

NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



OUT OF THE DARKNESS
RECALLING LIFE BEFORE ELECTRICITY

JANUARY 2024



Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Northeast Connection is published monthly to communicate with the members of Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative.

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GROVE OFFICE

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BUSINESS HOURS

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Offices are closed Saturday, Sunday and holidays.

DISPATCHING AVAILABLE 24 HOURS AT

1.800.256.6405

If you experience an outage:

1. Check your switch or circuit breaker in the house and on the meter pole to be sure the trouble is not on your side of the service.
2. When contacting the cooperative to report an outage, use the name as it appears on your bill, and have both your pole number and account number ready.

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REFLECTING ON 2023

Daniel Webster
General Manager/CEO

Here we are, facing another new year together. A new year promises new opportunities to embrace, but let's take a look back at achievements.

The board of trustees and employees of Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative worked hard throughout 2023 to deliver on our promises to you: reliable services at economical prices. Important elements for meeting those commitments include education, system planning, commitment to our communities, and advancing technology.

Education

NOEC employees were optimistic a couple of years ago when we learned Northeast Technology Center's Pryor Campus would be offering a lineman training course of study. Linemen from NOEC have had the opportunity to assist with education programs over the last year, familiarizing students with opportunities close to home. We have been pleased to find quality candidates for employment and to provide internship opportunities for students to advance their education.

System Planning

NOEC has comprehensive maintenance programs that lend to the efficiency and reliability of our system. The programs are under constant review and revised as needed. During 2023, over 1,000 power poles were replaced, and 1,143 miles of line received right-of-way maintenance.

The year gave members visiting our Grove location improved service through opening a new office location. Visitors now have ample parking and multiple drive-thru lanes, shortening wait times.

Continued on page 2.



03

UNCLAIMED DOLLARS



04

OUT OF THE DARKNESS



09

WINTER ELECTRICAL SAFETY



10

COLD WEATHER RECIPES

\$100 IS HIDING!

Search the pages of *Northeast Connection* for a 6-digit account number with an asterisk on each side. For example: *XXXXXX*. Compare it to your account number, which appears on your monthly electric bill. If they match, contact the cooperative at 918.256.6405, by February 1, 2024, to claim a \$100 credit on your electric account.

JANUARY EVENTS

Midnight Hollow

Jan 13 | Grove

Middle School Auditorium

Winter Entertainment Series: Aaron Radatz Magician

Jan 13 | Grove

Grove High School Performing
Arts Center

Catering Caper Cabaret

Jan 19 | Grove

121 W 3rd St

2nd Annual Pryor Area Chamber of Commerce Gala

Jan 19 | Pryor

Mayes County Event Center

Suicide Awareness & Prevention Seminar

Jan 20 | Vinita

Apostolic Life of Vinita

Winter Entertainment Series: Ned Ledoux

Jan 20 | Grove

Grove High School Performing
Arts Center

Winter Entertainment Series: Baldknobbers

Jan 27 | Grove

Grove High School Performing
Arts Center

AARP Smart Driver

Jan 27 | Pryor

First United Methodist Church

896749

REFLECTING ON 2023

CONTINUED FROM INSIDE COVER

Commitment to Communities

Not only have we been working hard to provide quality service, we've also been busy within our communities. During 2023, employees from NOEC served area communities through several service projects. Often, these projects are not in our service area, but still benefit our membership through helping communities.

Here are a few of the ways in which we were happy to help:

- **Vinita's middle school science students egg drop**
- **Changing a broken pole at the Craig County fairgrounds**
- **Assisting Grove VFW with the installation of a new flag pole**
- **Hanging banners for Camp Bandage**
- **Setting a pole for Vinita Lake Park**
- **Visiting with students during a career event at Colcord Public Schools**
- **Hanging Christmas lights for Ketchum and Langley**
- **Hosting blood drives that resulted in enough donations to save over 260 lives**

Advancing Technology

Because NOEC offers subsidiary services, the software responsible for maintaining accounting records were independent as the accounting system was incapable of separating entries and entities. Advancements and improvements in the accounting software allowed us to consolidate into one system, saving significant time for department personnel and improving the quality of reporting information.

