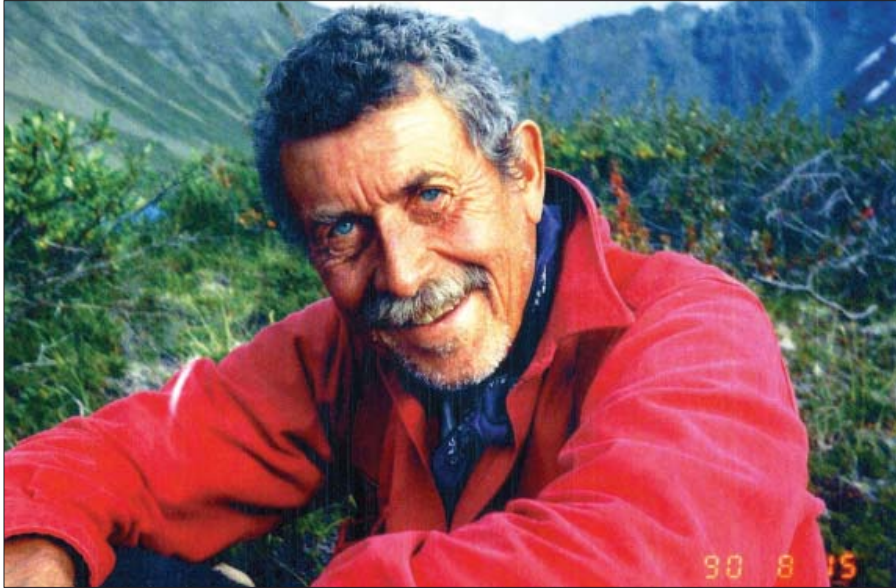


Fred Williams: 40 Years of Service



By Sharon Crisp

In 1971 (coincidentally the year I was born) when Fred Williams was asked to fill a vacancy on the CVEA Board of Directors, he never imagined that he would still be on that Board in 2011, 40 years later. Fred was asked to fill a vacant seat for one year. The next year, Fred was elected to a three year term and has been re-elected for 12 subsequent terms.

Fred, his wife Hallie, and their four children; Fred, Martin, Andrea, and Lindy, moved to the Copper Basin from Wyoming in 1963. Fred worked for the Department of Fish & Game in Wyoming. When given the opportunity to transfer to Alaska, took it. He said he came to Alaska because he was looking for something new.

Like many Alaskans, Fred grew to love the state and enjoyed the Copper Basin because of its sparsely populated surroundings and excellent hunting and fishing opportunities. He continued to

work as an Area Fisheries Biologist for 24 years, until his retirement.

During our interview, over a surf and turf lunch that Fred made for the two of us, I learned an interesting fact about Fred; during his tenure with the Department of Fish & Game, in 1987, he used a computer for the first time to write a report. According to Fred, it took way too long and that also became the last time he ever used a computer.

Fred spends his spare time travelling, hunting, fishing, and enjoying the outdoors. Guns are one of his passions and he has developed a very impressive collection over the years. His favorite is a Sharps 45-70 and his most rare a Marlin 22 Target Pistol, of which less than 50 were ever made.

Fred is dedicated to his community. He spent 30 years as an active member of the volunteer Fire Department and has served on various committees, including



Left: Fred Williams poses for the camera while enjoying the great outdoors.

Photo courtesy Barb Eaton

Above: Fred Williams processing paper at the Recycling Our Areas Resources processing center.

Photo by Sharon Crisp

the Historical Society. He has also been an active volunteer over the years, volunteering for the Copper Valley Museum, Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce in the Visitor Center, and Recycling Our Areas Resources.

In addition to Fred's service on the CVEA Board, he has represented CVEA on the Board of the Alaska Power Association (APA), and served on the APA Executive Committee, Resolutions and Governmental Affairs Steering Committee, ACRE/CARE Committee, and the ARECA Educational Foundation. Fred has been the recipient of the Mason LaZelle Achievement Award, the highest level award presented by Alaska's electric industry trade association. He also has an award given for exemplary employee service, called the Hatcher-Williams-Turkington Employee Award, named after he and two other industry leaders.

