

REC Board President Gilman Moe Passes Away

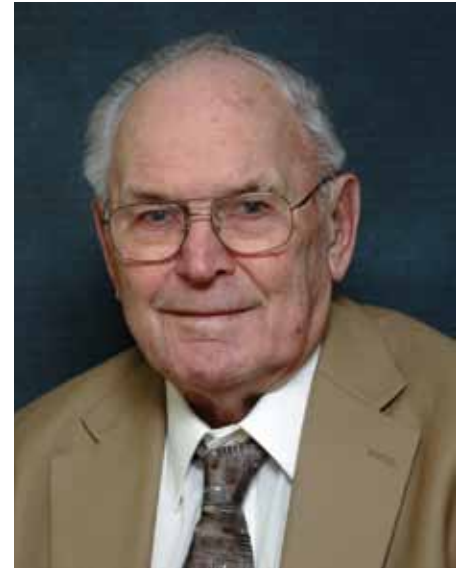
Gilman Moe, the Richland Electric Cooperative Board of Directors president since 1978, passed away on July 24 at his home. He began his service on the REC board in 1973 and was only the fourth board president in the cooperative's 75-year history.

As part of his dedicated service to REC members, Moe also served on a variety of related boards. He served as board member and a term as president of the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA). Moe served several years as a member of the Federated Rural Electric Insurance board of directors, for which he also served as board chairman. During his nearly four decades of electric coop involvement, Moe also served on a variety of local, state, and national committees on behalf of Richland Electric Cooperative.

In recognition of his cooperative leadership, Moe was presented with the Ally of Cooperative Electrification (ACE) Award in 1996. This is the highest honor bestowed upon any rural electric cooperative leader in the state of Wisconsin.

In addition, Moe helped guide many of REC's diversified services, including serving as president of Tech Com, Inc., the parent company of Genuine Telecom, which is owned by Richland Electric, Scenic Rivers Energy, and two telephone cooperatives. He also served as president of Skyview DBS of Wisconsin, the local DirecTV® provider, which first brought digital TV to the rural areas of southwest Wisconsin.

Moe was also very active and a well respected member of his community. He previously served on



the Richland County board, was the current chairman of the Town of Willow in Richland County, and was the current chairman of a local charitable foundation. ■

Mark Your Calendar for REC Member Appreciation Picnic/CFL Food Drive Coming Next Month



We'd like to remind you to mark your calendar for the Member Appreciation Picnic, which will be held next month on Saturday, October 8. Once again this year, we are asking members to bring a nonperishable food item or cash to the picnic for the local food pantry. Members who donate will receive a free compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL). Check your electric bill that you receive this month (September) for a bill insert with more information about the picnic/CFL food drive.





Making Waves

Country Lines:

by Dean C. Young

On a farm in Richland County many years ago, a boy was born to Garland and Laura Fruit (Garland was on the REC board from 1985–1991). He was like most farm boys, building a work ethic that would stick with him all his life. His life consisted of taking care of animals, chores like cleaning the barn, milking, making hay, and performing myriad tasks that every farm boy is subject to. He was involved in his church and participated in 4-H and managed to fit in school besides. What's more is that he loved the work and thought he'd always be on a farm.

Life has a way of leading us in strange directions, and that is what it did to Ron Fruit. Sometime during his years at Richland Center High School, he wanted to play basketball. His father made a bargain with him that he could do that if he also joined forensics, so the matter was settled. Here's where the turn comes. Instead of excelling at basketball, Ron stood out in forensics. By chance, the local radio station, WRCO, needed a student to work there. They called the high school asking for someone who shone in forensics, and the rest is history.

Ron says that first part-time job was like a typical school-to-work program. Each day he would be on the air waves starting at 2 p.m., and when he was done reading the evening news, he went home. "It was good having a job at this time and I really enjoyed it," he told me. "Radio was not difficult compared to cleaning calf pens and the other farm work."

The studios on Bohmann Drive are evacuated during the flood of 2007.



Ron Fruit in front of the new station building on Hwy. 14. Overview: An historic photo of the original WRCO building.

After high school, Ron thought about a career in agriculture or engineering as he attended UW–Richland. An extension agriculture agent, Mainard Holtz, connected him with former Judge Kent C. Houck, and soon Ron was share-renting the farm—for eight years! Of course, this isn't the end of the story.

In 1983, Ron had the chance to return to WRCO Radio full time. By 1986, he became the program director (in charge of scheduling) as well as operations manager, "doing everything else including taking out the trash," Ron laughed.

Whether he knew it or not, Ron's experience and aptitude, coupled with his kindness and generosity, were growing with the station as four years later, in 1990, he took over as station manager, overseeing the general operations of the entire station. Ron sat straight to make a point: "I learned *really* fast!" There were lots of new things to learn that opened his eyes quickly.

