

Retiring KPUD Employee is a People Person

By Lori Froehlich-Schwab

When Nadine Huxley started her career at Klickitat PUD 30 years ago, things were a little different. There were no computers, no typewriters, and the PUD had not begun its business in the transmission and generation world.

Nadine has seen the utility grow, flourish and double in size since she first walked through its doors.

Her first job was a meter reader, and she did this for a year, which was more than adequate, in her opinion. Meter reads were recorded in a tablet with a pencil, come rain or shine.

"I remember reading the water meters being the worst, getting down into the holes in the ground with all kinds of surprises inside," Nadine says.

From there, she tried a variety of jobs throughout the utility, learning about the industry. She found what she most enjoyed was working with people. In the customer service department, she felt a connection working one on one with customers.

"I always got satisfaction from coming to a solution," Nadine says. "Whether good or bad, helping customers get to a solution was rewarding."

When Nadine moved into a managerial role, she developed long-lasting relationships with her employees.

"I worked for Nadine for 15 years here at the PUD," Lori Fakesch says. "She mentored me in meter reading, customer service, as a billing clerk and helped me become who I am today."

Most of all, Nadine says she will miss the loyalty, friendship and daily interactions of her co-workers and employees.

In 1998, Klickitat PUD transitioned to a new vendor for billing that required a lot of dedication by Nadine. She spent two weeks in Iowa with the new vendor learning the system, putting in rates, account balances for customers, then printing statements for the first time.

This was one of the most satisfying and trying moments in her career. All of the hard work and late



Nadine Huxley

nights paid off when the conversion came through on schedule and on budget.

Nadine is grateful for the opportunities and the growth her career brought her. She earned two degrees from Columbia Gorge Community College, an associate degree in business management in 1999 and an associate degree in accounting in 2000.

Working full time, going to college and raising her daughter made for busy years while Nadine completed her degrees. Her perseverance paid off. At her graduation ceremony, the dean

commented that while Nadine was not the oldest student graduating, she had been a student the longest.

Volunteerism also has been a big part of her life and career. She was taught at a young age that a community needs its volunteers to survive, especially a small community.

Nadine has been part of the Goldendale Chamber of Commerce, a Little League coach, youth soccer coach, AAU basketball coach, a volunteer on the Klickitat County Fair board and a chairwoman on the American Red Cross Goldendale Community Drive.

The blood drives by the Red Cross were a special project for Nadine, as she has donated more than 100 pints so far. She recruited KPUD to become involved, helping donors book appointments and calling to find new donors. She was grateful KPUD helped support her efforts in providing the Red Cross with so much local assistance.

Throughout the years at KPUD, Nadine saw many people come and go, watched friends and co-workers grow and change, and move on to achieve bigger and better things. Now she knows it is her turn.

As she moves on, Nadine leaves her favorite mantra behind her as a reminder: "Don't waste a day. You can't ever get a day back. No regrets."

Klickitat PUD wishes Nadine the best on her future and new endeavors. ■

KPUD Mechanic Kept the Equipment Running

By Lori Froehlich-Schwab

Longtime Klickitat PUD employee Lawrence Browning turned his last wrench for the PUD on April 29, 2011.

He retired after 28 years of providing vehicle maintenance for KPUD. The first six years were as a contractor, until the engineering and operations manager at the time, Tom Svendsen, decided Lawrence was an asset to the utility and hired him as a full-time employee.

“Everything he did was right on,” says retired Line Foreman Roger Parton, “and it was always right the first time. He was definitely a perfectionist, but his work was never slow. I really enjoyed working with Lawrence.”

Lawrence was born and raised in Klickitat County. He graduated from Columbia Academy in Battle Ground.

Lawrence got most of his early experience and knowledge of equipment while working at the family sawmill in Wahkiacus. This was where he overhauled his first engine and maintained his own vehicles for transportation. His first car was a 1956 Volkswagon.

“Needless to say, it didn’t make it home from the purchase,” recalls Lawrence fondly.

His next job was for Olson Pontiac as the car dealer’s mechanic for the next six years.

When Lawrence was 20, he met his wife, Linda, while picking huckleberries near Mount Adams. They raised their two boys and a girl in Goldendale. Now, 43 years of marriage later, the couple has two grandsons and four granddaughters. Lawrence admits the grandchildren are one of his and Linda’s greatest joys.

This year also marks his 42nd year as a volunteer firefighter. He has served the Rural 7 and city of Goldendale fire departments during this time. He was also one of the first EMTs in Klickitat County.

Because of his experience and expertise with safety and medical equipment, he also maintained the fire extinguishers, first-aid kits and automated



Lawrence Browning

external defibrillators for KPUD.

Lawrence recalls when he first came to work as a mechanic there were 25 pieces of equipment to maintain and repair. By the time of his retirement, the fleet had grown along with the utility to include about 150 pieces of equipment.

He built a close relationship with Altec of Portland, where many of the boom and bucket trucks were purchased. The company spent many years working closely with Lawrence repairing and modifying KPUD trucks.

Equipment and the mechanic’s work were both transformed exponentially by the advances made in technology and computers. Computer skills became a necessity for diagnosing problems in a vehicle, and Lawrence adapted to these changes.

Now that he is retired, Lawrence plans to spend time with his grandchildren and ride his motorcycle as much as possible. He already is planning a group road trip by motorcycle with his friends next year.

His woodshop will also see more of him, as he plans to make more furniture for family and friends.

Along with the diverse collection of equipment, Lawrence says the variety of people he worked with through the years brought him enjoyment and sometimes a challenge. He already misses some of his co-workers and friends who he came to know through the years, including Ira Brokaw, Roger Parton and Ron Ihrig, to name a few.

He is excited about the new adventures life has in store for him beyond his work at KPUD.

“Life has been a learning curve. If a day goes by that I haven’t learned something, it hasn’t been a good day,” Lawrence says, grinning all the way out the door.

Many co-workers extended their appreciation and thanks to Lawrence for the many wonderful years of camaraderie and spoke of his excellent workmanship.

Best of luck in retirement to Lawrence! ■