In his early years on the CVEA Board,

Fred says there were not a lot of issues, and things sure were different. One of their Board duties was to approve all of the bills that had accumulated over the month and sign checks. He remembers spending a lot of time performing these duties during the monthly meetings. At that time he believes the average cost per kWh was 8¢ and the word ‘environment’ was never even discussed in the board room.

Then one day, that changed. The price of oil started to climb and rates started to rise, making the high cost to the member an ever growing concern. He remembers when Government started imposing environmental regulations on utilities and how dramatically they affected the way CVEA did business. One of the first things the Cooperative had to do was replace all of the transformers, which was a project that carried a high price tag.

He notes how ironic it is that in this day and age, the environmental issues have become so prevalent, that the Cooperative has to employ a person to manage all of the environmental and regulatory impacts.

Fred believes that high electric rates, due to the cost of fuel, and onerous environmental regulations are the biggest issues facing CVEA today and into the future.

Fred has enjoyed his time on the Board and says his favorite thing is “being in a group who take their responsibilities seriously and are genuinely concerned with helping the members, all members, from one end of the line to the other.” He says the thing he likes least is “driving between districts in the dark to attend meetings.”

When asked what he would tell others interested in running for the Board, Fred replied, “I’d tell them that it is stressful, time consuming, and it is a very serious job. They need to prepare to cross difficult hurdles, work together towards a common goal, and talk to people. I’d also tell them that they will be lucky to have an opportunity to work with such great

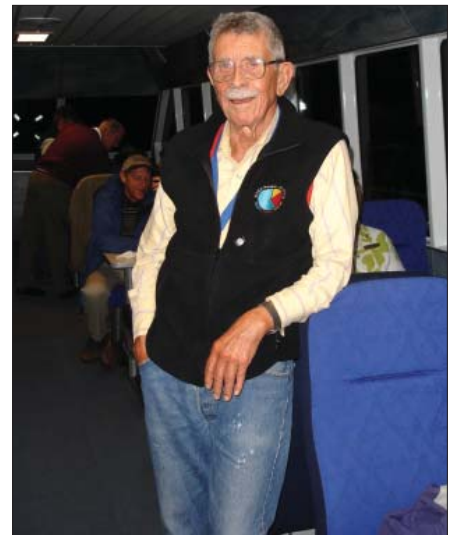


people.”

Having served on the same board for 40 years, one can imagine all that Fred has seen and been a part of. He believes the biggest accomplishment of the Cooperative was building the Solomon Gulch Hydroelectric Plant. There were different schools of thought on this project at the time it was built and there are still varying opinions even today. But, Fred told me he believes, “it is our saving grace today. It is an amazing accomplishment that the rate for hydroelectricity hasn’t changed from 6.8¢/kWh since 1998.” During our conversation, he challenged me to think of one other thing that remains the price today that it was then. I was unable to rise to that challenge.

He went on to tell me that his proudest moment was in 1981, when he cut the ribbon of the Solomon Gulch Hydroelectric Project, a project that a year later became the Cooperative’s primary power source. Today, Solomon Gulch provides roughly 50% of our annual generation requirement.

Fred looks forward to more proud moments as a Director of CVEA. I asked Fred why he has stayed on the CVEA Board of Directors as long as he has and he said, “Sharon, it’s because there’s always a project I’d like to see finished.”



Top: Fred Williams and long-time industry friend, Robert Hatcher, presenting the Alaska Power Association Hatcher-Williams-Turkington Employee Award.

Photo courtesy the Alaska Power Association

Above: Fred enjoying a Stan Stephens Cruise at the 2007 APA Annual Meeting in Valdez.

Photo by Sharon Crisp

Right now is no exception. In the next five years, Fred hopes to see the Allison Creek Hydroelectric Project in production, the T-Line moved out of the avalanche zone on Thompson Pass, and other small hydroelectric projects being developed in the Copper Basin. ■