

F E R G U S

FEATURES

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

A Valley of Peace

White Sulphur's Spa Hot Springs offers a healing soak for all ages

Story and photos by

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Contributing Writer

Twenty-nine years ago, Gene Gudmundson, a young chiropractor working in Chicago, visited his home state of Montana, taking the beaten path, looking for a place to start a practice out West.

"I thought 'if I am ever going to get back to Montana, this has to be it,'" said Gene.

Hearing White Sulphur Springs had an opening, that didn't sound like a bad place to be for the homesick practitioner, as he knew the area had something special: natural hot springs that benefit the body with their minerals and their warmth.

"The hot springs are what brought me here," he said. "It was February, and it was the middle of the week. I was the only person in the hotel and the only person in the pool. As I soaked, it started to snow. It was a magical moment, and I decided then I wanted to start a practice here."

Not only did Gene want to start a practice in the area, but he also wanted to integrate his practice with the water.

Eight months later, not only did he have the practice, but he also owned Spa Hot Springs.

And he's owned it ever since. Within



While soaking, patrons enjoy viewing a mural done by Connie Bellet.



A group of young Montanans enjoy the newest hot spring pool developed in 2013. A mural created by Mike Mahoney can be seen in the background.

five years, he even moved his practice to the spa where it stayed for 25 years.

While having his practice at the spa, he always encouraged his patients to use the soaking as part of their healing.

"I can say without reservation the best thing to do before and after a chiropractic treatment is to soak in the hot springs," he said.

The waters, Gene said, are wonderfully relaxing and a great aid in easing tension and fatigue.

"The main benefit of the hot springs is how it warms the body, loosens the joints and allows relaxation," Gene said. "That's what most people enjoy, and it's what we emphasize."

Now retired, Gene still stays plenty busy with the hotel, working hard to make Spa Hot Springs a quality place. His wife, Andreluz, who moved to

White Sulphur Springs from the Philippines, helps him with this endeavor by regularly working the front desk and managing the hotel.

"Annie's great," he said. "She also offers aqua aerobics and kickboxing classes."

As for Gene, he likes to stay in the background and let the water work its magic.

So far, so good, especially since making major renovations.

"We added 16 new rooms in 2013," he said. "We satisfied the number one request we got from people: poolside rooms. They are especially nice this time of year."

Gene and Andreluz also significantly upgraded the pools, and even added a new pool.

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney

The co-op had a relatively normal year in 2016. Seventy-six new services were constructed and 470 new poles were installed to replace 459 old poles that were “fully depreciated” or too old to reuse. New LED lights were installed in Winnett and Roy, replacing old high-pressure sodium street lights that were severely damaged by hail.

New power supplier

As of January 1, 2017, Fergus Electric began receiving its power supply from Members 1st Power Cooperative. Also in January, Fergus Electric received and paid its final power bill from Southern Montana Electric G&T for December 2016 power usage.

The Southern Board of Directors, Southern’s employee Carrie Boysun, Southern’s attorney Malcolm Goodrich and I are going through the process to dissolve Southern as a Montana corporation, which will likely take several months to complete.

As I stated last month in my Manager’s Message, our new power supplier, Members 1st Power Cooperative, is made up of three electric distribution cooperatives — Fergus Electric, Tongue River Electric of Ashland, Montana, and Powder River Energy Corp. (PRECorp) of Sundance, Wyoming. Mike Easley, PRECorp’s CEO/general manager is interim manager of Members 1st, also headquartered in Sundance, Wyoming. Fergus Electric Co-op’s board voted for Mike Vlastelic to serve as representative director and Fergus Electric’s board President Bob Evans to serve as alternate representative director on the Members 1st board.

Members 1st receives most of its power supply from Basin Electric Power Cooperative of Bismarck, North Dakota, and the other power supply for Members 1st comes from Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), which is power generated from large federal dams on the Missouri River drainage

system, such as Fort Peck and Yellowtail Dams in Montana, Garrison Dam in North Dakota, and Oahe Dam in South Dakota.

