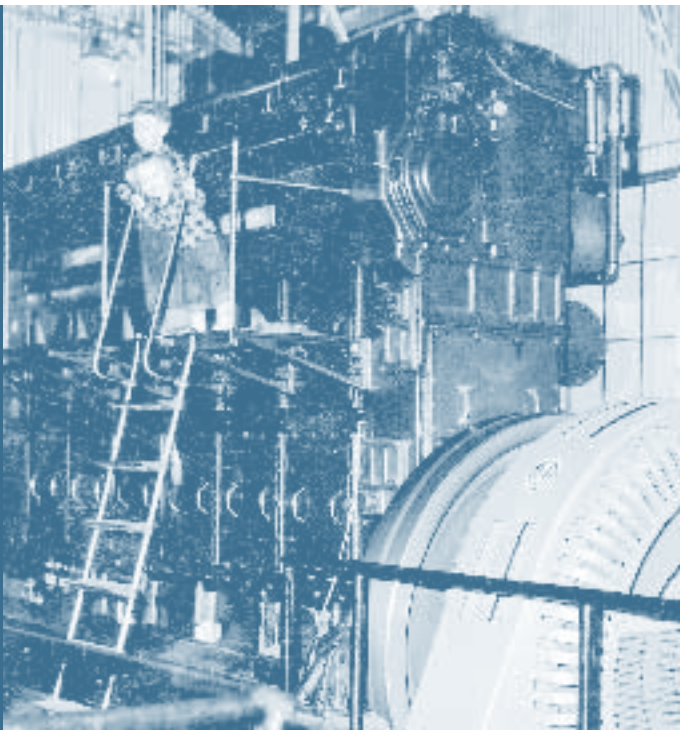


An OPALCO Legacy Story

The Eber Bruns - Madan Family

Eber and Atlanta Bruns, along with their children Ellen and Don, moved to the generation plant on Mt Baker Road on May 1, 1939. Eber, a diesel mechanic on tugboats, was hired to run the two diesel generators that supplied power to Orcas Island. His beginning salary was \$100 per

Madan children Rich and Sandy inspect the new Superior generator



month and included living quarters that he built himself at the plant. He also received all the electricity he could use for free.

In 1940, General Manager J.E. Harrison wrote about Eber in a letter to the REA: "He has taken excellent care of the plant and I am sure you can appreciate that it takes an unusual disposition to be able to maintain service 24 hours per day, day in and day out, with only one day off per week, and keep agreeable enough to be fit for company."

Ultimately Eber would end up as Chief Engineer for Orcas and Lopez islands, serving also as a lineman in charge of Force Account (power system) construction and all maintenance of both lines and generating plants. He installed the generating plant at Lopez and much of the switchboard improvements and additions in the main plant at Eastsound. In the early years, power was turned off between



Eber and Atlanta Bruns

10:00 pm and 6:00 am. Eber would blink the lights at 9:55 pm to give the poker players a warning that the lights were going off! During WWII, he maintained an armed guard at the plant. Eber retired May 1, 1967.



Rich, Buyral and Barry Madan at the plant.

Meanwhile, Eber's daughter Ellen married Buyral Madan, who began full-time work for OPALCO on February 1, 1958. Buyral's first part-time job was nailing the numbers to the poles on Shaw. The whole family would tag along as he nailed in the numbers, getting a whopping 10 cents per pole. He worked as a lineman, spliced the submarine cables, and eventually became



the operations/plant manager. Buyral, too, ran the diesel generators, working closely with Eber. One time a small submarine cable from Orcas to Blakely went bad. It was so small that Eber and Buyral pulled it up by hand from a rowboat—they laid it across the boat and repaired the bad spot, then tossed it back in the water. Even Ellen got in on the act, answering the phones when the power went out and dispatching her husband and other linemen to search for and fix any outages. Buyral's rise to the position of Superintendent was especially impressive as he was (and is) completely deaf. Buyral retired on June 28, 1990.

Beverly Madan, Buyral and Ellen's daughter-in-law (married to Barry), began work at OPALCO in 2008, long after her father-in-law retired. Bev is the Executive Assistant to Randy J. Cornelius, General Manager, taking minutes at the Board meetings, providing office support to Randy and the Board of Directors, and helping plan the annual meetings.

left: Barry, Ellen and Buyral Madan at the 2010 Annual Meeting. right: Eber Bruns at the controls

