



POWER IN PODCASTING New medium gives life to old cases

BY KATIE RYAN-ANDERSON

Barbara Louise Cotton was 15 years old when she was last seen in 1981. For decades, Barbara's story haunted family, friends and law enforcement.

"Somebody knows what happened to her," said James Wolner, creator, writer and investigator for the Dakota Spotlight podcast. "It's time we found answers for this little girl."

Podcasts are audio-based stories, available on tablets and smartphones. They can range from silly to serious and are usually available at no cost to listeners.

Fewer than 1,000 people live in Hebron, and Wolner is one of them. Though Dakota Spotlight is small-town in nature, it already has big-name appeal. *Marie Claire* magazine named it the Best True Crime podcast lists in both 2020 and 2021. And, Dakota Spotlight topped Find That Pod's True Crime podcast list in 2021.

Podcasts like Dakota Spotlight weren't around when Barbara was last seen 40 years ago. Family and friends say she was last seen leaving a restaurant in her hometown of Williston. Law enforcement has reason to believe her captor or captors took her from North Dakota to various locations in Montana.

Cottons, but not candy

"A Better Search for Barbara" explores the who, what and why of her case, including never-before-heard interviews with Barbara's family and friends. Among them is an interview with her brother, Kent Cotton of Nashua, Mont.

Decades after the disappearance, Kent said he still catches himself wondering what kind of work Barbara would have done and how many children she would have had.

"In the beginning, her disappearance was more surreal. Maybe I didn't accept it," he said. "But it's always been there. Dakota Spotlight brought it more to the front of my feelings."

Wanda Carnes of Trenton grew up in Williston and is only a year or two older than Barbara. The Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative member said she had never listened to podcasts before Dakota Spotlight. However, hearing about the girl from her hometown intrigued her.

"I think this podcast is helping the Cotton family. It's maybe even helping them heal," she said. "Dakota Spotlight is informative, and the host seems genuinely concerned about what happened to Barbara."

In its fifth season, Dakota Spotlight shares true crime stories of the Upper Midwest. The individuals featured in his podcast deserve dignity, Wolner said.

"If this ever happened to me or my daughters, I hope someone would do the same for us," he said.

In addition to giving a voice to victims and their families, Wolner works to give voices to rural

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America. The podcast's purpose is to tell the story of a victim and also the story of us all, Wolner said. To him, the content we consume is like nutrition. Is what we consume healthy? Or empty calories?

"I don't want Dakota Spotlight to be chewing gum," he said. "I want it to have a bigger meaning."

Forty years later, Barbara's case remains open and unsolved.

"In four decades, Barbara has been little more than a name on a missing-person's flyer," Wolner said. "She and her family deserve more than that."

Dakota Spotlight is available on Apple, iTunes, Google Podcasts and most all podcast smartphone apps.

To learn more about Dakota Spotlight, visit www.dakotaspotlight.com or follow on Facebook at www.facebook.com/dakotaspotlight.

Listen anywhere you get your podcasts. ■

Capital credit retirement

Did you know as a member of Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC), you get certain benefits? One of the benefits of being a member of LYREC is receiving capital credits.

LYREC is a cooperative, which is a nonprofit organization. Instead of profits, we have margins. Margins are any revenue we have in excess of our expenses each year. The total yearly margins are allocated to all members who were billed during the year.

Allocations are based on the dollar amount each member contributed during the year by paying their electric bill. For example, if you contributed 1 percent of our total yearly revenue, you would be allocated 1 percent of the total margins for that year.

The LYREC board of trustees approved the retirement of over \$930,000, which will be returned in 2021 to our current and former members. The retired capital credits will be an 80/20 split between the oldest and newest contributions. This helps to benefit more members and ensure that even newer members better understand the power of cooperatives. If you were an active member in all or part of 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007 and/or 2019, you may receive a credit on your bill the first part of June. If you are no longer an active member, you may receive a check in the mail the first part of June.

Since our incorporation in 1937, LYREC has returned more than \$18 million to members in capital credits. ■

Schlothauer wins scholarship

Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) awarded Baylee Schlothauer a \$500 scholarship for her outstanding scholarship application. MECA awards one \$500 scholarship to a deserving student in MECA's northeast district which consists of six cooperatives. Baylee also received a \$500 scholarship for being nominated by Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative to be sent to the MECA pool.

Baylee is the daughter of Dirk and Laurie Schlothauer, Fairview, Mont. Her plan is to attend Montana State University and pursue a career in dentistry. Congratulations, Baylee! ■



Don't let tragedy **STRIKE!**



Seek shelter

Lightning can strike many miles ahead of a storm front. If you hear thunder, seek shelter immediately, because that indicates lightning is within 10 miles of you. Safe shelters include inside a building or in an enclosed metal-topped vehicle.

Unplug

If you are inside a building, the National Weather Service advises you to stay off corded telephones and away from any electrical device that could carry an electrical surge if lightning entered into your home through wiring. Turn off or unplug such appliances, stay away from television sets, and do not depend on surge protectors to absorb a lightning strike. Conductors can also include the plumbing in your house.

Wait 30 minutes

Authorities warn against outdoor activities until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder.

Annual meeting to be held virtually

This year's annual meeting will be held virtually. The meeting will start at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, June 8. Each membership account that joins the virtual event will receive a bill credit for \$25.

This year, Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative had an uncontested election for District 1 and District 2. As only one candidate was nominated for each seat, there will be no district election. Therefore, the election of trustees will be by acclamation. Jim Vitt will be reelected to represent District 1, and Colin

Gartner will be reelected for District 2.

To register for the meeting, simply visit our website at www.lyrec.coop and click on the banner link. During the meeting, you will hear reports from officers and results on the bylaw amendments. Although we look forward to hosting an in-person annual meeting in the future, we appreciate the ability to host a virtual meeting for the first time. Do not forget to register for the annual meeting and login June 8! ■

BUDGET BILLING Sign up through August

Are you having trouble budgeting your monthly bills? If so, budget billing is available to all residential members who are current with their electric bill, have an "A" credit rating, and have established a 12-month history with Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC).

To determine your budget billing amount, LYREC will average your current and last 11 months of

bills. Therefore, there will be variations each month, but the change will not be as drastic and will make budgeting easier.

If you would like to sign up for budget billing, call LYREC's office to see if you qualify. To sign up, you will need to apply before Aug. 31. To get a form, call the office or go to www.lyrec.coop. ■



Lower Yellowstone Electric Cooperative (LYREC) is able to offer its members a discount by being a Touchstone Energy® member. Simply call 1-800-MEDORA-1 and give the discount code of "Touch 2021" for a 15 percent discount on any of the following during any night of the season:

THINGS TO DO:

- Medora Musical
- Pitchfork steak fondue
- Bully Pulpit Golf Course

LODGING AT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Elkhorn Quarters
- Badlands Motel
- Rough Riders Hotel

3200 W. Holly - Sidney, MT 59270


Phone: 406-488-1602
Fax: 406-488-6524
Website: www.lyrec.com


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- Corey Candee Chief Information Officer
- Jeremy Reese Information Technology Technician
- Edwin Gatzke Line Locator/Groundsman
- Justin King Warehouse Supervisor

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Operating report

Year to date:	March 2019	March 2020
Total miles energized	2,104	2,127
Total number of meters	6,186	6,213
Kilowatt-hours sold	76,842,521	71,643,699
Revenue	\$7,623,738	\$7,232,527
Total expenses	\$7,536,702	\$7,170,134
Operating margins	760,748	845,251