

Boyd Stevenson was celebrated for his 100 years on this earth, surrounded by friends and family this February.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHANNON HEICK

A LIFE OF SERVICE

Celebrating 100 years of Boyd Stevenson

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

From farm fields to airplane factories, from serving his country to powering rural North Dakota, Boyd Stevenson spent a century working hard and showing up for others.

I knew Boyd while I lived in Leeds. I saw him volunteering at community events, lending a hand wherever needed and sitting faithfully in the same church pew every Sunday. But it wasn't until I began working at Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) that I discovered another side of his story. Boyd was once a lineworker who helped bring electricity to countless rural homes across North Dakota.

Boyd worked for Baker Electric Cooperative (BEC), which later consolidated with Tri-County Electric Cooperative in 1997 to form NPEC. That meant Boyd wasn't just part of the community. He helped build the infrastructure that powered many communities.

For years, I casually asked Boyd's son, Steve, if his dad had any good stories from "back in the day" as a lineworker. After Boyd celebrated his 100th birthday in February, I finally had the chance to sit down with both Boyd and Steve to hear firsthand about Boyd's remarkable

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Baker Electric Cooperative lineworker **Boyd Stevenson**, left, and **Adolph Lybeck** are at work in 1951. Boyd said he never used a bucket truck during his 40-year career.

life as a serviceman, a lineworker and a family man.

Before we even began, Boyd made me promise to include a disclaimer.

"Anything I tell you is the best I can remember," he said with a grin. "Being 100 years old and all, my memory isn't what it used to be."

Even with that warning, his stories were sharp, honest and filled with the kind of humble humor only a life well lived can produce.

North Dakota childhood

Born in 1926, Boyd grew up in Mylo, a small town in southeastern Rolette County. He was raised in a lively household with eight siblings and his parents. Life was busy, and it was built around hard work.

After completing the eighth grade, Boyd made a decision that set the tone for the rest of his life. At just 13 years old, he went to work for a farmer rather than continuing school.

"If I wanted to go to high school, I would've had to travel to the next town," he explained

For three years, Boyd milked cows and worked the land using horses, because tractors were still rare.

"I remember their first tractor," Boyd said, laughing. "In high gear, it only went 20 miles an hour."

Answering the call

In 1941, after harvest was finished, Boyd left home for Seattle, Washington, with his older brother, Harold. The country was preparing for World War II, and the two brothers wanted to find work and support the war effort, even before they were old enough to vote.

Harold was hired at Boeing, but Boyd was only 16 years old and too young to join his brother. Instead, he took a job at Sears, Roebuck and Co. filling Christmas orders. Eventually, Boyd followed in his brother's footsteps and began working at Boeing as well, helping build B-17 bombers.

When Harold was drafted, Boyd stayed behind and continued working in the factory. When Boyd turned 18 years old, his name came up for the draft, too. But during World War II, skilled Boeing workers were often granted deferments because their labor was vital to producing aircraft for the war effort, so Boyd received a deferment for a year.

On March 30, 1945, Boyd officially answered the call to serve. He began his military training at Camp Livingston in Louisiana, far from the North Dakota fields he knew so well. Soon after, he was stationed in Hawaii as a military police officer as part of the Asiatic-Pacific Theatre. Even at a young age, Boyd carried serious responsibility,

servicing with discipline, steadiness and integrity, all qualities that followed him throughout his life.

After the war ended, Boyd was honorably discharged after nearly two years of service. By then, he had earned the rank of sergeant, leading small teams and overseeing training and readiness. It was a quiet testament to his natural leadership.

Line work and family

Boyd returned home expecting to return to farm work, but another opportunity came along that would shape the next four decades of his life.

"I just got home and two weeks later, I went to work for Baker Electric," Boyd said.

A friend had already been hired and encouraged Boyd to apply.

"He told me, 'Come on down. They'll hire you.' So, I did," Boyd said.

BEC, which was headquartered in Cando, was building power lines near Boyd's hometown and needed workers willing to dig holes, climb poles and build line.

"I had never climbed a pole in my life," Boyd said. But that didn't stop him.

He found a pair of hooks and a belt the workers for the city of Mylo used for installing streetlights and climbed his first pole. From then on, he was hooked on the lineworker's life. Boyd admitted he didn't have experience or formal training in electricity.

