

## “The Co-op is the Members is The Co-op”

Annual meeting time for the Members of M.J.M. Electric Cooperative has rolled around once again. Your directors and employees encourage our Members to take an interest in the Cooperative.

### **What Is A Co-op?**

A lot of people have a lot of answers, mostly different and mostly depending on the kinds of services for which they belong to one or more cooperatives.

Some rural residents point to the farm supply store in a nearby community as The Co-op. Others will say it is the grain elevator up the road. And still others identify the Co-op as a rural electric headquarters building that serves as the nerve center for their electric service.

There is one area of agreement in all of these. They are wrong...wrong...wrong.

Wrong, because they all miss the never-changing, fundamental fact of life about the cooperative: A cooperative is not sticks and stones, it is flesh and blood. The Co-op is people.

When you and your neighbors join a co-op, or form a co-op, you are not merely “associated with” or “related to” a cooperative. You **are** The Co-op. And there is no other right way to say it.

The people who are the Co-op may require things to serve themselves – such things as store locations, headquarters buildings, feed mills, trucks and so on. But these are the “sticks and stones” things. They are not The Co-op. You, all of you, are the Co-op.

This is important because it is the very heart of the cooperative idea. When you remain aware of this all-important fundamental – The Co-op is people – you are strong in your own interest. You are strong because you understand that there is a difference between the cooperative way and all other ways of doing the same thing. And you know what that difference is.

Gertrude Stein, an American poet, once demonstrated the impressive effect of repetition, when she wrote, “A rose is a rose is a rose.” But it is better – much better – to say: “The Co-op is the Members is The Co-op.”

This year is a special year for The Co-op. Come help celebrate by attending The Co-op’s 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting!