

# Four decades of achievement

It was a calling...of sorts. Actually it was a telephone call he received while combining wheat on his farm in central Kentucky that drew Robert N. Cleveland into what became a distinguished career in rural electrification that has spanned more than 40 years. Next Jun. 1, the president of Ohio Rural Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (OREC) and Buckeye Power, Inc. plans to retire.

Cleveland was a lean young farmer only 21 years old (his hair was white even then) the day he was coaxed off his combine to attend Shelby Rural Electric Cooperative's annual meeting. He was told they were making him a candidate for the Co-op's board. People in the community knew of the dedicated hours young Robert and his father had devoted to volunteer work among other ag cooperatives and committees, and they wanted him to help bring "the lights" to Kentucky's countryside. He was elected — one of the youngest RE board members on record.

Cleveland's actual employment in the program began in 1961 when J.K. Smith, general manager of the Kentucky statewide association, hired him as administrative assistant.

During his recent 12-year tenure in Ohio, Cleveland has earned nation-wide respect as a "thinker and doer," particularly in the areas of planning, legislation, finance, marketing and power generation. He frequently has been chosen by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Assn. as a keynoter or panelist for its important meetings and seminars.

Since 1985 he has served on the select Policy Advisory Committee, working with NRECA General Manager Bob Bergland and his staff in developing solid approaches to solving the financial problems of many of the nation's G&Ts. Through the years, Cleveland has served on many other such committees and has given frequent testimony on Capitol Hill and in state legislatures on behalf

of rural electrification. In 1975-76 he was president of the RE State-wide Managers Assn.

Cleveland's deep conviction that intensified research is vital to preserving the nation's strength and status in the world energy market also has inspired him to leadership in the Electric Power Research Institute. In early 1988 he was elected to a second one-year term as vice chairman of the Palo Alto, California-based organization and is a member of its executive committee. EPRI, one of the nation's largest private research organizations, is supported through voluntary contributions from 600 member utilities that provide two-thirds of the nation's electric power and energy. Its 1988 budget is \$365 million and cumulative investments exceed \$2.6 billion.

**I**f anything has kept this country ahead of the others, it has been our emphasis on research in the past," Cleveland said. "It was Thomas Edison and others like him who discovered ways to use electricity; we're also the ones who modernized the automobile and devised computers and learned how to use them. Other people have taken those ideas and may be doing a better job than we did originally, but research is the key to our surviving today in this very fast-moving economy. If we're not there to produce a better product, through research, someone else is going to do it."

Buckeye Power, Inc. itself contributes more than \$1 million annually to NRECA/EPRI research and development. In addition, Ohio's rural electrics budget some \$50,000 annually to in-state energy research.

Robert Cleveland and the Columbus-based associations have reason to be proud of their stature among the nation's rural electrics. OREC is composed of 28 distribution Cooperatives, serving more than 246,000 member-consumers. It operates in one headquarters/-



Robert N. Cleveland

warehouse facility and shares some of its staff with Buckeye Power, Inc. The G&T utilizes 1,230 megawatts of its own coal-fired generation at the Cardinal Generating Station, near Steubenville, to serve all of its Ohio consumers. Buckeye ranks among the 10 largest G&Ts in the nation, selling in excess of 4.5 billion kilowatt-hours a year. Wholesale power is priced at about the fifth lowest among the more than 50 G&Ts in the United States. Cardinal Plant capacity is expected to extend well beyond the year 2000.

Contributing greatly to the stable cost of Co-op power in rural Ohio are marketing programs spearheaded by Cleveland and his staff. Examples: A computerized load management system, now in its 16th year, utilizing radio-controlled switches on 65,000 electric water heaters; 1,850 dual fuel installations, incorporating the addition of electric heat pumps to fossil fuel furnaces; and formation of the statewide distributorship for

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## Achievements

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WaterFurnace geothermal heat pumps, which, after eight months now services 49 heating-ventilating-air conditioning dealers.

