

F E R G U S

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc. , Lewistown, MT

Ed Musselman still flying at age 90

Story and photos
by Judy Bryne

“I was very, very fortunate,” says Ed Musselman. “I was in the right place at the right time.”

The time was 1939, and the United States government needed pilots – lots of pilots – for the thousands of airplanes being built. Musselman, the son of a California railroad man, was born with a love of flying. Already enrolled in a pilot training program, he was a perfect fit for the Army Air Corps training. Having completed his solo flight in 1937, he became a pilot instructor and has been flying, gliding, and looping the loop ever since. He recently received the Master Pilots Award from the Federal Aviation Administration for his lifetime – 72 years – of accident-free flying.

Today, he pilots a Citabria, a red and white single-engine two-seater, but in the past he flew DC-10s for Western Airlines. His primary route was from Los Angeles to Honolulu, which he loved. His 24-hour layover in Hawaii gave him opportunities to experience everything the islands have to offer. He spent many layovers scuba diving, sailing, and gliding.

“Oh, it was pretty,” he says. “When the Trade Winds blow up against the mountains, you can stay up in a glider indefinitely gazing at the mountains and the sea.”

While flying for Western Airlines, Musselman met a pretty young stewardess named Paunee who became the love of his life. They married in 1946, and soon son Marc and daughter Cyndi made their family complete. Once the children were grown, Paunee wanted to return to her Montana roots and the house where she was born. They left California and settled on the homestead her grandfather established in 1877 in the Judith Mountains.

Musselman continued as a commercial pilot, commuting from Lewistown to Los Angeles for three years. He regularly flew his own plane either to

Great Falls or Billings, then hopped a commercial flight to go to work. Occasionally, he drove.

“When the weather was so bad I couldn’t fly, it was terrible driving through those blizzards,” he says. “But that was rare.”

Mandatory retirement at age 60 brought an end to Musselman’s long-distance commute, but he had seen it coming and was prepared. He and Paunee continued to fly their private aircraft and work the ranch until her death in 2003. He misses having her as copilot when he takes to the sky, but it hasn’t kept him grounded.

Once a week he revs up his Citabria, taxis across the field of his ranch, zips over the tipi in his yard, and sets a course for Lewistown. He joins a group of eight local pilots, among them Dale Chamberlain, Pete Smith, and Jack Morgenstern, for lunch at the Bistro. “It’s a wonderful group,” he says. “I’m lucky to be a part of them.” These fliers enjoy good food and a lively

discussion. This loose-knit club operates according to a few strict rules of participation. Religion and politics are prohibited topics, and anyone whose cell phone rings gets stuck with the entire luncheon tab.

At 90, Musselman reigns as the oldest and most experienced pilot in the group. He serves as their historical encyclopedia and shares the expertise he has gained from over 30,000 hours of flying. Occasionally, he still offers flying tips to his pals and inspires



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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney

Happy New Year!

I want to wish all of the members of the cooperative a happy New Year and I hope that we can all keep our resolutions throughout 2010.

Budget

The cooperative's board and management have completed the 2010 budget, which will reduce expenses for the coming year. The reduced budget is important to stabilize electric rates while still maintaining the electric plant (poles and wires) to keep electric service as reliable as possible. When temperatures fall below zero, the co-op is acutely aware of the importance of electric reliability.

Highwood Generating Station

The financing is progressing on the natural gas power plant near Great Falls. Phase 1 is a 40-megawatt natural gas peaking power station. In Feb. 2009, our power supplier, Southern Montana Electric Generation and Transmission Cooperative, made the decision to switch from a coal-fired power plant to natural gas. This decision was difficult for the Southern



board but I believe it was a good decision for several reasons, one of which is that it preserves approximately \$30 million that Southern had invested in the coal plant to use now for the natural gas plant.

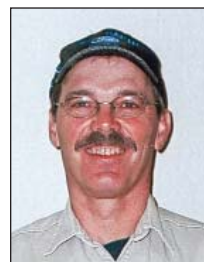
In switching fuels, Southern acknowledged that some of the monies invested in the coal plant were no longer "useful" for the natural gas plant. This means that Southern is writing off the portion that is no longer useful and Fergus Electric will write off our share of approximately \$2.2 million in our 2009 audit. Southern Montana Electric's capital credit allocation to Fergus Electric is approximately \$400,000, which will offset part of the write-off.

An important point is that Fergus Electric has already paid this money so the write-off will not raise future electric rates. While writing off this loss is very difficult, it does preserve the majority of the money that Southern has invested in the Highwood Generating Station and natural gas is the fuel of choice in 2010.