"We all just learned as we went," he said.

Boyd described his first year with Baker Electric as a whirlwind. Farmers were anxious to get electricity to their homes, barns and shops, so many were willing to help the lineworkers in any way they could.

Boyd laughed as he recalled how they set poles in those early days.

"The farmers rigged up a grain truck with a wooden boom and a rope," he said. "Oh, we had quite the start!" It wasn't fancy, but it worked. And little by little, line by line, electricity spread across the countryside.

In 1951, Boyd moved to Leeds and took the role of foreman for the Leeds line crew. Boyd was just 25 years old, and the promotion spoke volumes about his work ethic and leadership.

While Boyd was helping power rural North Dakota, he was also building a life of his own. Wanting a large family, Boyd and his wife welcomed six children. Later in life, he also became a loving father to three stepchildren and a husband to his beloved wife, Della.

Brotherhood and community

Line work is demanding and dangerous, so crews often develop a bond unlike any other – a brotherhood built on trust. Boyd formed many close friendships over the years, including one with fellow lineworker Rip Hanson.

"He was definitely one of my best friends," Boyd said.

Their bond carried them through decades of hard

work, long days and countless storms. Boyd retired in December 1985, and Rip followed only a few months later.

Over the course of his career, Boyd helped electrify communities from the Canadian border to Fessenden. He also answered the call when neighboring cooperatives needed assistance, including mutual aid work in the Carrington area for Tri-County Electric Cooperative.

One storm stayed with him.

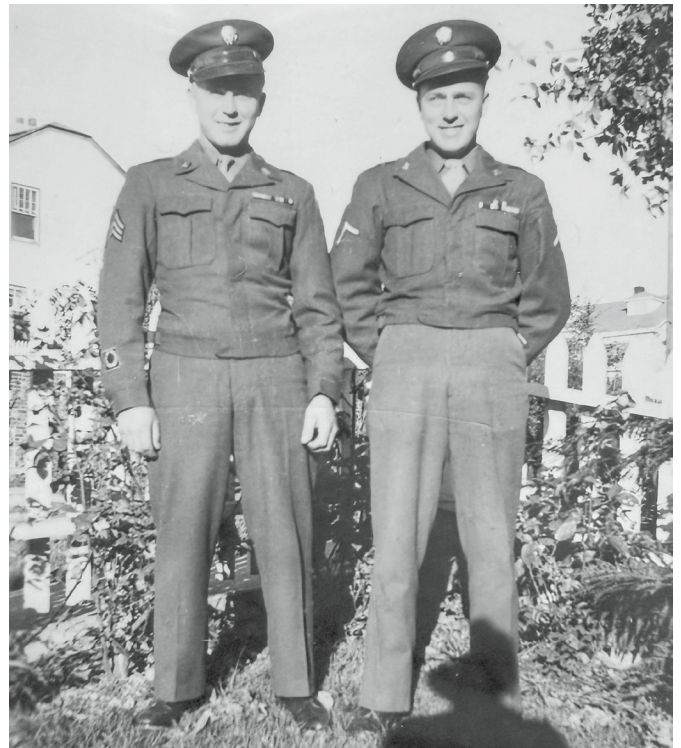
"I remember an ice storm with over 1,000 poles on the ground," Boyd said. "I think we got it all restored in nine days." It's difficult to imagine that kind of destruction or the determination it took to rebuild with the tools and equipment available at the time.

"I never used a bucket truck," Boyd said with pride.

Boyd was devoted to his work and his community. A lifelong resident of Leeds, he spent decades serving his community through the volunteer fire department, ambulance service, the American Legion, Lions Club, Elks and Leeds Lutheran Church. He lived the kind of life that quietly strengthens a community: always involved, always dependable and never asking for recognition.

Boyd celebrated his 100th birthday in February surrounded by family and friends observing an incredible milestone and a reflection of the many lives he touched.

In April, after 100 years on this earth, Boyd went home to be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I'm thankful Boyd shared his memories with me, and I hope the stories he told will be treasured by his family for generations to come. ■



Boyd Stevenson, left, and his brother, **Harold**, both served in the U.S. Army during World War II.