Cold weather and power bills

The cold weather in December and January have increased many members’ monthly power bills. Fergus Electric has not increased its electric rates, but when members increase electric usage due to the cold winter weather, it increases the bill. I have electric heat in my house, and my power bill in December was slightly more than double my November bill. When temperatures dip to 20 below zero, I understand that our houses need to be warm, livestock need to be watered and cars, trucks and tractors need to be plugged in to start, but I encourage all members to use electricity wisely and conserve electricity whenever possible.

Power outages

We experienced some power outages in the Roy area due to high winds breaking a tie on the transmission line between Hilger and Roy. When the wind was gusting at more than 50 mph, a tie wire broke and caused the one wire to fall, knocking out the transmission line to Roy. Our crews worked as quickly as possible to restore power. I appreciate the dedication and hard work Fergus Electric’s line crews devote to their job, especially when the power goes out during some of the coldest days of the year!

Community solar seminar planned

I want to invite all our members to a free seminar on community solar, Wednesday, February 22, at the Central Montana Community Center, 307 W. Watson St. in Lewistown. At 4:00 p.m. coffee and cookies will be served, and at 4:30 p.m. the program will begin with Darren Crawford, Montana State University Fergus County Extension Agent, acting as master of ceremonies.

The meeting will give us an opportunity to tell our audience about the community solar project Fergus Electric Cooperative is developing. Knowing that the co-op had surveyed its members about solar in 2016, reading several of my articles here in the *Rural Montana* magazine, and being a proponent of solar power herself, Fergus Electric Cooperative member Laurie Lohrer, who serves as chair on the Central Montana Resource Council, reached out to the co-op and offered to help arrange a public meeting on community solar. We thank Laurie and Darren, (also a Fergus Electric member) for volunteering to assist us so we could have this opportunity to visit with you in person about community solar.

Please call the Fergus County Extension office at 406-535-3919 for details and to sign up.

In addition to Fergus Electric Cooperative, there will be other speakers who will give short presentations. I believe that it will be an informative meeting and will cover a range of information from photovoltaic solar panels to co-op-based community solar programs, such as the one we are planning. It will be a good chance for you to learn more about community solar and to ask questions. We look forward to visiting with you on February 22. Mark your calendar!

Board member Descheemaeker completes director program

Board member Paul Descheemaeker successfully completed the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Credentialed Cooperative Director Program. NRECA offers training on the competencies directors need to provide value to the membership

and to the communities they serve. The CCD certificate is earned by attending five required courses and successfully completing a learning assessment for each. Fergus Electric was also commended for its ongoing commitment to education and training.

Fergus Electric’s offices in Lewistown and Roundup will close for Presidents’ Day Feb. 20.

Valley of Peace

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“The newest pool is the one on the east side,” Gene said. “On average, it’s about 102 degrees. Our larger, older pool is around 98 degrees, and the small, indoor hot soaking pool stays at about 105 degrees. We like providing options for people. Over the years, we’ve found that’s what people want. Some pools can be more active, some are better for kids and some are better to soak in and relax.”

A history of peace

Gene will be the first to tell you the history behind the hot springs in White Sulphur Springs.

“Native Americans traveling through this valley were the first to discover and make use of these hot springs,” Gene said. “They felt the hot mineral water had a strong medicinal effect, healing the body and strengthening the spirit.”

A number of tribes would come to the area and soak, even tribes at war with one another.

But there was no violence at the waters.

“A truce was worked out and they made this a valley of peace,” Gene said. “Here you had to co-exist, be peaceful and share the waters.”

The hot springs now known as Spa Hot Springs were in fact the first commercial hot springs in Montana, Gene said, thanks to James Brewer, who was the first to construct a bath house around the waters circa 1872.

“Baths were 75 cents and whiskey was extra,” Gene said, according to historical information he discovered in old newspapers.

But Brewer didn’t hold onto the bath house long, selling the land to Dr. William Parberry — the first medical practitioner in the area. Gene said it was Parberry who named the area White Sulphur Springs.

“He lived in this area a long time and was always an advocate of the water,” Gene said. “He’d recommend his patients use the springs for healing as early as the 1880s. He was also active politically in Montana, becoming a state congressman.”

But Parberry didn’t own the springs long either, passing it to John Ringling, who once hoped to build an elaborate resort spa in town.



Owners Gene and Andreluz Gudmundson work hard to make Spa Hot Springs an inviting destination.