Line Foremen

The cooperative has four foremen who are responsible for managing the construction of all the line work completed each year. In Lewistown, Jim Richter, Murray Matthews and Dave Phifer lead our three line crews. As foremen, each supervises a two-man crew consisting of either a service lineman and journey lineman or two journey linemen. Dean Lawler, our sole Roundup foreman, has one service lineman and one apprentice lineman working with him.

My hat is off to our foremen who fulfill a very fine job of leadership for all our line crews.



Dean Lawler



Murray Matthews



Dave Phifer



Jim Richter

Nominating committee seeks candidates

Fergus annual meeting set for June 10

In accordance with Section 4.3 of Fergus Electric's bylaws, the committee for selecting board candidates has been appointed and will meet January 20, 2010. Currently, Steve Balster of Lewistown is the board representative from District 1 and Joe Pirrie of Shawmut represents District 6.

Committee members are District 1 Dwayne Bakkedahl – 538-5010, Scott Damby – 538-6133 and Jayson Shobe – 538-5864; District 6 Carla Glennie – 473-2381, Dennis Lawson – 632-4145 and David Paugh – 575-4339.

In addition to candidates selected by the nominating committee, any 15 or more members acting together from District 1 and 6 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 1 (Lewistown area) and District 6 (Lavina, Ryegate, Roundup and Harlowton 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, please call the committee member in your district.

Need help with electric bills?

Even with energy conservation, some members face serious challenges in keeping their homes warm during the winter months, and some may be overwhelmed by their utility bill.

Fergus Electric encourages you to call the office (406-538-3465) before you get behind in your payments. Office personnel will work with you to arrange a payment plan.

There is also some assistance available for members who qualify. For those living in Fergus, Golden Valley, Judith Basin, Musselshell, Petroleum and Wheatland counties, call HRDC – District VI at 406-535-7488 or 1-800-766-3018 for more information.

Still flying

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younger flyers.

This fall, a group of hunters stayed with him at his ranch up New Year's Road. Musselman treated their 13-year-old son to a ride in the Citabria. Remembering that day brings a smile of delight to his face. "It was his first airplane ride. He was so happy, he was beside himself."

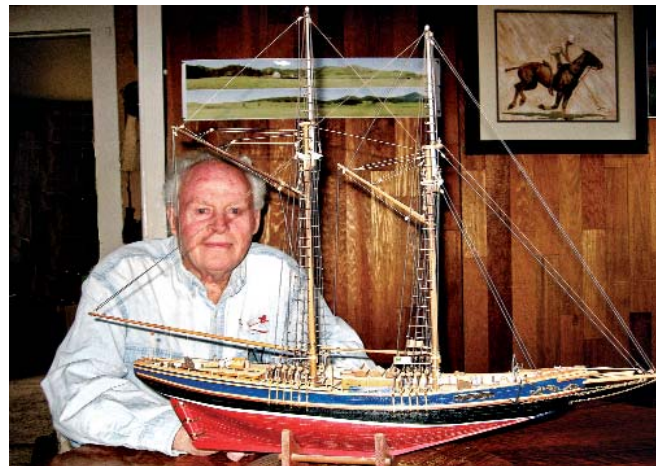
These days, the corrals sit empty. He rents out some land for pasture, but he has no livestock of his own. His son died in 2008 and his daughter lives in Colorado, so a golden retriever named Dusty provides companionship between visits from family or neighbors. He watches PBS on television and reads in the quiet of his mountain retreat. A golf cart eases his trek across the field to his hangar, and he can no longer wheel the plane outside by hand. Instead, he has rigged some tracks and a winch to move it in and out.

"Climbing in and out of the airplane, I'm an old man," he explains, "but once I'm in the cockpit, I'm agile. I might as well be 20 years old again. I'll quit flying when I can no longer parallel park my car."

Although flying has defined his life and provided much of his experience, Musselman has also enjoyed a variety of hobbies and activities. He is an accomplished photographer, potter, airplane builder, sailor, and collector. Trinkets gathered from around the world and an eclectic collection of artwork and photographs fill his home. A model he built of a 1930s era



Paunee, a stewardess, and Ed, a pilot, met while flying for Western Airlines. They were married for 57 years. Over time, Ed has developed a number of hobbies. This 1930's Caymanian Racing Schooner is one of his projects. Top photos courtesy Ed Musselman.



Caymanian Racing Schooner occupies a place of honor in the living room, and he is currently working on a kit model of Captain Cook's ship, Endeavor.

"The world has really changed in my lifetime," he says. "I don't like glass cockpits with all the computerized panels. I don't have a computer, either. I do have a Jitterbug, but it's just a phone.