Annual poster contest winners announced

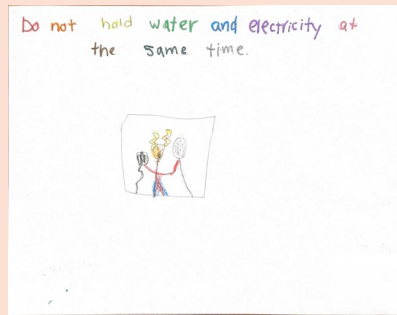
Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) hosted its eighth annual safety poster contest, asking for members' children to depict "how to stay safe around electricity."

Over 40 children entered their drawings, with a wide variety of scenes showing safety precautions taken at their home or on the farm. The posters were judged by NPEC employees, and winning entries are displayed here. ■

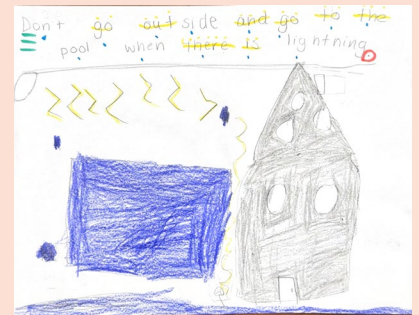
Kindergarten-first grade



First place
Eddie Krapp, Pingree



Second place
Maria Swanson, Cando



Third place
Jesse Hoover, Cando

Second-third grade



First place
Michael David, Cando



Second place
Ben Heinle, Buchanan

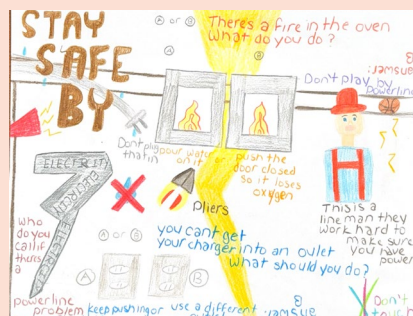


Third place
Leo Krapp, Pingree

Fourth-sixth grade



First place
Noelle Heinle, Buchanan



Second place
Isla Reed, Egland



Third place
Samantha David, Cando

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative lineworker **Tom Moravec**, left, and **Dustin Peterson** demonstrate how interaction with a live power line could be deadly.



Co-op participates in Safety Day

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) lineworkers Tom Moravec, Jacob Reimche and Dustin Peterson and Operations Manager Justin Kollman had the opportunity to participate in Kidder County Farm Bureau's Safety Day in Steele in April.

About 150 kids stopped by the NPEC booth and bucket truck to learn how to stay safe around electricity on the farm and what to do if you make contact with electricity. They learned about a lineworker's job duties and how lineworkers stay safe on the job.

Each student left with a goodie bag provided by the cooperative that included fun activities and safety material to help further their education.

NPEC appreciates being invited to help educate students on these important safety subjects. ■

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative lineworker **Dustin Peterson** demonstrates how he uses hooks to climb a pole, while **Jacob Reimche** waits to show the students how to operate a bucket truck and the safety protocols that take place.





Family-owned T&L Meats and Grocery opened for business April 1 in Pettibone. Left to right are **Nicolas Tripp, Brittany Tripp, Kayla Leno, Tyler Leno, Valerie Tripp** and **Steve Tripp**.

T&L MEATS AND GROCERY: KEEPING PETTIBONE ESSENTIAL

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

Born and raised in Pettibone, the Tripp family has always believed in doing their part to help their small town thrive. So, when the owners of T&V Grocery began considering retirement, they knew exactly who to call. Rather than see the community lose an essential service, they approached the owners of T&L Meats with the idea of expanding into the grocery business.

T&L Meats business partners Tyler and Kayla (Tripp) Leno, Nicholas and Brittany Tripp and Steve and Valerie Tripp launched the family-owned operation in 2016. What began as raising butcher steers to provide their own family with hormone- and antibiotic-free beef quickly turned into something much larger after friends and neighbors began asking to purchase the same products for their own families.

Their beef was processed at local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or state-inspected facilities before

being brought back to the Leno garage, where the family operated under a retail license from the N.D. Department of Health. There, they sold whole, half and quarter beef, along with individual cuts, directly to consumers.

