

48 YEARS: THEN AND NOW

March 1964

ORIGINAL BOARD MEMBER TELLS OF COOPERATIVE START

“Those days when we were just beginning to get signers for the rural electricity program were rough,” said Harve G. Matherly, one of the original board members of Indian Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Original story published in the Lamp March 1964

“We could hardly pay our help, and it was hard to get farmers to sign up before the line was actually built. They all wanted to get on the line then,” Matherly continued.

Men like Matherly worked at securing members every day, hoping to have enough signers to build the lines. In some places it was necessary to cross the road, because a landowner did not want the lines to be built across his property.

Matherly lives in Olive, a community which was not included in the first area covered to solicit members for the building of an electric system with Rural Electrification funds; however, before the final organization took place, parts of Creek County were included and he represented his district on the first board.

While serving on the Indian Electric board, Matherly represented this cooperative on the board of

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March 2012

SON OF ORIGINAL BOARD MEMBER TELLS OF COOPERATIVE START

By C.L. Harmon

“Young people think it has always been here,” 88 year old George Matherly said. To be honest, most people these days probably think this, if they even give it a thought at all. But Matherly remembers a time when he used a kerosene lantern to feed the chickens and milk the cows. He remembers a time when lightning bugs were the only source of light on a moonless night and there was no humming noise reverberating through each room in his house as its source delivered warm and cool air depending upon the season. Olive resident George Matherly remembers a time before electricity was a part of his life.

He owes this luxury that became necessity, in part, to his father Harve Matherly. It was the efforts of people like his father who helped bring electricity to rural property owners. In fact Harve was one of the ‘founding fathers’ of Indian Electric Co-op, according to a 1964 article published in The Lamp and republished along side this article. He was an original board member who also served on the Olive School Board, served as a state representative from 1928-1932, county chairman of the Republican party and was a post master.

“My dad worked days and days to get people to sign up,” Matherly said. He is referring to his father’s efforts in convincing people to sign up for a five dollar membership before those people even had access to electricity. One must remember that in those early days of the co-op, light at the

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ORIGINAL BOARD MEMBER (CONT)

KAMO, a cooperative of cooperatives. This body engages in construction of electric transmission lines. Matherly contributed toward the selection of its name to represent Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

A farmer for as long as he can remember, Matherly and his bride, Callie, set up housekeeping on the Bland ranch in December 1904, following their marriage in her parents' home at Happy Corner.

Matherly and his son, George, now operate a ranching program on a total of 10,000 acres of land which they own and lease. Part of the land has just come out of the soil bank after five years of laying fallow to rebuild the land. Ceresia lespedeza was sown on the land to rebuild it.

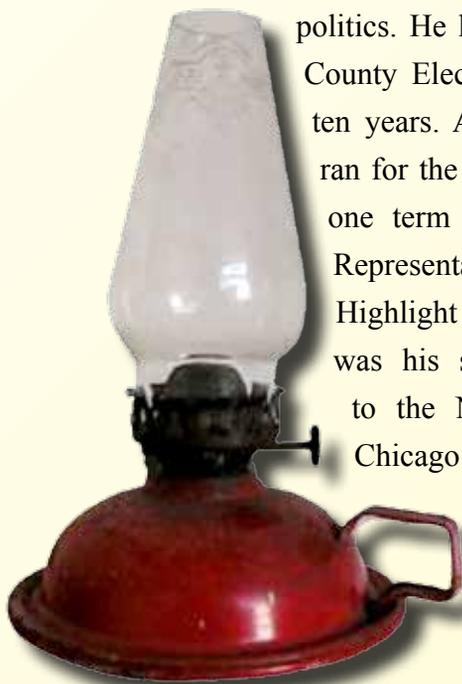
Because of his interest in education, Matherly served on the Olive School board for 18 years and helped consolidate the school district. He had studied the school systems of Iowa and other states before working strenuously for the Olive consolidation.

Mr. and Mrs. Matherly were the parents of three children George, who is foreman of the ranch operations; Ruby, now Mrs Edward Schirmer of Muskogee; and Alma, Mrs Clarence Jackson of Wichita Falls, Tx. There are three grandsons.

Not only was Matherly interested in school affairs and the cooperative, but he also took an active part in politics. He has served on the Creek County Election Board for the past ten years. A strong Republican, he ran for the State Senate and served one term in the State House of Representatives from 1928 to 1932. Highlight of his political career was his selection as a delegate to the National Convention in Chicago in 1944.

Matherly has also served as county chairman of the party and is deputy county

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SON OF ORIGINAL BOARD MEMBER (CONT)

flip of a switch was a dream to those in rural areas who had never had it. And so five dollars at a time when times were hard was a hard dream to sell.