At this point, WRCO's owner, Peter Athanas, encouraged Ron to consider purchasing the station. "I was very reluctant for a long time," Ron recalled, looking into the distance, "but I finally looked at it as an opportunity." After much paperwork, the station changed from Richland Broadcasting to Fruit Broadcasting in 1994.

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Making Waves

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I asked Ron what the letters for the station meant. He explained that the W was a letter chosen by the FCC (Federal Communications Commission), the RC was Richland Center, and the O was for Overgaard, the name of the first license holder. In 1949, WRCO was an AM station, and by 1966 it signed on the FM. Ron and his wife, Beth, are only the fourth owners of WRCO and are also the second longest owners, though they are still putting time on that clock!

Now it was time for nature to change Ron's path as a flood hit Richland Center in August 2007. As flood waters rose, they became the station's biggest challenge yet. After the flood waters flowed over the sandbags and entered the station, Ron had to move it to the office of the Star Spangled Celebration. Operations returned to Bohmann Drive in February 2008. Then, before the station was completely fixed up, the flood of 2008 rose from the depths of the Pine River and the station was once more inundated.

Ron's serious expression softened to one of fondness as he told me how much the Richland community pulled together to help him and the station. "The City of Richland Center, Richland County Emergency Management, and Richland County all worked really hard to relocate us out of the flood's way. It was heartwarming that an army of people came to sandbag several times when the station was threatened. September 30th will be a substantial date. It is our one-year anniversary of the first time we

didn't have to be moving, cleaning, repairing, and tearing down! We appreciate (from experience) how difficult it is for people to get through a flood."

Before the flood disaster at the station, Ron and Beth signed papers to upgrade the FM facilities with a new tower and transmitter building erected just west of town. Ron notes, "We figured having a better signal was more important than a studio!" Richland Electric Cooperative was a huge help, providing the means and support to run lines for powering the facility. A generator was installed and will kick in with the load management system when the REC signals that it needs to reduce demand for power to avoid brown-outs.

Ron and Beth found a building on Highway 14 that matched what they needed for a new studio. They only had to retrofit the existing building and make some minor changes before they could move in on June 21, 2010. Many people wondered if tearing down the old studio would be sad. "I wasn't sad, as you might think," Ron conveyed. "I looked forward to fewer problems."

When he's not taking high-quality photos, Ron can be seen in various places around Richland County when he gets out of the studio. He is the MC of parades, Star Spangled Celebration for 18 years, Walk with Grace, and Churning Dirt. He is also involved in many events at the Richland County Fair (September 7-11). Ron says proudly, "We are honored when people request us!"

WRCO is certainly a well-maintained family operation. Beth runs the financial areas; Ron does commercials, shows, and interviews (which he loves best); and 20



Left: The first tower section at the new FM transmitter site is set. This site and tower are served by Richland Electric Cooperative and are part of the load management program; the generator provides backup power during periods of high electric demand. Center: The emergency generator is set in place at the new studio. Right: Phil Nee (left) and Beth and Ron Fruit at the station's new FM site in November 2007.

employees, who work hard and are committed to the local area, all help keep WRCO growing and healthy. Daughter, Sarah, was helping at the desk this summer but also attends college with her eye on becoming a dentist. She took on the huge task of organizing the Walk with Grace. I expect Ron will continue making waves...radio waves!

When I write these articles, I think the nicest thing besides being able to delve into people's interesting lives is that I go away from the interviews having made new or renewed friends, so I thank you one and all! ■

Do you know of an interesting business or hobby or unique way of life along the REC lines? Contact the REC business office or e-mail me, Dean Young, at dad@mwt.net.



Left: Announcer Phil Nee's daughter Macey. Below: Ron's daughter, Sarah, with the Walk with GRACE auction items.



REC on Facebook!

Richland Electric Cooperative (REC) is now on Facebook. You can check out energy-saving tips, safety tips, and other co-op information on our page. Go to our website at www.rec.coop and click on the Facebook link at the left of the page, or search for it from your personal Facebook account. Don't forget to "Like" us!



Laugh Lines

John Elway, after living a full life, died. When he got to heaven, God was showing him around. They came to a modest little house with a faded Broncos flag in the window. "This house is yours for eternity, John," said God. "This is very special; not everyone gets a house up here."

John felt special indeed, and he walked up to his house. On his way up the porch, he noticed another house just around the corner. It was a three-story mansion with a green and gold sidewalk, a 50-foot tall flagpole with an enormous Packers logo flag, and in every window, a cheesehead!

John looked at God and said "God, I'm not trying to be ungrateful, but I have a question. I was an all-pro QB, I won two Super Bowls, and I even went to the Hall of Fame."

God said, "So what do you want to know, John?" "Well," John replied, "why does Aaron Rodgers get a better house than me?"

God chuckled and said, "John, that's not Aaron Rodgers's house. It's mine!"

Office Closed

The REC office will be closed on Monday, September 5, for Labor Day. Have a safe and happy Labor Day weekend.



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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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