The T&L team had already talked about expanding the business someday. The fear of losing access to groceries close to home gave them the push they needed. With everyone on board, they decided to combine their growing meat business with a hometown grocery store and build a new facility to accommodate their new adventure, renaming their business T&L Meats and Grocery.

"It was a pretty simple answer of yes from all of us," Kayla said.

First, the team needed to see if it was feasible, then needed time to make it happen. Without a grocery store, Pettibone's roughly 55 residents would face a nearly

90-mile round trip for basic necessities. Knowing the importance of local access, the T&L team asked the owners of T&V Grocery to give them at least a year and a half to get everything in place.

Even with busy schedules, the group believed they could make the expansion work. Tyler serves as mayor of Pettibone, Kayla is the city auditor and they also own a welding shop. Steve trucks and helps in the welding business, Nicholas works for a local farmer and Brittany works full time from home. Valerie took the responsibility of managing the day-to-day retail operations of the new store.

Construction began on a new facility designed to meet their growing needs, combining a grocery store, commercial kitchen for baked goods, and a sausage kitchen for meat processing and packaging all under one roof. They will continue to have their beef slaughtered at a USDA or state-inspected facility and further process it at their new location on main street in Pettibone.

The expansion was made possible, in part, through financing assistance from Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC). NPEC served as the lead lender through its revolving loan fund and helped secure 50% of the loan through a participation agreement with the Rural Development Finance Corporation. The partnership helped keep financing costs affordable and supported the long-term success of the project.

"Without the loan, there would be no way we'd be able to do this," Kayla said. "Definitely couldn't have done it without their help."

By investing in projects like T&L Meats and Grocery, NPEC continues its commitment to strengthening local

businesses, creating jobs and improving access to essential services throughout the communities it serves.

The new facility, powered by NPEC, officially opened its doors April 1, just one day after T&V Grocery closed following 40 years in business. Thanks to that seamless transition, the community never went without access to groceries.

Today, the store offers much more than locally raised beef. Customers can also purchase pork, chicken, sausage, beef sticks, beef strips and much more. Future items to come are bacon, ham, pork ribs and smoked chickens, along with traditional hamburger and steak cuts. Their focus remains on providing high-quality products made with natural ingredients and traditional preservation methods.

For the families behind T&L Meats and Grocery, the mission goes beyond simply running a business. Their goal is to ensure Pettibone and the surrounding area never become a food desert, while continuing to provide customers with both traditional and healthier meat options. They also encourage customers to call with requests for bulk meat orders or specialty grocery items.

For the Tripp family, the new grocery store represents a meaningful full-circle moment. Steve's grandparents owned and operated one of Pettibone's first grocery stores in the 1940s. In the late 1950s, his parents owned the store called Tripp's U Save, which included living quarters where Steve himself lived until he was 2 years old. Now, nearly 60 years later, the Tripp family is once again running a grocery store in Pettibone, continuing a legacy of service to the community they call home. ■

T&L Meats raises beef for butchering and selling at their storefront, along with pork and chicken.



Employee news

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) welcomes Jaden Chesley as an apprentice lineworker on our Jamestown crew under foreman Beau Bredahl.

Originally from Shevlin, Minnesota, Chesley is a 2022 graduate from Southeast Lineman Training Center in Georgia. He previously worked for Legacy Power Line, a company contracted by NPEC to do construction work such as pole change outs and building power line. Chesley worked primarily in the Jamestown, Woodworth and Carrington areas for three-and-a-half years while employed with Legacy, with three of those years as foreman of a line crew.

Chesley, who was hired in May, said he is looking forward to getting to know everyone and continuing learning. In his spare time, he enjoys fishing, hunting and snowmobiling.

NPEC hired Bryce Utke, a temporary apprentice

lineworker, as summer help to assist NPEC during the busy construction season.

Utke, a Glenfield native, started working with the Carrington line crews in June. He received his lineworker certificate from Bismarck State College this spring and is eager to learn about the cooperative model and to get to know new people. In his spare time, Utke enjoys hunting, fishing and golfing.

Congratulations to Jaden and Bryce. NPEC is happy to have you both on our team! ■



Chesley



Utke



Congratulations to Annette Sprague of Harvey

Annette is our latest winner of a \$25 bill credit for playing the April bill insert word scramble contest. Members can regularly check bill inserts for future contests.



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