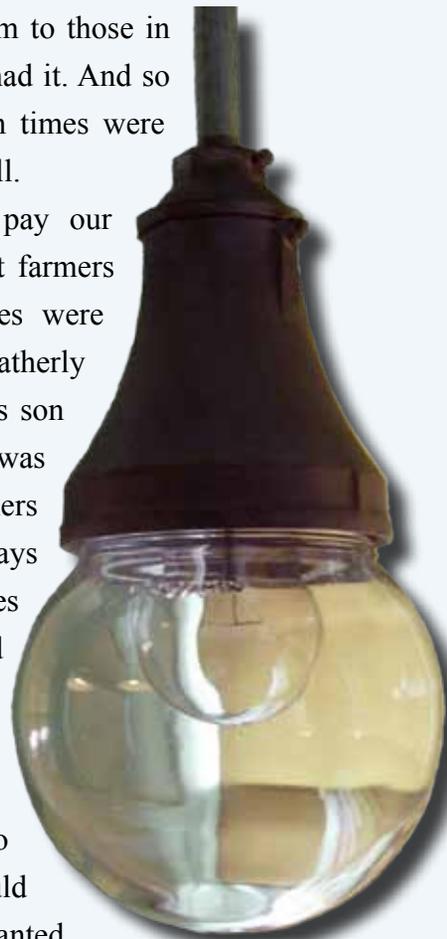
“We could hardly pay our help and it was hard to get farmers to sign up before the lines were actually built,” Harve Matherly said in the 1964 article. His son reflected on how difficult it was for his father when farmers refused to give right-a-ways to the co-op for the lines forcing him to regroup and find a willing participant to continue bringing the lines down to all rural areas. Often crews would have to cross roads where they could gain permission and be granted right-a-ways.

“It was funny later when those who had refused saw their neighbors and fellow farmers using light bulbs in their barns and on their front porches while they remained in the dark,” Matherly quipped. “They all wanted electric then when they could see how flipping a switch could light up the whole barn.”

Matherly was grown and married by the time electricity came to their family farm and ranch and so he had grown up with out electricity. He spoke about his first home where he and his wife actually had an “ice box” that used real ice to keep its contents cool. He remembers the ice truck stopping by every three days with another 75 pounds of ice.

“The first things that I bought after getting electricity in 1941 was a real ice box [refrigerator], an iron for my wife and a radio. That’s what most people bought after first getting electric to their homes. There wasn’t much else to buy back then,” he said. “After that first iron,

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ORIGINAL BOARD MEMBER (CONT)

assessor. He was selected as state committeeman of the Republican Party. Another office he has filled is that of Postmaster for 18 to 20 years. The post office was moved several years later.

Although Matherly is deeply involved in politics, Mrs. Matherly takes a back seat in government affairs. She prefers to cook and keep house. Before she was ill two years ago she was active in the Olive Baptist Church. Since that time she attends rather irregularly, she said. She found it necessary to discontinue her attendance at the Order of the Eastern Star during her illness.

The Matherly family moved to the present location in 1935 after they had spent five years building their home. They had purchased the farm about nine years earlier, but had never lived on the land. They say today that they hope to finish the home one of these days. There are still a few things they want to do to it.

Rather impressive in its appearance, the home has two full stories solidly constructed on ten and twelve-inch floor joists and a large basement underneath. Because the house stands on sloping land, Matherly can drive his car around the house and park it in the basement out of the weather.

Matherly is proud of his holdings and what he has done with them. He has given his time and energies to progress in his home and his community. It is easy to see that he will continue to take an active part in neighborhood, county, state and national affairs as long as he is able.

The Lamp salutes one of Indian Electric's founding fathers. ♦

SON OF ORIGINAL BOARD MEMBER (CONT)

my wife never went without another electric iron," he added sporting a boyish grin.

"My dad lived here in this house and he was so proud of having electricity," he said. "It's hard to imagine now, but people would get excited over a light bulb. Once the juice was flowing and then when new appliances were being offered to homeowners, people had to hire electricians to come out and wire them outlets," Matherly said. He remembers a man who worked for the co-op in the early days whose job it was to inspect these outlets and then use a long pole to reach the power pole and flip their power on. He also recalls that 40 kilowatts for a month cost about \$12 and what it was like to no longer have to draw water from a well using the old rope and bucket method. Looking back on it, he further remembered how people would have to drill new water wells because the electric pumps kept running the wells dry.

Matherly didn't follow in his father's footsteps to become an IEC board member. He said he has always felt like there were good representatives for his district and so he saw no need to replace them. But in a way he has carried on his father's legacy. He has grown to embrace the new way of life that his father knew electricity would bring. In fact he has grown so accustomed to his many electric amenities, that during the snow storm last year when the power was out, he purchased a generator large enough to run his entire house...and has no regrets for having done so.

Matherly summed up his feeling about the importance of electricity in a simple phrase that I believe explains just how valuable his father's efforts and the efforts of those who have come after him have been to bring us out of the dark: "Electric power changed the way we live and since then we have forgotten how to live the old way. We wouldn't even know how to go back if we wanted," he said. I suppose that to most of us, not just the young, it does seem like electric has always been here...even to those who know it really hasn't. ♦



Win \$100

During the months of March, April and May IEC will have a \$100 monthly drawing from members paying their electric bill by auto bank draft, eBill or through the automated phone system. The lucky winners will be drawn the following month and have \$100.00 dollars credited to their bill.

1) Automated Bill Payment @

http://www.iecok.com/forms/automated_bill_payment.asp

2) eBill @ <https://ebill.iecok.com>

3) IVR @ 918-295-9597

All you have to do to be entered is pay your bill in one of these 3 ways and you will be automatically entered.

Recipe: Died & Went to Pimento Cheese Heaven

- 6 ounces cream cheese
- ½ cup vermont extra sharp white cheddar cheese , grated
- ¾ cup sharp cheddar cheese , grated
- 1 cup monterey jack cheese , grated
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- 4 ounces pimientos , chopped
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 1 dash hot sauce (or more!)
- fresh ground black pepper , to taste

Recipe: Died & Went to Pimento Cheese Heaven

Directions:

Using a hand held mixer, beat cream cheese until soft.

Add the remaining ingredients and beat until creamy and combined.

Cover and refrigerate for about an hour.

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