During his tenure in Ohio, Cleveland also has worked unceasingly to encourage sales of off-peak surplus power and energy to an association of municipal electricians and to expand economic development efforts to entice new industry to Co-op territory. Both efforts have paid off handsomely in stabilizing the cost of power to the consumer. Buckeye's load factor, a measure of capacity utilization, has increased from 47.9 percent in 1977 to 61 percent in 1988.

Cleveland's earliest years in top management began in 1969 when he became statewide association manager in Colorado. After spearheading four years of reorganization and unprecedented growth with that association, he moved back east to a similar position in North Carolina. There, he sparked formation of a material supply service, purchase of an office building, coordinated power supply activities, and simplified committee structures.

With the retirement of Howard Cummins as Ohio's statewide manager in 1977, Cleveland took up the challenge and moved to Columbus. The pattern of Cleveland-shepherded activity continued: Passage of a territorial integrity act; defeat of legislation that would have taken much of the regulation of the Cooperatives out of the hands of the consumers and their boards; completion and start-up of a new 600-megawatt generating unit at Cardinal; purchase of 2,200 acres of land in Pike County for future siting of a new generating station; continued financing for an abundant supply of low-sulfur coal; renovation and expansion of the headquarters office building and warehouse; computerized record-keeping and typesetting.

With retirement now imminent, the OREC/Buckeye Power president was asked to list the pluses, as well as the disappointments of the experience. "I'm happy to see

the Co-ops running as a true business," he said. "We were able to get legislation in place that protected Co-op boundaries. As new loads come into our areas we have the opportunity to serve them, which improves the Co-op's load factors and helps keep down the rates to the people we already serve. Getting a new generating unit up and running was another great accomplishment.

"From a national standpoint I am sorry the rural electrification program has not been changed so we don't have to go to Congress every year and fight for support," Cleveland said. "We continue to need the government agency. It should not have become a political football. For many years it was not. We do need a revolving fund that is self-sustaining to help Co-operatives with their expansion programs. Properly managed, the program could continue to be very meaningful to our consumers without this tit-for-tat among our political leaders."

Cleveland agrees that utilities, and industries in general, face great challenges in the future, especially with respect to the environment. He believes research in the next 10 to 15 years will go far toward conquering "acid rain." He sees carbon dioxide's contribution to the "greenhouse effect" as a world problem which must be dealt with. Accordingly, he foresees a renaissance in nuclear generation during this period, and a trend toward electric vehicles.

Cleveland was asked if he believes rural electric Cooperatives, as we know them today, can survive another 50 years and, if so, what their consumer-owners can do to keep them viable.

His reply: "We must have larger operating units. There are 1,000 electric Co-ops across the nation, and we need only about a third that many. Merging or consolidating that many is hard to accomplish. We haven't had much success at that in Ohio, but I hope it can be done on a planned, orderly basis before the wolf's at the door.

"There isn't a lot of profit in serving the remote areas of the state, so the profit-oriented investor-owned companies aren't necessarily interested. That's why we have to have some of the "cream" (industry) in order to be more efficient operating units. We've done that very well in Ohio, but I think there will be a continuing need to serve the remote areas. That means we will have to run our Co-ops on a business-like basis if they are to thrive."

Cleveland continued: "There's nothing better in the minds of the consumers, I think, than the fact that they have some control over their electric systems. They have the opportunity to elect their own boards, and those trustees have control over their electric rates. That's why they must operate in a business-like fashion."

A successor to Cleveland is to be announced yet this month. The retiring president has arranged with the boards of OREC and Buckeye Power, Inc. to be available as a consultant during the transition. But, with seven grandchildren scattered in several states, it's a safe bet that Robert Cleveland and his wife, Joan, will devote more time to self and family.

—Marcus Orr

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## White amur

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and Hester Horst of Marengo tell a similar story. Their five-acre pond used to be covered with moss by late spring. They had to pull the moss off the pond before they could add chemicals. Now — 50 white amurs later — they "let the fish do the work." The non-working fish in the Horst pond — bluegill, bass, crappies and catfish — will learn to eat weeds if they are smart.

To obtain more information about white amur to help you determine if these fish would be beneficial for your pond, contact the nearest Division of Wildlife district office or one of the advertisers on page 20.