Along the same thread, the billing softwares used to manage NOEC and BOLT were separated, requiring the use of four different data systems. This year, we were able to migrate all features into one software program. The conversion was time-consuming and generated many calls, but the end result greatly improves our efficiency and accuracy.

Another technology update for BOLT subscribers was our launch of the Plume® system. Plume extends wi-fi range within the home and provides a host of beneficial tools and features.

Lastly, SmartHub, the online feature that allows members to check usage, pay bills, and report outages, now provides the same features for our BOLT subscribers.

AS WE SAY GOODBYE TO 2023 AND BEGIN NAVIGATING 2024, I LOOK FORWARD TO MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW IN OUR SERVICE TO YOU.



UNCLAIMED DOLLARS COULD BE YOURS

Checks totaling \$10 or more have been mailed to eligible members. Checks were not mailed to members whose patronage capital accounts totaled less than \$10. These accounts will continue to accumulate funds with each retirement. When an account reaches \$10 or more, a check will be issued following the next retirement. NOEC makes every effort to ensure members receive patronage capital that is rightfully theirs. To accomplish this, it is important for NOEC to have a current mailing address. Checks are often returned marked "undeliverable." Many of these do not have the correct 911 address. A partial listing of unclaimed checks is provided here. Future issues of *Northeast Connection* will contain additional listings. If you see your name, claim your check by calling 800.256.6405, extension 9313. A complete list of returned checks is available online at www.noec.coop. Visit the link or scan the QR code below with your smartphone camera to access the full listing.

A

- ABBS, CHARLOTTE A/ERIC - SALINA OK
- ABEL, R G - TULSA OK
- ACKLIN, ROBERT E - CUSHING OK
- ADAMS, ALFRED D - SALINA OK
- ADAMS, BRET/CAROL SELLERS - OAKS OK
- ADAMS, CHARLES - SPAVINAW OK
- ADAMS, JESSE D JR - FAIRLAND OK
- ADAMS, R M/MARY A - GROVE OK
- ADAMS, ROBERT/RAYMA - PURCELL MO
- ADAMS, ROBIN - COLCORD OK
- ADAMS, SCOTT W - VINITA OK
- ADAMS, STEVEN R - KETCHUM OK
- ADDINGTON, HARLAND - JAY OK
- ADDIS, ANNA L - WELCH OK
- ADKINS, JEFF A - JOPLIN MO
- ADMIRE, KEVIN L/JEANNIE R - GROVE OK
- AILEY, MARSHA - FAIRLAND OK
- AKEE, GABRIEL T - TULSA OK
- ALLEN, BRIAN - MIAMI OK
- ALLEN, DON F - GROVE OK
- ALLEN, DOYLE - SILOAM SPRINGS AR
- ALLEN, LEO W/RETHA M ALLEN - PRYOR OK
- ALLEN, R R - BARTLESVILLE OK
- ALLEN, RONNIE L - COLCORD OK
- ALLEN, TERRI - FAIRLAND OK
- ALLEN, WILLIAM A - VINITA OK

