

# currents

fall 2008

G R A N D R I V E R D A M A U T H O R I T Y



Moving GRDA towards a brighter future...

# Celebrating Public Power Week 2008

Just a generation or two ago, people still marveled at electricity's uses and how it could improve their lives. They could see some potential, but likely never imagined just how far electricity could go and how important it would become. However, as light bulbs replaced kerosene lamps and ice boxes gave way to refrigerators, electricity became less of a marvel and more of a fundamental part of daily life.

I like to think the Grand River Dam Authority has a similar history. Back in the early 1940s, during GRDA's first decade of existence, the country was becoming fully "electrified" and GRDA was becoming fully established as a powerful Oklahoma entity.

And, like electricity itself, the GRDA "idea" took some getting used to. Just as the construction of Pensacola Dam impacted the physical landscape, the development of GRDA impacted the economic landscape. While abundant electricity and all the "luxuries" it could offer were suddenly available, so was a new entity committed to providing that power and boosting economic development.

Today, over six decades later, GRDA's low-cost reliable electricity still sets the standard in Oklahoma. It still helps power our days and brighten our nights.

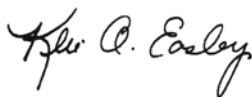
And though we may no longer marvel at electric light or consider it a luxury, I still believe GRDA's best days are ahead. It still has important goals it can achieve. In other words, even though we all became "electrified" many years ago, GRDA still has the potential to "energize" the region.

That potential is wrapped up in many things: our ownership interest in the Redbud Power Plant; our new Ecosystems and Education Center and our improved credit ratings are just a few examples. And of course, our status as a public power utility is always key.

GRDA joins the nation's other public power utilities in celebrating that status during National Public Power Week (Oct. 5-11). It is a time to promote public power ideals and celebrate public power successes. But for GRDA, it is also a time to simply say "thank you" to our customers, constituents and the people of Oklahoma.

Two generations ago, the GRDA idea was successfully introduced to Oklahoma. Two generations from now, I hope that idea is still making life better for Oklahomans.

Sincerely,



**Kevin A. Easley**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Grand River Dam Authority**

**Front cover:** Power in the hands of the people...  
This issue of the *Currents* celebrates National Public Power Week 2008 (Oct. 5-11).

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As it prepares for bond issue ...

# GRDA receives credit rating upgrade, bond council approval

The trend of financial and managerial improvements continues for the Grand River Dam Authority.

On August 28, Fitch Ratings announced that it would upgrade the Vinita (Oklahoma) based electric utility's credit rating to "A" from "A-" while also revising the outlook from positive to stable. This announcement from Fitch comes just two weeks after Standard and Poor's also upgraded GRDA's credit rating to an "A."

Also that day, the Oklahoma Council of Bond Oversight gave its unanimous approval to GRDA's plan to issue \$563 million in bonds.

"This is the exactly kind of trend we have been working for," said GRDA Chief Executive Officer Kevin Easley, responding to the Fitch announcement. "Again, I credit the leadership of the GRDA Board of Directors. The board understands the tremendous benefits of GRDA to the state of Oklahoma and it has insured this agency is in great financial shape to supply those benefits for decades to come."

According to the Fitch report, the GRDA upgrade "reflects recent initiatives undertaken by GRDA's management (with board support) and institutionalized management and governance practices that resulted in strengthened credit profile."

Among those initiatives are new, long-term contracts with wholesale municipal electric customers, rate increases that served to improve the utility's financial position and improved system operations and maintenance.

"Contracts with customers have been improved and provide increased credit protection for investors with most contracts extending beyond the life of the bonds," stated Fitch. "Furthermore, GRDA realigned its staff and provided them with the tools needed to improve system operations, lake management and to better monitor and maintain the system."

That staff realignment and efforts to put qualified people into better positions to improve utility operations was also noted by the bond council, added Easley. "Council Chairman Ted Fisher expressed his confidence in GRDA and pointed that out as well. Coupled with solid leadership from our board, our management team's structure gives us great confidence as we head towards the bond deal."

According to Easley, GRDA began focusing on these issues four years ago, in anticipation of rating upgrades like this latest one.

"Recommending rate increases, lake permit increases, and realigning departments and procedures is not an easy thing to do," he said. "But those were necessary steps to improving GRDA's financial standing."

## GRDA Credit Rating Improvements: 2005 - 2008

Rating Agency	Rating/outlook prior to 2005	2005 - 2006	2007	2008
Standard & Poor's	BBB+ Negative	BBB+ Stable	*A- Positive	**A Stable
Moody's	A2 Negative	No Action	A2 Stable	A2 Stable
Fitch	A- Stable	A- Positive	No Action	A Stable

\*First credit rating upgrade in recent GRDA history

\*\* Second upgrade in less than a year

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# Interplastic Corporation

Whether you bowl, boat or even surf, there is a good chance your favorite leisure activity is enhanced by the work of Interplastic Corporation and its 600 employees nationwide.

Since its inception, the company, which has been operating a facility in the MidAmerica Industrial Park (and purchasing wholesale electricity from the Grand River Dam Authority) for 34 years, has been making thermoset resins, vinyl esters, and gel coats. Those products are used in the manufacturing of composites in everything from boat hulls and surf boards to bath tubs and truck parts. Along with the Yamaha Watercraft Group, Interplastic's Molding Products Division recently received the Innovation Award in the sports and leisure category at the JEC show in Paris, the largest composite exhibition in the world.

