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I just wanted to shake your hand

By **JACK HAMBLIN** | *Manager, Southeast Electric Cooperative*

I'VE spent my entire career in the electric cooperative world. I started out as an apprentice lineman in the late 1970s at a co-op in Wyoming. I spent a total of 18 years there; the last 10 years as manager of operations. I then took a short vacation from the business, but soon returned with my current job as Southeast Electric Cooperative's manager.

I came to Ekalaka more than 21 years ago with the plan to stay a few years and then get back to my Wyoming homeland. But as you all know, plans made are sometimes changed; and sometimes, most often, for the better. Celinda and I are so happy we decided to stay and make eastern Montana our home.

I've never been one to automatically follow tradition or the accepted norms in some things. That is why the style and tone of my *Rural Montana* articles have never really been like most other managers. I certainly don't want to offend my manager colleagues, but I believe most of them would mostly admit that most of their articles are most often mostly... boring. So I decided to try something a little different. I wrote mostly light-hearted articles, some of which had little or nothing to do with the current



goings-on at the co-op. For that, I got a couple of light-hearted rebukes from my more serious manager friends. One of them even told me there

was no room for humorous writing in the *RM* articles I was having so much fun with; that these articles were meant to inform the members of important news and that's it. I am comforted in the thought that not too many of his members even read his articles. My goal was to have a little fun with my articles by making a little fun of mostly myself, and letting the members get to know me a little in the process. I thought that if I could get people to read my articles, they may read the rest of the magazine also.

The *Rural Montana* magazine has for decades been a primary means

of information for rural electric members. *RM* has won many journalistic awards through the years and has been recognized nationally. This, even in spite of too many boring manager articles. It deserves to be read and I wanted to do something a little different so I could maybe see fewer copies in the waste bin at the post office.

I introduced the members to Miss America — my wife, Celinda. I know I embellish a little in my articles, but she is pretty much the way I have described her these past 20 years. There have been periods where I have also been guilty of my own boring articles. But if I put too many of that kind out, it's not long before I get a comment from one or two members asking why I never talk about Miss America anymore. So, I try to quit taking myself and my supposed importance too seriously and write what I know you'll read.

You can never be absolutely sure a tactic such as this has the desired

Don't aim at electrical equipment

As hunting season approaches, please remember that electrical insulators, conductors and electrical equipment are NOT on the hunting list.

Southeast Electric Cooperative encourages hunters to be aware of electrical equipment while enjoying the great outdoors this season. Hunters and other gun owners should not

shoot near or toward powerlines, power poles and substations. A stray bullet can cause damage to equipment, could be deadly to the shooter, and potentially interrupt electric service to large areas. Repairs can be costly and damages cause outages to our members.

As a nonprofit cooperative, owned by the members, we all share in this

expense. We encourage experienced hunters who are familiar with the area to identify the locations of utility properties and equipment to young or new hunters in their group, and remind them to avoid shooting toward these facilities.

Enjoy the great outdoors but be aware of what's behind that big buck, or it might cost big bucks. RM

Tips for keeping cyber criminals out

BEING cyber smart and maintaining stellar online hygiene is the best way to protect yourself and others from cyber-attacks. No single tip is foolproof but taken together they can make a real difference for taking control of your online presence. Following these tips is also easy and free.

Use a strong passphrase/password manager.

This may seem obvious, but all too often securing strong passphrases/password managers is overlooked. Using long, complex and unique passwords is a good way to stop your account from being hacked, and an easy way of keeping track and remembering your passwords is by using a



password manager. Perform software updates.

When a device prompts that it's time to update the software, it may be tempting to simply click postpone and ignore the message.

However, having the latest security software, web browser and operating system is one of the best defenses against online threats. So, don't wait – update.

Do your research.

Common sense is a crucial part of maintaining good online hygiene, and an intuitive step to stay safe online is to do some research before downloading anything new to your device, such as apps. Before downloading any new app, make sure that it's safe by check-

ing who created the app, what the user reviews say, and if there are any articles published online about the app's privacy and security features.

Check your settings.

Be diligent to doublecheck your privacy and security settings and be aware who can access your documents. This extends from Google docs to Zoom calls, and beyond. For meetings on Zoom, for example, create passwords so only those invited to the session can attend, and restrict who can share their screen or files with the rest of the attendees.

Other practices are installing virus protection, do not use flash drives and back up your devices.

By taking preventive measures and making a habit of practicing online safety, you can decrease your odds of being hacked.

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results. I have thought maybe my friends were right and I should've taken a more serious approach to these writings. But a vindication came just the other day.

From my desk in my office, I heard a man come in and, in a loud voice, ask if I was in. I could hear him very plainly, so I got up from my desk and walked into the lobby to greet him. I had never seen the man nor his wife

before, but the first words out of his mouth were, "I've known you for 20 years and just wanted to shake your hand." I started to apologize for not remembering him. Then he continued, "I've never met you, but I came in here 20 years ago to sign up for electricity, and I've read your article every month since. So, I feel like I know you."

He said this was only the second time he'd been in the office, and just wanted to meet the manager. It was

such a very pleasant encounter, and I enjoyed meeting him immensely.

As he drove away, I thought of my manager friends who, in their great wisdom, tried to set me straight so many years ago. I wonder if they've ever had a complete stranger come into their office and say, "I've never met you, but I've known you for 20 years and just wanted to shake your hand." Probably not. RM