- ALLMAN, HERSHAL W/MARY - MIAMI OK
- ALLRED, JANET K/JIM L - GROVE OK
- ALSBAUGH, F V - MIAMI OK
- ALSBURY, GLORIA J - QUAPAW OK
- AMES, DESTINY J - KANSAS OK
- AMES, VERNON - VINITA OK
- AMIS, WILLIAM E - CUSHING OK
- AMOS, CLAYTON D/JUDY A - STROUD OK
- ANDERSON, CAROLYN K - KANSAS OK
- ANDERSON, JOY - JAY OK
- ANDERSON, SANDRA L - KETCHUM OK
- ANDERSON, STEVEN A - ST JOHN ND
- ANDRASKO, ALEX C - VINITA OK
- ANDREWS, CARL - COLCORD, OK
- ANDREWS, MEGAN E - KANSAS OK
- ANDREWS, TANYA M/CHAD A DAVIS - NOBLE OK
- ARMSTRONG, WILMA - GROVE OK
- ARNOLD, DARRELL R - GENTRY AR
- ARNOLD, J E - BARTLESVILLE OK
- ARNOLD, LINDY/BETTY REYNOLDS - TULSA OK
- ARNOLD, STEVEN R - PRYOR OK
- ASHER, DON W - SAPULPA OK
- ASHMORE, MARVIN L/DORIS - TULSA OK
- AT&T COMMUNICATIONS - COLUMBUS OH
- AT&T WIRELESS - COLUMBUS OH
- ATCHISON, DORIS L - JAY OK
- ATCHLEY, MARTHA SUE - CHOUTEAU OK

- ATHEY, LINDA - AFTON OK
- ATKINS, GEEGEORGE/FRANKIE - JAY OK
- ATKINSON, JEANNETTE - CHOUTEAU OK
- AVERY, ERVA J - SALINA OK
- AYERS, TOM J/ED - TROY MO
- AZARIAN, SAM - KETCHUM OK

B

- BABCOCK, BOB R - LOS ALAMOS NM
- BACK, AMBER A - KETCHUM OK
- BACK, ANTHONY W - SALINA OK
- BACK, MARVIN - SALINA OK
- BACKHAUS, FLOYD - NEWKIRK OK
- BAHE, TONY A - SALINA OK
- BAILES, RICHARD C/CHRISTINE - GROVE OK
- BAILEY, WADE E - KETCHUM OK
- BAKER, SHANE - JAY OK
- BAKER, TRUMAN J - COLCORD OK
- BAKKE, JEREMY R/LAVONNA M - SALINA OK
- BALDRIDGE, BEULAH - GROVE OK
- BALES, MARTY D - DISNEY OK
- BALES, TERRY/PHILLIP - GROVE OK
- BALL, FRANKIE R - SPAVINAW OK
- BALL, J D - WICHITA KS
- BALL, JESSIE W - ADAIR OK
- BALL, KIMALEE K - ADAIR OK
- BALOGH, OPAL M - BLACK RIVER NY
- BANK OF OKLAHOMA - GROVE OK
- BAPTIST REGIONAL HEALTH - MIAMI OK
- BARB, KATHRYN - VINITA OK
- BARK, ROBERT L - SALINA OK
- BARLOW, JAMES S/KATHY A - LANGLEY OK
- BARNARD, JAMES R - GROVE OK
- BARNES, ASHLIE M/JACKSON B - LOCUST GROVE OK
- BARNES, TERESA J - GROVE OK

To view the full list please visit our website, www.noec.coop or scan the code below with your smartphone.



SCAN ME!



OUT OF THE DARKNESS

RECALLING LIFE BEFORE ELECTRICITY

Ruby Price is a treasure. We first made her acquaintance at the Miami Fairgrounds on the afternoon of September 14, 2023. She had just completed registration at the REC Day 2023 drive-thru. You may be impressed to know that the spirited 93-year-old Miami resident drove herself to the event.

Ruby informed us that day that she has been a member of Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative since the beginning, which means she also remembers life before electricity. She agreed at that time to be interviewed and share her story with us. We are honored to pass her memories along to you now.

Ruby's family was residing in the Curtis community of Delaware County just west of Grove when rural northeast Oklahoma was first electrified. She was in middle school, she recalls, as poles were being set and lines were going up all around the area. She remembers her father working on a crew that cleared brush for the electrification project. With the nation still recovering from the Great Depression, work was a blessing in whatever form it presented itself.

“When you’re a farmer and you don’t have crops you’ve got to do something,” Ruby smiled.