The overall composites industry really began to emerge in the 1950's as composites were introduced to mainstream America through their use in the 1953 Corvette and in recreational marine applications, such as Chris Craft boats. Interplastic was incorporated in 1959 in St. Paul, Minnesota. With one small 1,500 gallon reactor, used to make its product, the company began offering a competitive product to the composites manufacturing industry - particularly in the Midwest. Now nearing its 50th anniversary, Interplastic is an industry leader not only in production, but also in design and development of innovative new thermoset resins. The corporation has grown to include three divisions and is effectively

competing in the national and international markets shipping its products worldwide throughout North America, Middle East, Europe and the Far East.

"The composites industry continues to grow worldwide as engineers and designers select composites as their material of choice instead of traditional materials such as steel, aluminum and concrete," said Bob DeRoma, Senior Vice President.



Interplastic, a MidAmerica Industrial Park facility.

Photo courtesy of Douglas Henderson ([www.douglashenderson.com](http://www.douglashenderson.com)).

Interplastic's three divisions: Thermoset Resins (TRD), Molding Products (MPD), and North American Composites (NAC) work as one to put the company in the best position possible to meet a wide and ever-expanding range of customer needs. According to the company, the divisions enable the corporation to respond to the needs of fiberglass reinforced plastic (FRP) and cast polymer manufacturers.

The TRD is a pioneer in the field, focusing primarily on the production and distribution of unsaturated polyester and vinyl ester resins, gel coats and colorants. Today the division produces one of the most exten-



Bob DeRoma, Senior Vice President

sive lines of vinyl ester resins in the marketplace.

The MPD was established in 1978 and has since become a leader in the production of sheet molding compounds and other thermoset molding materials. It is the MPD that gives shape to ideas and concepts that have revolutionized industries such as marine, communication, transportation, aerospace and medical.

The NAC is a national full-service supplier to the same industries.

Over the last 30 years, it has grown into a nationwide distributor with

27 distribution centers in the United States. It is the only one of three distributors with locations throughout North America.

“Today we are working to develop green products in support of green initiatives worldwide and highly engineered resins for use in wind power and pipeline remediation,” said De Roma.

Interplastic maintains a competitive edge in the ever changing and evolving market by remaining true to its standards and focusing on traditional markets, including the home building market, marine and transportation industry.

For the past 34 years, Interplastic’s MidAmerica facility has been a part of that success. The Pryor location was chosen in part because of its proximity to the developing customer base, but also because of the excellent location in the industrial park. The transportation infrastructure and very competitive utility cost, including low-cost reliable power from GRDA, were also factors.

The Pryor plant manufactures a wide range of products as well as specialty products based on vinyl ester resin chemistry and putty resins.

“Pryor is and will continue to produce the standard and specialty products. As new markets develop, Interplastic Corporation is committed to developing new technology and products to meet the demands of these markets. The Pryor location will play an integral part as the Corporation’s largest and most diverse manufacturing site,” said Bob Hoffman, Vice President Manufacturing.

Recently, in 2006, Interplastic Corporation selected its Pryor location for a \$20 million expansion of its polyester and vinyl ester manufacturing capabilities to enhance quality as well as improve its pollution control equipment. This expansion allows Interplastic to reduce lead times and continue to improve competitiveness in emerging new national and international markets. Over the next 10 to 24 months, Interplastic will continue to invest in this facility to accommodate shipping products via rail. To support this expansion they have increased the staffing at this location and have begun hiring people from the surrounding communities and presenting them with a very competitive wage and benefits package.

“The GRDA has contributed to the success and recent expansion of our facility, making it our largest and most diverse manufacturing facility by offering competitive and reliable power,” said Hoffman.



Interplastic Blend Tanks at the MAIP facility.



Future GRDA technicians? Maybe. At the very least these two third graders learned a little more about the industry during GRDA's electrical presentation.

*All aboard the electric express...*

## **Developing a classroom education project**



All smiles...The program wasn't just educational, it was also lots of fun.

He's shaped like an electric plug, serves as the conductor on the "Electric Express" and is a self-proclaimed "Know-Watt All." Plus, he made a lot of new friends at Locust Grove (Oklahoma) Upper Elementary School last spring and is looking to do the same at other schools in the future.

Of course, we are talking about Plugsby, the Grand River Dam Authority's brightly colored mascot and the face of a special electricity education program recently developed by GRDA. A familiar "face" around GRDA events for the last eight years, Plugsby was the natural choice to be the ambassador of education for this new GRDA initiative.

"Plugsby was something that [GRDA Graphic Artist] Karen Olinger actually designed a few years ago," said GRDA Communications Specialist Shannon Cook, who is coordinating the education program. "The animation and the bright colors are something the kids could really relate to, and hopefully that makes the learning process more fun."



Plugsby, designed by GRDA Graphic Artist Karen Olinger.

Though the program is still "a work in progress" GRDA did unveil a pilot version to a class of third graders at Locust Grove Upper Elementary School last spring. As part of their curriculum, Mrs. Glinda Knott's students spent some time each day, for one week, being introduced to GRDA. Informative DVDs, about the organization as a whole, were made available to the classroom. After that, a program journal created by Cook and Olinger, and featuring Plugsby, introduced students to some of the basics of electricity: cell, electric current, simple circuit and switch.

"We relied on the expertise of our engineering and transmission personnel who helped us develop some of the basic exercises and lesson ideas for the journal," said Cook. "Using the concept of a train track as a circuit, and Plugsby as the engineer on the 'Electric Express' the students were able to see how electricity moves, how it can be switched on and off and how it needs to complete a circuit."

