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MISSION STATEMENT  
Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will operate as a competitive provider of energy services and a partner with local communities, with a focus on safety, service and integrity.

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This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## Annual meeting reflections

**IN 1942, UPSTATE** South Carolina native Benjamin Franklin "Ben" Robertson, Jr. published a book that came to be considered his masterpiece: *Red Hills and Cotton: An Upcountry Memory*. One reviewer suggested the volume could be called a beautifully written story that focused on Robertson's own family and their home in our state's Blue Ridge region.

Along with his authorship of three books and some short stories, Robertson was also an accomplished journalist and World War II war correspondent. Tragically, he died at age 39, the result of a 1943 airplane crash in Portugal. He was traveling on that ill-fated flight to his new job as chief of the New York *Herald-Tribune's* London Bureau.

### A surprising tidbit

There's one particular tidbit in *Red Hills and Cotton* that most readers would likely breeze by without giving it a second thought. Someone like me, however, would certainly sit up and take notice. In this instance, Robertson is describing a day in 1941 when he's driving to a rural electrification meeting. That event was undoubtedly the very first annual meeting of the fledgling Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, held on February 7 of that year.

I've researched our records of that initial Blue Ridge annual meeting. However, the published minutes for that session don't go into a great deal of detail. The attendance of the distinguished Mr. Robertson wasn't mentioned. Be that as it may, I strongly suspect he received a warm welcome from the Blue Ridge folks who were present at that inaugural member meeting.

Yes, when your co-op was just beginning to spread its wings, the Japanese

attack on Pearl Harbor was only months away. In each of the intervening 80-plus years since that original gathering of Blue Ridge members, an annual meeting has, without fail, been conducted.

### Profound changes

Since those early days, the changes have been profound. For example, after starting with a total of 1,680 members receiving service in 1940, the co-op is now rapidly closing in on 70,000 member accounts. From servicing a membership that consisted predominantly of a farming populace, Blue Ridge is now providing power to a large and varied cross section of rate-payers. Counted among those members are small residential dwellings, as well as sprawling industrial plants. Space wouldn't allow me to begin to describe the many additional advancements that, over time, have impacted both your cooperative and others in the electric-power business.

With regard to our annual meeting in general, it has truly evolved from that handful of members who attended the 1941 event. Through the years, the meeting has undergone several alterations. In the process, the number of co-op members who've registered each time has continued to increase. The 2022 edition will be no exception to that pattern. I believe Ben Robertson would be impressed. Please plan to come by our Oconee or Pickens office on either April 27 or 28 for the drive-thru registration. While there, you can also claim your door prize and goody bag and then be on your way.

JIM LOVINGGOOD  
President and CEO

# Blue Ridge Electric remembers Ben Bolt

BLUE RIDGE Electric Cooperative is mourning the recent passing of Ben Bolt, the director representing the co-op's Anderson County District. Bolt was a lifelong farmer

and had served faithfully on the board for 35 years. Prior to his affiliation with Blue Ridge, both Bolt's father and mother were elected to serve on the board by their fellow co-op members. During his tenure, Bolt served one three-year term as its chairman.

Bolt was a strong believer in community service. Besides his involvement with Blue Ridge, that spirit was perhaps best exemplified by his support for the Center Rock Volunteer Fire Department. Bolt devoted large portions of his time toward upholding the department's mission of supplying quality fire protection and related services to his community. His hands-on commitment to training fellow volunteers touched untold numbers of individuals affiliated with Center Rock and with other fire departments within the region.

Most recently, Bolt was an active participant at Anderson's Shiloh Baptist Church. He is survived by his loving wife Gloria, his children Brian and Rita and their spouses and six grandchildren.

Bolt enjoyed the respect and appreciation of his fellow Blue Ridge directors. At the board meeting following his death, they unanimously approved a resolution commending him for his record of service.

Shortly thereafter, Blue Ridge President and CEO Jim Lovinggood visited with Gloria and presented her with a framed copy of the resolution.

"I'm grateful for the association I enjoyed with Ben throughout these many years," Lovinggood says. "He was a steadfast advocate for the cooperative, its members and its employees. I counted him as a colleague, but more importantly as a friend."



Ben Bolt

ERNEST RAWLINS PHOTOGRAPHY

## Apply now for 2022 WIRE scholarships

JENNY BALLARD WAS PERSISTENT in pursuing the things she felt needed to be accomplished. It's a trait that helped her and women like her launch Women Involved in Rural Electrification (WIRE)—a service organization associated with South Carolina's electric cooperatives—40 years ago. It's also why a scholarship for women returning to school was named in her memory.

Sponsored by WIRE, the Jenny Ballard Opportunity Scholarship is a one-time award available to adult female members of Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative whose pursuit of a college degree has been interrupted or delayed. The scholarship is based on need and personal goals. The deadline to apply is June 1.

An online application for the 2022 WIRE scholarship can be found [ecsc.org/wire](http://ecsc.org/wire).

Applications are also available at your Blue Ridge office and as a PDF download at [SCLiving.coop/scholarship](http://SCLiving.coop/scholarship).

Applicants for the program must:

- ▶ Be a member of Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative or another South Carolina electric cooperative.
- ▶ Have graduated from high school or earned a GED at least 10 years ago.
- ▶ Be accepted into an accredited S.C. college or university.
- ▶ Demonstrate financial need and clear academic goals.

Recipients will receive scholarships for the fall 2022 or spring 2023 semester, with funds paid to the college or university.



South Carolina  
**WIRE**  
Women Involved in Rural Electrification

# Blue Ridge Electric Co-op 2022 Annual Meeting

## DRIVE-THRU REGISTRATION AT PICKENS & OCONEE OFFICES

Wednesday, April 27, 2022 • Thursday, April 28, 2022

7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

7 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Registration open both locations both days.

**GRAND PRIZE... 2009 Ford F-150  
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