It was a busy time, both here in northeast Oklahoma and abroad. While World War II was raging across the Atlantic, big things were happening here in our corner of the state. Construction of the Pensacola Dam was underway, thanks to \$20 million in funding approved by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal's Public Works Administration. Roosevelt's signing of the Rural Electrification Act would also provide low-interest loans that prompted farmers to create electric cooperatives and eventually energize the countryside. The days of lighting homes with coal oil lamps and refrigeration by way of a springhouse would soon be a thing of the past.

Emboldened by the promise of hydroelectric generation from the new dam, 14 local farmers banded together to form Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative. With the sum of \$5,000 in hand, they filed for incorporation on September 19, 1938.



Ruby at 10 years old

Larger cities already had power, of course, but municipalities and investor-owned utilities had little interest in electrifying rural America. Building expensive power lines out to farms in the middle of nowhere simply made no fiscal sense to those urban monopolies. The irrepressible spirit of men like Ruby's father, however, would not be dissuaded. Their hard work and dogged determination would soon pay off.

“Daddy signed up for electricity and was one of the first to get it. They put one of the main poles down by us,” Ruby said. “Daddy said ‘I’m helping them get ready so they can string that line up for us and we’ll be the first ones.’ And bless his soul we were.”

Of course, Ruby's childhood was occupied with simpler things. When chores were finished, she and her siblings and childhood friends spent summer days down at Flat Rock Hollow.



Ruby present day



Ruby in her 20s

She recalls swimming at the hollow as a young girl and the massive rock ledges that stair-stepped down to the cold, spring-fed swimming hole. Flat Rock Hollow still exists today on the eastern shores of Grand Lake, but the old swimming hole is somewhere below the existing lake waterline, one of many such watering holes impounded to make way for progress.

Construction on the Pensacola Dam was complete in March 1940. By the end of that summer, rivers, creeks and springs had filled the lake. Life here in northeast Oklahoma was forever changed.

Ruby was born in 1930, the fifth of eight children born to Albert Newton "Newt" Rice and Abbie Lena Boyd. Ruby attended Curtis School until she reached fourth grade. She began bussing into Grove in the fourth grade.

As a youngster, Ruby recalls her father getting creative to help her and her sisters' legs stay warm during those cold, winter walks to school.

“To show you how times were different, daddy would cut gunny sacks for us to wear in the snow. You know, women weren’t allowed to wear pants back then.”

She also remembers her father pulling the younger kids to school across the snow on a sled.

Ruby doesn't recollect all of the details, but she recalls the family being in California for several months. It was about that same time that her oldest brother enlisted, so they may have taken him and simply stayed for the job opportunities.

“My oldest brother graduated from school and signed up for the war. They told him when he signed that they’d put him directly into some program, so we all went to California for almost a year. Daddy worked in the shipyards there, but he came back home and got that job working on the lake.”

Pensacola Dam dam project under construction 1939

Ruby describes her father as resourceful. Even with a fourth-grade education, it was apparent that he had a mind for numbers.

"When that new math came out he could always figure out how to get the answer," Ruby laughed. "They didn't have answers in the back of the book and the teacher would ask how I got the answer. I said 'Daddy explained it to me.' She said 'Your dad?'"

Ruby added: "People called him to help build houses for them. After we got back, he helped build two or three. I know they paid daddy a very small salary, but that's what we had to live on. Daddy always provided for us. He always found some way. A lot of people sat and waited for help. Sometimes us kids would get aggravated because mother would say 'Well, the neighbors down there, they didn't put out a garden and they don't have any potatoes. We can get by.' So she'd have us kids get out there and pick vegetables and take them down there to them. But that helped me learn how you take care of your neighbors."

Ruby inherited both her father's knack for numbers and his proclivity for enterprise.

"I could always go pick blackberries and sell them in the summer," she said. "Ruby Browning would buy all I could pick. They were bringing fifteen cents a gallon and she'd always give me a quarter. I was Miss Rich."