"The students loved the journals," said Knott. "They were not only informative, but also fun for the students to work on. It was well written."

Throughout the journal, Plugsby offered "Guess Watt" and "Know Watt" features that gave the students electric facts in an easy to understand manner.

"Those reinforced the lessons and made the activities more fun," added Knott.

GRDA also paid a visit to the classroom to give the students an opportunity to put their electric knowledge to work. Using simple circuit boards, constructed by GRDA's Phil Stokes (Engineering Department) and J.D. Couch, (Facilities Management) they created their own basic circuits.

"Students learn best from hands-on activities. When they are actually working with the circuit boards they are able to understand how electricity flows," said Mrs. Knott.

Of course, building a circuit and supplying the power are two different things. So, to add a fun twist to the program, the students had to peddle a special bicycle, outfitted with its own generator, to create electricity to light their boards.

"Phil Stokes put the bicycle together for the program and I think it helped reinforce that it does take a lot of energy to produce electricity," said Cook. "We sometimes take it for granted when we just turn on the light switch, but somewhere, there is a lot of effort put into generation. We hope that's also a lesson that sticks with students."

According to one student, Michaela Moss, "it takes a lot of power to make a circuit board to light up. The part I liked best was riding the mountain bike to make the power."



GRDA Superintendent of Customer Support Phil Stokes explains how "bicycle power" becomes electricity.

An electric safety demonstration, which GRDA has made available to several groups over the years, was also part of the program curriculum. Linemen Scott Monahan, Brent Scott, Bill Clifton and Steven Willis made that presentation for the entire third grade.

“The safety demonstration was very effective,” said Knott. “The students discussed how dangerous downed lines could be and how much equipment is needed to work on lines.”

At week’s end, on Friday, Knott’s class had an opportunity to tour GRDA’s Robert S. Kerr Dam, where Mechanic Bill Johnson guided them through the powerhouse and explained how the power of falling water is harnessed to create electricity.



GRDA Mechanic Bill Johnson leads third graders through a tour of the Robert S. Kerr Dam.

“GRDA makes it possible for their customers to purchase power,” wrote student Sydney Schwichtenberg, in her journal entry after viewing the DVDs. “GRDA does more than that though. They created projects to help birds and fish. They also created a program to tell people about an endangered species called Gray Bats.”

GRDA has always been available to make presentations (water safety, electric safety, dam history) to area groups, but “this new educational program is an important step in what will become a much more active speaker’s bureau in the future,” said GRDA Corporate Communications Director Justin Alberty.

“Telling the GRDA story is important to us, but if our educational programs can be an asset to GRDA constituents across Oklahoma, then we want to see that happen.”

For more information on the availability of GRDA education and safety presentations, contact the GRDA Corporate Communications Department at (918) 256-5545 or email [scook@grda.com](mailto:scook@grda.com).



GRDA Linemen Brent Scott and Bill Clifton demonstrate some of the safety tools used when working around electric lines.

“I learned a lot about GRDA,” said student Dylan Luper. “I liked going up and down the stairs, and going below the dam. We learned about how many gallons of water goes into the turbine per second and all the oil it takes. And not to touch powerlines. We learned how electricity is made and the tools you use.”

Even though the development of the program remains a work in progress, Cook said this first experience seemed to be very positive for the classroom. The evidence, she said, was in the feedback from the students.

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That improved financial standing will be evident in the bond issue, said GRDA Chief Financial Officer Carolyn Dougherty.

“A better credit rating equals tremendous savings in bond related costs,” said Dougherty. “Over the life of the bond, the difference between an A minus and A rating can be millions of dollars, because the better rating means lower finance and insurance charges. That puts GRDA in a much stronger position, and a stronger GRDA is better for Oklahoma.”

Now that GRDA has received the Council's approval, the next step will be bond pricing. GRDA then planned to go to market with the bonds on September 9, said Dougherty.

GRDA will use proceeds from the bonds to purchase a 36 percent ownership in the Redbud Plant, a natural gas fired power plant near Luther, Oklahoma. Additionally, the utility will use proceeds to fund repairs and improvements to its generation and transmission facilities.

According to the Fitch report, those facilities continue to be positive assets for GRDA. The report noted GRDA's beneficial mixture of low cost power resources: hydroelectricity produced at three facilities in Northeast Oklahoma and coal generation at the GRDA Coal Fired Complex (Chouteau). The value “has improved in recent years due to its competitive all-in costs,” stated Fitch.

“Assets like those are only as good as our employees can make them,” added Easley, “So I believe much of the credit for this latest upgrade goes right back to our workforce. Our board has shown the leadership necessary to move this agency forward and the employees continue to provide the momentum.”

The Oklahoma Council of Bond Oversight is a five member group which reviews and approves all financing requests by state agencies.

GRDA is a self-supporting state agency, funded by the revenues from the sale of electricity instead of taxes. GRDA transmits and delivers electricity across its 24-county service area via a sophisticated energy delivery system that includes over 1,900 miles of transmission line. GRDA sells wholesale electricity to three customer classes: municipals, electric cooperatives, and industries.



GRDA Lineman Dave Hefner works inside a substation near the GRDA municipal customer community of Stilwell. Fitch Ratings cited new long-term agreements between GRDA and its municipal customers as one of the reasons it has upgraded the utility's credit rating.