“He had big plans,” Gene said. “At one point he was thinking the hotel would have 267 rooms. That’s 12 times the size of what we have now. Can you imagine?”

But the plans weren’t to be, as the Great Depression swept the nation before it got underway.

Owners have come and gone through the decades, and Gene has now owned the spa longer than anyone else at 28 years and counting, and he’s pleased to carry on the tradition.

“This valley is special, a place of healing and relaxation,” he said. “From the Native Americans to today, the hot springs are a legacy we’re proud to preserve.”

For reservations, call 406-547-3366. For more information, go to www.spahotspings.com.

Lineman scholarship offered

Individuals interested in a career as an electrical lineman can apply for a \$6,000 scholarship offered by Fergus Electric Cooperative. The scholarship application is available at the co-op, on the co-ops’ website — www.ferguselectric.coop — and via a link from the Facebook page. Completed applications must be post-marked and returned to Fergus Electric no later than March 15, 2017. The successful applicant will be notified by April 15, 2017. This offer is open to students, and to men and women seeking a new career.

Staking engineer hired

Melanie Foran joined Fergus Electric Cooperative’s engineering staff just before Christmas.



Raised in Judith Gap, Melanie said, “I look forward to being part of a team that serves the electrical needs of the local farm and ranch community I grew up in.” She added, “I’ll enjoy developing a working relationship with our members.”

With a degree in civil engineering from Gonzaga University, Melanie brings considerable experience with her. This includes: project engineer for Turner Construction in Seattle, an oil service engineer with Cudd Energy Services traveling across the northwestern U.S., and a civil engineering specialist working for the Montana Department of Transportation.

“I was part of the construction management team that took down the overpass just west of Lewistown,” she noted.

When asked what she likes about her new job, Melanie said, “I like the design and engineering mapping aspect paired with being outdoors. It is just the type of job I’ve been hoping for.” When asked about an interesting aspect of her new position, Melanie chuckled and said, “Having been here for just a few weeks, the only thing I can think of is almost drowning in tumbleweeds while searching for stakes.”

When not working, Melanie enjoys reading the classics and loves a pick-up game of basketball. She’s also a big fan of Gonzaga sports teams and the Seattle Seahawks. A goal of hers is to master one of her mother’s wonderful recipes.

Melanie’s husband, Jared, is part of a family ranching operation. They live in Christina with their four-footed fur babies Jasper and Sadie.

Nominating Committee Seeks Candidates

Fergus annual meeting set for June 8

In accordance with Section 4.3 of Fergus Electric's bylaws, the committee for selecting board candidates has been appointed and will meet this month.

In addition to candidates selected by the committee, any 15 or more members acting together from District 2 or District 4 may make other nominations by petition not less than 30 days prior to the annual meeting. Such nominations are to be posted where the committee list is posted. No other method of nominating candidates for trustees is permitted.

Directors serve a term of three years and are elected by ballot at the annual meeting of the membership.

At least two candidates from District 2 (Judith Gap/Moore areas) and District 4 (Grass Range/Winnett areas) will be nominated. Candidates must have their principal residence in the district from which they are selected.

If you are interested in running for a position on the board, watch for meeting dates and places in local newspapers or call the office (538-3465) for more information.

Identify Account Number*

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Account 372029 • Account 163601
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You will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.

Last month's winners were Don Cates and Ray Plovonic both of rural Lewistown.

**Numbers are drawn randomly.*



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Purchasing ENERGY STAR-certified appliances and electronics is a great way to save energy in your home. But how do you choose the right product? It depends on your energy-saving goals and how you use energy in your home.



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Home computers can use a shocking amount of energy each year. If all computers in the U.S. were ENERGY STAR certified, we would save more than \$1 billion in energy costs per year. If you can't buy an ENERGY STAR-certified computer, consider updating the power management setting on your computer. Visit energystar.gov/products/office_equipment/computers.

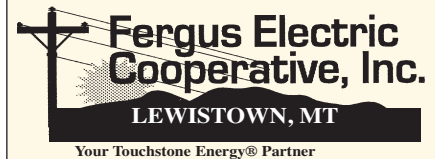


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Second: Check the breaker below the meter.

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

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

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Scott Sweeney.....	406-538-7218
Don Criswell (Roundup)	406-366-3465
Monte Obert.....	406-425-1288

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