Ruby married Everett Price on September 14, 1946. They had three children and eventually seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

The Prices' eldest child Karen is 74 and lives in Joplin. Youngest child John is 64 and lives in Broken Arrow. The second of the Price children, Robert, passed away in 2013 at age 62. While years are a blessing, they can also bring sadness. Ruby has outlived her husband, a child, and is the last of her seven siblings. Tears stream down her cheek as she recalls Robert's untimely passing.

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"I can't help it," she said, drying a tear. "He was my son. But I know he's happy now. He's not suffering."

Everett passed away on February 4, 2004.

"We would have been married 58 years the year he passed away," Ruby said.

She smiles as she remembers happier times. There were so many summer birthdays to celebrate—"they all got tired of birthday cakes"—Everett would politely request cobbler instead of cake by the time his birthday rolled around on August 30.

"He loved cobblers but would settle for a pie," Ruby smiled. "The last four years he got cobblers."

The most frightening event of Ruby's adult life occurred when she was in her mid-30s. It came not long after the Prices had moved into the new home they built in Fairland. Ruby was attempting to re-light the pilot on a gas oven when it exploded. The force of the explosion knocked her back against the kitchen island, injuring her severely and leaving her with third and fourth-degree burns over much of her body. She had apparently forgotten to shut off the gas before lighting the match.

"I was burned so bad they had to cut my clothes off of me," she said.

Ruby credits treatment she received from her doctor as well as physicians at the Miami hospital for her complete recovery within 2-3 months' time. She said her doctor had previous experience treating his own granddaughter following a burn injury.

"They tried to heal her in water, but it didn't work. She was scarred."

Ruby's treatment plan followed an intensive pressure-wrapping regimen.

"He pressure-wrapped me and changed the wraps two or three times," said Ruby. "I remember being paraded through that hospital looking like a ghost, but he fixed me. I had a mask and my eyelashes grew back. But I didn't scar. I retained that pressure wrap. I retained everything."

The Prices moved from Fairland to a home in Miami and then in 1973 built a second home—the Miami home Ruby now occupies.

"Everett and I built this house from the ground up," she said. "We used an old-fashioned cement mixer and hauled buckets of rock and cement. I'd hold sheetrock for him, and even though I can't stand heights I'd hold two by fours for him while he put the frames up. The guys he worked with would say 'we'll come and watch.' I'd be up there and they'd say 'did you ever see a grown woman crawl across a two by four?'"

Everett worked at Goodrich until it closed. He had 30-plus years in and was nearing retirement when the plant was shuttered. Ruby also worked outside the home. She handled bookkeeping for Riley Brothers Farms for 28 years and for Elder's Coal Creek Ranch a short time before that.

She was 16 when she married Everett and left school before completing the eleventh grade.

"I took more courses out at the college because I wanted go a little bit further on my accounting," she said. "I took about four different courses out there for different things."

The Prices ran cattle on the 18 acres on which the current home sits as well as another tract to the west.

"We bought some land on the corner of Ottawa and Craig counties and had quite a few cattle at one time," said Ruby. "We started with a few here. We had an opportunity to buy that land so we bought it. We sold the cattle when Goodrich went on strike and sold the land when his health started failing."



Ruby's days now are spent reading, doing genealogy research, and working puzzles. She also enjoys feeding and watching birds. She doesn't get out much, but daughter Karen checks on her often and visits when she can. Ruby's church family is also a source of support. While she finds it difficult to attend services, people from the church bring her meals and do her shopping.

"The people at that church are just as sweet as can be, especially Carol (Klapp)," Ruby said with tears welling up in her eyes. "Everybody is so good to me. I can't say a bad word against anybody."

Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative has always been more than an electric company for Ruby.

"The people who started that co-op were raised the same as me. They've always been people you can count on. They've been good to me. I can't complain or fuss at them at all, and I never have. You can depend on them. If the weather's bad and power goes out, I know they're working as fast as they can. I appreciate them. I've got nothing but praise for them. When the power comes back on I always say 'thank you, Lord.'"