# CFC Lab gets good results for GRDA

The Grand River Dam Authority generates the majority of its electricity at the Coal Fired Complex (CFC), where the mission is to produce reliable, round-the-clock power for customers. Consisting of Units 1 and 2, the CFC continues to meet the strict environmental standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality.

The responsibility for ensuring some of those standards is met by the CFC laboratory. The staff of results technicians, led by Becky Oliver, Superintendent of Chemistry Services, rotates through six laboratory stations on a bi-monthly basis. Each technician is certified by the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) as a certified water plant operator and laboratory operator. The laboratory is certified by the ODEQ for laboratory accreditation and must follow strict rules and regulations set forth by the EPA.

“Rules and regulations are very strict concerning laboratory certification. A certified laboratory must complete and pass unknown testing twice per year to keep accredited,” said Oliver. “The CFC laboratory continually passes the testing to keep its accreditation status. This is done through the hard work and determination of the Results Technicians.”

One of the laboratory technicians’ tasks is that of the coal analysis laboratory. The coal train arrives carrying approximately 16,500 tons of coal from Wyoming’s Powder River Basin. Normally one train a day is unloaded at the CFC. Samples representing each coal train are analyzed by the laboratory technicians.

“The mine sends representative samples of each train which may consist of up to 6 samples of coal. Each train is analyzed for BTU (British Thermal Unit), moisture, ash and sulfur,” said Oliver.





Roger Simmons test a coal sample.

The rail cars will be emptied by a rotary dumper, the coal will be dispersed unto the coal pile or into silos en route to be ground into powder and injected into the boiler for combustion. Samples of the coal on the way to the boiler for combustion (gas-fired samples) are routinely analyzed as well.

After analyzing the sample, the technicians will record the results and compare them to the mine laboratory results. If the results vary greatly, the sample must be refereed by an independent laboratory.

The technicians test unknown samples of coal in a round-robin program and consistently score in the top percentages against professional analysts. The staff was recently awarded both the 60 mesh coal and the 8 mesh coal analysis awards from Standard Laboratories, Inc. Though the team had won each award before, this was the first time they won both awards in the same year.

“Achieving both awards at the same time was a first for us,” added Oliver. “The technicians work very hard to get a perfect score on each test. It’s tough because we are competing with some large commercial labs where analyzing coal is all they do.”

Analyzing coal samples is just one facet of the technician’s duties. Each of the six stations represents a unique aspect of the plant that converts coal to electricity.

The main water lab includes testing of the circulating water, boiler water, environmental water, secondary water, primary water, and motor and gearbox oils testing. At the water plant, raw water is processed for use in the fire water system, drinking water system and treated water systems. The demineralizer processes treated water to ultrapure status for the boiler. The polisher operation continues treatment of the water

in the feedwater system to keep it ultrapure. Chemical treatment of the cooling water is also included in the technicians’ duties. The lime laboratory duties ensure the lime meets contractual specifications.

The quality of work the lab consistently performs is both effective and economical. It is an accepted industry standard that each boiler must be professionally cleaned every three to five years. Due to the efforts of the lab technicians, the CFC boilers have never had to be cleaned in their 25+ years of service. Consequently, the lab’s efficiency has saved GRDA millions of dollars.

“Other plants like ours don’t utilize the laboratory the way the CFC does, though the operation of the water treatment facilities, and millions of dollars are spent to clean their boilers,” said Oliver.

And while the recognition may be nice, she said her crew knows there is much more to the job.

“Being recognized for the coal testing is great but we continue to analyze the water, coal, lime and oil to keep the CFC running efficiently, which is the departments’ main objective,” Oliver stressed.

“None of the achievements would be possible without the determination and efforts of everyone in the department. The technicians are dedicated to the way they do their jobs.”



Coal moves along a conveyor, into the main plant.

**Opposite page:** Results technicians at the GRDA Coal Fired Complex include (from left): Roger Simmons, Matt Butcher, Ron Ash, Keith Wheeler, Billy Scott, Gary Benge, Tim Lunk, Coy Davis and Superintendent Becky Oliver.

GRDA employee spotlight...

# Bob McDaniel/Russel Ramsey

**Editor's Note:** In celebration of National Public Power Week 2008 (October 5-11), it seemed appropriate to put GRDA's longest-tenured public power employees – Bob McDaniel and Russel Ramsey – into the spotlight with this issue. Both these gentlemen have given nearly four decades of their lives to GRDA, to public power and to serving the great state of Oklahoma. We hope you enjoy their stories.

Electronics first captured the imagination of Bob McDaniel while he was a young boy in the third grade. Through the years, as he grew, so did his knowledge and love for the ever-changing field.

The soft spoken technical superintendent at the Grand River Dam Authority Coal Fired Complex (CFC), McDaniel studied electronics at Oklahoma State University and Okmulgee Tech, graduating in the spring of 1970.

Equipped with a formal education in the field that fascinated him, he took a temporary job with the GRDA's Metering Department that summer. One month into the job, he dropped the "temporary" designation and became a full-time employee earning \$3.55 an hour. It is a job he has kept for the last 38 years, earning him the current title of GRDA's longest tenured employee.

"I thought I was rich!" he laughed, but in a more serious tone he quietly added, "It's been my life; I love my job and have since I came to work here."



38-year GRDA veteran Bob McDaniel at the Coal Fired Complex.

As a meter technician, Bob became the department's third man: joining supervisor O.E. Hutchinson and journeyman Felix Gay. Together the three managed the power metering of all GRDA customers. In the days before computerized metering and billing, his duties included metering calibration, inspections, reading and hand preparation of records for customer billing. The meters were all electro-mechanical and used dials and inked charts for recording energy usage. According to Bob, the ink would not come off of either hands or clothes.

