



2001 Inductees



Robert Johnson

Robert Johnson's commitment to cooperatives and rural South Dakota spans more than a half century of service.



Johnson remembers the days when living in the country meant you did without and suffered the ridicule of those who had the "city comforts" that are taken for granted now.

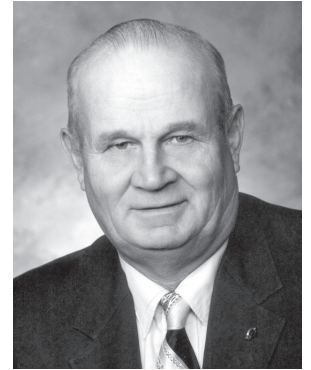
"When I was a child living out here in rural America, my Chicago cousins would come to visit. They'd irritate me to no end about what we didn't have: hot and cold water, no phone, no electricity. I wanted to make sure rural America had parity of living with those in the city.

Johnson's first experience as a cooperative director was on the Groton Farmers Elevator board of directors in 1950. Since then, he has served on eight cooperative boards, including 40 years with James Valley Telecommunications Cooperative (1961 to present), 22 years with Northern Electric Cooperative (1960-1982) and 34 years with the elevator (1950-1984). He also served in the South Dakota Senate from 1958-1964 and was chairman of the Senate Education Committee. He has been a member of the South Dakota Railroad Board for 20 years.

Robert and wife, Marvel, live in Groton where they raised their six children.

Donald Olson

Donald Olson has spent over 40 years seeing that rural residents in the Huron area get reliable electric and water service.



1928-2006

Olson spent 31 years serving on the Beadle Electric Cooperative board and then the Dakota Energy Cooperative board before retiring in 1998. During his tenure, he was one of the members who strongly advocated the consolidation of Beadle Electric Cooperative in Huron and Ree Electric Cooperative in Miller. He continues to serve on the Mid-Dakota Rural Water System board in Miller.

"In his visionary style of leadership, he knew that the consolidation would be better for the members of Beadle, Hand and Hyde counties," wrote Dakota Energy manager Bob Rademacher in nominating Olson. "When the selection of the new name for the new cooperative was being decided, he was not concerned what it was called as long as the word cooperative was in it."

Olson, who was selected as an outstanding young farmer early in his career and was still being recognized for his contributions to ag decades later, said that working with cooperatives came naturally. "It's one of those things that went along with farming."

Olson and wife, Betty, farm north of Huron where they raised their four children.