Having experienced life without electricity, Ruby has never for one moment taken it for granted.

"Oh, gosh no. Listen, whenever you've had to draw your own water with a bucket, and if you've had to can the hundreds of quarts of vegetables that our large family canned, and if you had a momma that made you get out there and weed the garden like she did with all of us kids, then you learn real quick to appreciate every little luxury of life. Electricity and all the work it took to bring it here will always be appreciated."

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Rice family photographed in the 1950s

TIPS & TRICKS

WINTER ELECTRICAL SAFETY

- **Make sure your home is equipped with functioning carbon monoxide detectors.**

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless gas that kills at high concentrations and causes serious and irreversible injuries at lower levels. Deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning increase during the winter months due to the use of common fuels like natural gas, wood and coal. Installing an inexpensive carbon monoxide detector can save your family's life.

- **Keep outdoor outlets closed.** Check your outdoor outlets regularly to ensure that they don't have an accumulation of ice and snow on them. Keep them cleared off and closed to avoid moisture from invading the receptacle box and causing an outage.

- **Practice outdoor extension cord safety.** Extension cords are often used during the winter months to power snow blowers and other equipment. If you use an extension cord, ensure that its wattage and voltage are compatible with your power equipment. Your extension cord should also be equipped with a ground fault interruption device to avoid electrical shock.

- **Use caution with electric blankets.** Never use an electric blanket while you're sleeping. Make sure the plug and cord are in good shape; otherwise it can pose a fire hazard. Be sure to dispose of electric blankets that have worn or damaged areas.

- **Be careful with your kitchen appliances.** Be sure to check electrical kitchen appliances for frayed or damaged cords and plugs before use.

WINTER ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- Lay down a rug to preserve warmth. You'll not only help insulate your floors, but you'll cut down on the noise too.
- Don't heat spaces unnecessarily. Avoid heating areas of your home that are not insulated such as a garage, crawlspace, attic, or storage shed.
- Protect your windows. Clear plastic sheeting on your windows can add insulation and reduce icy drafts with minimal effort and cost.
- Heat your home responsibly. Cranking up the heat to warm the house quickly doesn't work. The house will warm up at the same rate, regardless of the temperature setting.



Attic air sealing may be a DIY project if your attic is accessible and large enough to allow you to move around. Contact a contractor first if you inspect your attic and detect any of the following:

- Wet or damp insulation indicating a leaky roof.
- Moldy or rotted attic rafters or floor joists indicating moisture problems.
- Kitchen, bathroom, and clothes dryer vents that exhaust moist air directly into the attic space instead of outdoors.
- Little or no attic ventilation.
- If you have unsealed and uninsulated recessed can lights, special care must be taken when insulating around these fixtures.



FEATURED RECIPES

COLD WEATHER COMFORT FOOD



ULTIMATE POTATO SOUP

CINDY TAYLOR | GROVE

INGREDIENTS

- 1lb chopped bacon
- 1 stick of butter
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 cloves minced garlic
- 1/4 cup flour
- 8 potatoes, diced
- 4 cups chicken stock
- Salt and pepper to taste

Step 1: Cook bacon and keep with browns in pan while draining off grease, then add 1/2 stick of butter, celery, onion, and cook until translucent.

Step 2: Stir in garlic and potatoes and sauté for 10 minutes. Then add enough chicken stock to cover potatoes and simmer until tender.

Step 3: In a separate pan melt 1/2 stick of butter over medium heat and whisk in flour and heavy whipping cream. Once thick add to potato mixture.

Step 4: Garnish as desired.

NAVY BEAN SOUP

SHIRLEY PRATHER | GROVE

INGREDIENTS

- 3qt water
- 1lb dried navy beans
- 1lb ham or ham bone
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 1 onion
- 1 can tomato sauce
- Salt and pepper to taste

Step 1: Add all ingredients to soup pan and cook in a 325°F oven for 4 hours.

Step 2: Garnish and serve as desired.



GREAT SKI TRIP MEAL!