He continued in the metering department until a position became available in the GRDA relay department. Once again, it was his love for electronics that led him to accept the new and challenging position. He spent the next few years calibrating, testing and maintaining GRDA system protection relays. Finally, in 1980, as GRDA was constructing the first unit of its two unit coal fired plant, Bob made one more move. He came to the CFC as a journeyman instrument technician and has remained there for the last 28 years, holding several positions before his last promotion to Technical Superintendent in August 2002.

"I moved when the opportunity arose at the CFC. They were still building it when I moved over as an instrument technician, it was a great move," he said.

Having worked his entire career in the public power industry, McDaniel believes in the benefits public power brings to the community and the state.

"Public power means economic development and low power cost," he said. "GRDA is instrumental in the development of Northeastern Oklahoma."

Being raised in a small community, Bob also recognizes the importance of public power in the rural areas.

"Without public power, a lot of the rural communities wouldn't have developed like they have," he said.

The oldest of seven, Bob possessed a natural curiosity for how things worked and an inherent mechanical ability that allowed him to find the answer. He recalls tinkering with electronics and mechanics back in those grade school days. Taking things apart and putting them back together helped satisfy that curiosity. While still in elementary school, he began building ham and shortwave radios but says he enjoyed the construction of the radios as much as he did being able to talk with people of all ages from across the country.



Mugging for the camera...McDaniel with CFC Electrician Eddie Lee in this early 1990s photo.

As he grew, so did his interests. Radios soon gave way to cars and motorcycles- a love affair that continues to this day. Bob approached motorcycles the same way he had radios- by taking them apart and putting them back together. By 1972, he had begun to build street and dirt bikes. Even today, he still finds time to build one or two per year.

“I used to race a bit, but now I just build and ride them,” he said.

Speaking of love, it was just one year later, on May 19, 1973 that he married Connie Dobbins, a long time friend of Bob’s sisters. The couple have raised two children, Heath and Rhonda, and

recently celebrated 35 years of marriage. For their first anniversary Bob began a tradition of presenting Connie with one rose for each year they had been married.

“After 36 years, it’s starting to get really expensive,” he laughed. “I may have to change.”

Bob enjoyed coaching both Heath and Rhonda in soccer and even continued participating after they had stopped playing.

“I like kids,” he said. “I kept on coaching and refereeing long after my kids were through playing.”

Connie accepted Bob’s motorcycles but didn’t share his fine appreciation of the machine nor the long rides he savors. After taking his first cross country ride, he was hooked. He now takes at least one long distance ride per year. He enjoys riding in the mountains in the spring and fall particularly back east, though according to him Colorado is good in the summer. Interestingly enough, Bob avoids interstates when at all possible.

“I like to see America and I believe you can see it a lot better from a two-lane road. There are some beautiful small towns and amazing views to be seen,” he said. “My goal is to ride to every national park in the United States, including Alaska. It will probably take two or three years.

One trip to the Appalachians during the fall was especially memorable for Bob and his riding companions.

“After we went over the pass in the Appalachian National Park one of the guys with me, L.D. Wilson (GRDA employee), said of the falling leaves ‘It was like it was raining liquid gold on us.’ I thought that was a very good description.”

Though Bob has yet to convince Connie to accompany him on the long rides, she has recently begun to enjoy riding on the shorter outings. According to Bob she rides with him on mainly day trips and the occasional overnight ride to Arkansas. He has passed his love of the motorcycle to both of his children though. Heath, a cruiser type rider, prefers his Harley, while Rhonda rides a 600cc Ninja sport bike.

Whether he’s riding the motorcycle, watching a soccer game, spending time with family or guiding his department through some new equipment installations, this nearly 40-year fixture at GRDA seems to be pretty comfortable doing all those things. And why shouldn’t he be? After all, as Bob said, “it’s my life.”



McDaniel has overseen a lot of electronic upgrades during his years at the CFC.

Russel Ramsey, Kerr Dam Maintenance Superintendent, will mark 38 years with the Grand River Dam Authority in October. But, Ramsey's association with GRDA goes back much farther, nearly all of his life in fact. His father, John Ramsey, went to work at the GRDA Steam Plant (now Calpine Pryor) in 1950 when Russel was just a toddler.

"Since I was two years old, GRDA has been my livelihood. Dad was the Superintendent at the Steam Plant, I would go out there with him," he said. The elder Ramsey retired as the Materials Control Superintendent at the Coal Fired Complex in 1988, after 38 years of service.

Russel understands one of the benefits of public power first hand. It stimulates the local economy by providing local jobs. But his understanding of public power, as a whole, is as broad as one would expect from a man who has spent the last 25 years maintaining a hydroelectric facility.

"Public power really keeps the other providers in line," said Russel. "I don't believe that people really understand what GRDA does for Oklahoma. The low-cost power we produce really does help the quality of life across the state.

Because he works at a hydroelectric and flood control facility, the amount of rain that has fallen in the last couple of years has tested Russel and the entire Kerr Dam crew. But, it has also caused him to see the many benefits of dams.

"I used to see more generation than flood control. When I see water, I see generation. But now, especially in the last two years, I have thought a lot more about the flood control aspect."