Nothing fancy, but I can read the screen and my fingers fit the keys. My father was a telegrapher, and I've never crossed over the digital divide."

Though it's a different world today, one thing remains constant: Musselman's love of flying. "It gives me a sense of freedom," he smiles.

Identify account number

Win a \$31.50 credit

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

Account 379008 • Account 87851

Account 379055

You will receive a \$31.50 credit on next month's statement.

Last month's winners were Mr. and Mrs. Donald Smith of Winifred.

Evans honored

Retired director Alan Evans was recently honored for his loyal service to Fergus Electric Cooperative. Evans served the cooperative for 27 years including seven as president. He was Fergus Electric's representative on the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association Board for three years, served on a number of co-op related committees and was instrumental in helping to create Southern Montana Electric G&T.



Six ways to lower energy bills on a budget

It's winter, temperatures are heading downward and energy costs are rising. What's a homeowner to do? Aside from the usual upkeep, a few simple changes can help lower bills. Here are six energy-saving tips that are inexpensive and easy on the environment.

- 1. Replace your light bulbs.** Cut down on your home's energy use (and brighten your rooms) by replacing traditional incandescent lights with energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs. Fluorescent bulbs use 75 percent less electricity than incandescent and can last up to 10 times longer. Once available only in spiral shapes, compact fluorescents come in more aesthetically pleasing versions these days.
- 2. Add insulation.** Keep the heat in the house – where it belongs – by adding insulation to your attic. It's one of the smartest things a homeowner can do. And the good news is there are a number of environmentally friendly products you can use. Insulation made from recycled blue jeans, soybeans or newspapers is available at home-improvement stores or on-line. While these green products are slightly more expensive

than traditional fiberglass insulation, they are worth the money: you'll avoid breathing in stray fibers.

- 3. Install a programmable thermostat.** Never return to a chilly house or wake up to a cold bedroom in the morning again. A thermostat is easy to install and can be adjusted for several settings throughout the day to meet your heating needs.
- 4. Use a special paint.** If you plan to punch up a room with a fresh coat of paint, why not brush insulation onto the walls at the same time? Mix a nontoxic ceramic powder into your paint to reduce the amount of heat passing through your walls to the outside. The ceramic particles in the additive create a radiant barrier that reflects heat back into the room and once it's put there, the walls are insulated for good.
- 5. Protect your pipes.** An insulating wrap acts as a safeguard. Place the precut foam lengths over cold-water pipes in crawl spaces, the attic and overhead in the basement to prevent them from freezing. Don't forget hot water pipes. Hot-water loses heat as it gets to its destination – shower or sink.
- 6. Redirect the heat.** You pay good

money for electricity, heating oil or natural gas, but where does most of the heat wind up? Near the ceiling. Redirect it back into the room with a ceiling fan. Move the fan's switch to reverse, so the blades run counterclockwise. This pushes the warmth away from the ceiling, down around the walls and into the living space.

Always set the fan on low, or it will cool the heated air. Don't have a ceiling fan? Take advantage of bright, sunny days by cleaning windows and removing outdoor screens to let in the maximum amount of sunshine and warm rooms naturally.

Cold weather exercise

Outdoor activities can relieve cabin fever, pump up your energy on gloomy days and boost your immunity during flu season. Have fun in the cold with a little preparation:

- Check with your health care provider first if you have cardiac problems or asthma, even if you've had no problems exercising in warmer temperatures.
- Dress in layers. Wear moisture-wicking polypropylene, fleece or wool for insulation and a waterproof, breathable outer layer. Remove or replace layers as needed.
- Wear a warm hat and gloves, and if you have respiratory or cardiac concerns, wear a scarf over your mouth.
- Stay visible after dark. Wear light-colored or reflective clothing, and clip on a flashing light.
- Put on footwear with good traction to avoid slips.



- Use sunscreen and sunglasses to reduce UV rays and glare.
- Watch the wind chill factor and consider staying indoors when it's below zero outside.
- Stay hydrated. Drink one or two cups of water before exercising.
- Don't go it alone. Exercise with a buddy or let someone know when you'll return.

Take care to avoid frostbite and hypothermia. If you notice pain, numbness, tingling or skin whitening (usually on the face, fingers or toes), get out of the cold immediately and slowly warm the area without rubbing. If hypothermia symptoms occur (intense shivering, slurred speech, fatigue or loss of coordination), seek emergency help.

Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc.

LEWISTOWN, MT

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 | 406-538-5192 |
| Guy Johnson..... | 406-535-5132 |
| Scott Sweeney | 406-538-7218 |
| Don Criswell (Roundup) | 406-323-3426 |
| Monte Obert | 406-538-9705 |

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