club until his sons were born and now serves on the Cottonwood/Beavercreek Volunteer Fire Department.

Jason and his wife Rebecca have twin sons, Finn and Zane. When asked what he does during his spare time, Deffinbaugh chuckles, "With two 3 year olds, I don't have spare time." He is also part of the family-owned Deffinbaugh Ranch.

Write an essay, win a trip to Washington, D.C.

Plans are underway for the 2019 Youth to Washington, D.C., Tour and Essay Contest. The tour is scheduled for June 15-21, 2019, with an orientation in Great Falls on June 14. Airfare from Great Falls to Washington, D.C., is paid, along with lodging, meals and admission to events.

Contest rules are:

- The student must be a junior or senior in high school in the fall of 2019.
- The student cannot be a prior winner of the Youth Tour.
- The student and/or parent or guardian must be served by Fergus Electric Cooperative.
- The student must write an essay of 400 words or less (double-spaced) on the topic: *What would your day be like without electricity?*

• Essays should include a cover page with the student's name, address, telephone number and the cooperative's name. Essays and applications are due November 30, 2018. Mail them to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, Fergus Electric Cooperative, 84423 U.S. Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457.

An application form must accompany the essay. Please call 538-3465 for the form. It is also available on the MECA website at www.mtco-ops.com under the Youth Tour link, or on the Fergus website, www.ferguselectric.coop under community.

The Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association, headquartered in Great Falls, selects a statewide winner, and Fergus Electric also sponsors a student. For additional information, call Vangie at 538-3465.

Identify Account Number* Win a credit

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

**Account 395632 • Account 321294
Account 89449 • Account 76100**

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

**Numbers are drawn monthly.*

Helen Day of Roundup was last month's winner.



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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