Growing up in rural Mayes County, Russel embraced his family's tradition of living the cowboy way of life early on. The value placed on family, land, cattle, your word and a good horse came natural for the older brother of Johnny and Sharon. His father and maternal and paternal grandparents had run cattle in Northeastern Oklahoma since statehood.

Joining 4-H when he was 10, he showed Hereford cows and soon followed his father and grandfather into the rodeo arena, competing in the junior division.

"We really had good folks," he said. "Dad showed cows and roped and then he and Grandpa roped in the wild cow milking event. I love it, there's just something about riding a horse that sets you at ease, whether you are with friends, competing or just out by yourself- it's good times."



Russel Ramsey, Kerr Dam Maintenance Superintendent and his trusty companion, Lil' Pep Diamond Dude.

Although Russel's father passed away in 2006, his mom continues to run 75 head of cattle and raises a big garden every year.

Russel also competed in the green and white jerseys of the Adair Warrior's basketball and baseball teams. Buck Gay (now the rural electric cooperative representative on the GRDA Board of Directors) coached him his senior year and planted in the teenager the desire to become a teacher and a coach.



Ramsey (second from left) with other members of the Kerr Dam Maintenance Crew in the late 1980s.

“I worked with him, coaching baseball, the summer between my junior and senior year of high school,” Russel recalled. “I enjoyed it, I liked him and I saw the way he made a difference. It just sparked something inside of me that made me want to do the same thing,” he said.

After graduation in the spring of 1967, Russel spent the summer out in the sun drilling holes for a fence at Kerr Dam. The hard, hot work was taken in stride due to the summers spent in the hayfield. Little did he know that he would one day work on the inside of the dam.

Although the Markham Ferry Project had been online for only three years, Russel’s knowledge of GRDA facilities had been limited to the steam plant. He says that same limited perception of GRDA is still out there today, for many people.

“Even today, people say “What is GRDA?” They are amazed that we are so much more than electric lines. They don’t consider the floodgates, the dams and water systems we manage,” he said.

His summer employment ended with the arrival of fall and he began his freshman year at Northeastern State University (NSU) in Tahlequah, declaring education as his major. He transferred to Northeastern Oklahoma A&M (NEO) in Miami his sophomore year, where he played one season of baseball for the Golden Norsemen.

He first met Linda Galyean, a Texas girl, at a rodeo in Vinita. They married on June 6, 1969. Considering his new responsibilities, Russel decided to take a job that had become available at the steam plant. On the first day of October 1970, he reported to work as a laborer making \$1.91 an hour.

“When I first started I did mechanic maintenance at the water plant (river pump station) and worked on the maintenance of turbines and generators,” he said. “We took care of all the leaks from the river pump station.

The work was hard, but the weather was harder. He laughed when recalling having to bust ice off of the pipes at the station, saying “it was a cold winter.”

Russel spent more than ten years working at the steam plant before the Oklahoma Ordnance Works Authority (OOWA) took over the plant and boiler. Five employees stayed with GRDA with the rest going with OOWA. Although several steam plant employees are involved in operations, Russel is the last of the group of five.

After the steam plant closed, he went to work at GRDA’s Coal Fired Plant (CFC). He was familiar with the job because, while at the river pump station, he would be loaned out to the CFC for a month at a time. He then transferred to Kerr dam, returning to the spot of his summer job as a lead mechanic. Since 1983, he has remained at Kerr Dam, first as a lead man and then supervisor until he was promoted to Superintendent in 1997.

“It was different working here but once I got used to it, I liked it better,” he said.

Russel and Linda will soon celebrate 40 years of marriage. The two have not only kept the family tradition intact, they have passed it on to their son Greg. A system operator, Greg is a third generation public power employee.

According to Russel, a cowboy needs three things: a good dog, a good horse and a good woman.

“I got all of them,” he says proudly. However, he has something else to be proud of too: a nearly 40-year public power career in Oklahoma.



Ramsey and his family were selected as Mayes County’s Farm Family of the Year in 2005.

Oklahoma's public power team explains ...

# The importance of hometown power



"Our electric utility in Stroud has been able to help our community in ways that most people don't realize. Because of the fact that we are public power, we are able to do things in our community that many towns just can't do."

- **Steve Gilbert**  
Stroud City Manager

“Public power is a hometown, community-owned electric utility. Your electric utility operates to benefit the entire community while providing safe, reliable power and high-quality customer service, all at low rates. The revenue generated by this not only pays for the electric utility but your recreation facilities, public safety, and in some way supports almost every operation your in which your community is involved.”

**- Tim Miller**

Director of Utilities  
City of Claremore



“Public power provides not only competitively priced, reliable power, but also empowers cities to provide essential safety services, streets and parks. Public power belongs to the people it serves.”

**- Pam Polk**

Collinsville City Manager

Oklahomans powering Oklahoma ...

# The real power behind GRDA



"If it wasn't for public power, we would all be at the mercy of whatever the market would bear."

**- Don Wilson**

Coal Yard

GRDA Retiree (September 2008)

"Public power has the ability to give back to communities in ways other than just supplying cheap electricity. Public power provides jobs and allows communities to make revenue for city support. It also provides a democratic form of policy where customers have a say and makes other power producing companies keep their rates in line to remain competitive also."

**- Rodney Darnell**

Hydro Electrical Crew

GRDA



“Public power is good for Oklahoma,  
because of its ability to look beyond  
profit and focus on customer service.”

- **Steven Willis**  
Distribution Crew  
GRDA



“In Oklahoma, public power provides  
a means to keep the cost down to the  
end-users. With the current economy  
we all need to find ways to keep costs  
down -- when you think about it, we  
all know someone who benefits from  
public power, whether as customer, a  
vendor, or as an employee.”

- **Joyce Summers**  
System Operations  
GRDA



# America's Public Power Team:

## Mark Crisson

**Editor's Note:** Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the American Public Power Association (APPA) is the service organization for the nation's more than 2,000 community-owned electric utilities that serve more than 45 million Americans. GRDA Chief Executive Officer Kevin Easley has been a member of the APPA Board of Directors for three years. GRDA, and its municipal customer communities are APPA members.

APPA President and Chief Executive Officer Mark Crisson joined the organization in January 2008. Prior to that, he served 20 years with Tacoma (Washington) Public Utilities; leading the organization as its director for the last 14 years. In 2005, Crisson received APPA's Alex Radin Distinguished Service Award for exceptional dedication and leadership in public power. He has also served on the United States Secretary of Energy's Electricity Advisory Council.



Mark Crisson  
Chief Executive Officer  
APPA

In celebration of National Public Power Week (October 5 – 11), the *Currents* brings you this exclusive interview with Crisson.

### 1. Besides rates and local control, what other advantages distinguish public power from investor-owned utilities?

As not-for-profit providers of an essential service, public power utilities are uniquely positioned to maintain a tight focus on customer/owner service. They are able to be exceptionally responsive to the needs of the community. Public power also has a proven track record of reliability. In terms of financial viability, public power continues to display better credit ratings than its investor-owned brethren, which means that—going forward—public power can continue its tradition of reliability and affordability.

### 2. What are public power's biggest challenges today?

The biggest challenges facing public power today are definitely broad issues that reach across the electric utility industry—and beyond. As climate change continues to grow as a public concern and Congress considers legislation, our industry will need to work hard to ensure that Congress enacts legislation that sets realistic greenhouse gas reduction goals that balance the needs of the environment with the health of the economy. High fuel costs are also raising concerns with utilities and their customers. And APPA continues to look at wholesale electric market issues to find out what isn't working and why. Lastly, public power utilities are continuing to struggle with hiring and retaining quality employees to fill what appears to be an impending void that will be created by looming retirements.

With all of these issues in mind, public power utilities are challenged to think about how they can communicate with their customers to prepare them for changes that they will be seeing—especially when it comes to higher costs.

### **3. What can the nation’s public power team (employees, customers, etc.) do in their hometowns to help public power meet those challenges?**

Public power utilities must continue to keep all stakeholders informed about the issues that are on the table. This—of course—includes customers, but also elected officials. One very tangible way in which this can be done is by communicating about and marketing energy efficiency programs and best practices. It is absolutely essential that utilities work with customers and empower them to become more responsible in their energy use. Helping them save on their bills is definitely a part of it, but we also need to open their eyes to some of the bigger picture issues—such as climate change legislation, electric market reform, high fuel costs, and the need for more investment in transmission infrastructure and alternative energy sources—including solar and wind.

### **4. As an organization, how is APPA preparing itself to meet those challenges in the future?**

APPA has developed a variety of programs to face public power’s key issues. On climate change, APPA continues to work with its CEO Climate Change Task Force and Energy and Air Quality Task Force to vet proposals that are likely to gain traction in Congress. We also will continue to work with Congress to secure incentives for public power utilities to develop renewable energy resources. We are also working to offer new educational materials on integrated resource planning, new generation technologies and related topics.

On the topic of wholesale market issues, APPA’s Electric Market Reform Initiative (EMRI) is continuing to apply pressure on members of Congress to hold the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) accountable for ensuring just and reasonable rates. APPA has spearheaded the Campaign for Fair Electric Rates ([www.FairElectricRates.net](http://www.FairElectricRates.net))—a grassroots advocacy effort focused on educating consumers and businesses as well as Members of Congress and other policymakers, on the failure of the wholesale electricity markets operated by regional transmission organizations (RTOs) to adequately protect consumers.

APPA internal task forces have been formed in order to tackle the issues of energy efficiency and workforce recruitment. The task forces have rolled out accompanying Web sites ([www.EERCnet.org](http://www.EERCnet.org) and [www.CareersinPublicPower.com](http://www.CareersinPublicPower.com)), developed summits to share best practices, and created tools to help member-utilities tackle these issues.

Overall, APPA continues to work to utilize its own resources to help public power utilities bolster theirs.

### **5. What are some of the personal goals you had for APPA when you became CEO? And what is your overall philosophy for guiding the organization?**

Before I started with APPA, I knew that I’d be inheriting—and leading—a team of highly qualified and professional staff members. I also knew that it would be my job to build on that foundation, ensuring that APPA would be an appealing environment to work in—and competitive in the Washington, D.C. market.



Public Power Week  
October 5-11, 2008

I'd say that energy efficiency was one of my top priorities when I arrived at APPA. For the past few years, it has been identified as a hot topic, but I really wanted to develop concrete programs that could benefit member-utilities and public power customers.

**6. You've no doubt had the opportunity to meet a lot of public power professionals during your career and in your role today with APPA. What are some of things (skills, attitudes, goals etc.) they all have in common?**

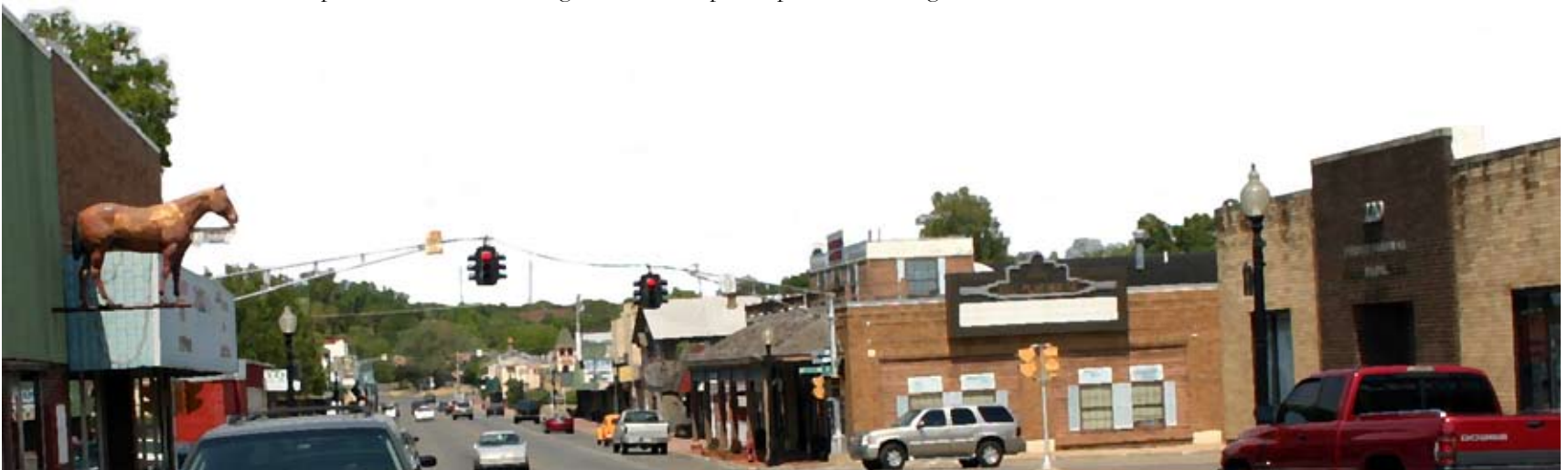
Public power professionals all share a commitment to the values and ideals that are at the core of public power: a customer-focus, a dedication to the community, and a commitment to reliability and safety as well as concern for protecting the environment. Beyond that, I've found that most public power professionals—like me—share an enthusiasm for a line of work that is both professional and businesslike but also intimately focused on community service—allowing one to really be a part of the community in which one lives. There aren't many lines of work that afford this kind of opportunity.

**7. If you could map out the successes/achievements for public power over the next decade, what would they be?**

I think it's essential that as public power faces up to the key challenges that I've outlined, it takes a long-term look at potential impacts on the customer. For example, when dealing with climate change (specifically regulating CO<sub>2</sub>), viable solutions must be sustainable, balanced, and affordable—addressing consumer interests without compromising reliability.

**8. Finally, this article will be read by many public power customers, employees, retirees and others in Oklahoma. Any message you'd like to send them?**

In the state of Oklahoma, the way GRDA and others have managed their respective supply portfolios has provided an excellent example of forward-thinking management. The state's public power leadership has done a great job and should be commended. APPA will continue to work with Oklahomans to ensure effective operations and find lasting solutions for public power's challenges.



# GRDA CEO appointed to HCI Board

Another opportunity to help the Grand River Dam Authority's municipal electric customers. That is what GRDA Chief Executive Officer Kevin Easley says is the intended result of his late June appointment to the board of directors of Hometown Connections, Inc (HCI). The utility services subsidiary of the American Public Power Association (APPA), HCI was established a decade ago as sort of an aggregate buying entity, responsible for helping municipally-owned electric utilities get the best value for their dollar when they purchase industry related goods and services.

"My hope for serving on the HCI board is to help insure those goods and services are available, at the best value, for GRDA's public power partners in Oklahoma," said Easley. GRDA sells wholesale electric power to 17 municipal customers.

According to HCI President and CEO Tim Blodgett, the organization focuses primarily on services that "help municipal electric systems operate more effectively," he said. Metering equipment and software are just a couple examples of the good and services HCI helps public power utilities purchase.

As for the board's role, Blodgett said the close contact board members have with their customers is really the foundation for HCI. "The board's ability to stay in touch with the industry and its needs is important to our success. We look to our board to help us charge our course and vision for the future," he added.

For Easley, staying involved with HCI and APPA helps furthers the goal of "insuring GRDA has a seat at the table when important decisions are made that affect our customers," he said.

**RIDIN' FOR THE BRAND** was the slogan used in GRDA's participation in the 2008 Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo Parade held in Vinita in August. Russel Ramsey (Kerr Dam), Dale Willis (Transmission & Engineering) and Justin McLain (Coal Fired Complex), along with members of their families represented GRDA in this year's parade.

**Opposite page:** Main street in the GRDA municipal customer city of Tahlequah.





# Providing **PUBLIC POWER** for Oklahoma

For over six decades GRDA has been flipping the switches and turning the generators to provide low-cost, reliable electricity to Oklahoma communities.

Through all those years, GRDA has supplied that electricity at not-for-profit rates, while always operating on the ideals of public power—which keeps the power in the hands of Oklahomans.

And when Oklahomans have the power, good things, like economic development, and enhanced quality of life, can be the results.

That's why we say...

**At GRDA, when  
you flip the switch,  
we turn you on!**

**GRDA**  
GRAND RIVER DAM AUTHORITY  
[www.grda.com](http://www.grda.com)

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