

# Line Legacies

In some families, line work is not just a job — it's a tradition with generations of linemen.

By Amy Fischbach, Field Editor

The wind started roaring, the thunder rumbled and lightning cracked as then 10-year old Clay Proctor heard the phone ring. All of a sudden, his father James, who worked as a lineman at Ameren Illinois, started putting on his work clothes and told him that he had to go to work because of the storm. Clay was immediately worried, and he stayed up as long as he could waiting for his dad to come home.

"The next morning, my dad was home by the time I got up," Clay said. "I don't remember talking to him about what he had to do, but I was relieved that he made it home safely."

Today, both Clay and his brother, Adam, work in the trade. Clay Proctor is a lineman handling orders out of Virden, Illinois, while his brother, Adam, works as a senior emergency response specialist in Maryville, Illinois.

Across the power industry, "line families" are proud to have generations of linemen spread out across the family tree. Oftentimes, the love for the line trade starts with a grandfather and then passes down through different families. Line work is a way of life for many people, said James Proctor, who spent 44 years in the trade before retiring from Ameren Illinois.

"Seeing family members grow and teaching their families work ethic and responsibilities helps the future of the industry," James said. "Being part of the line family has led me to be able to have a legacy. Both of my sons now work in the industry and couldn't be happier for them to continue with their careers."

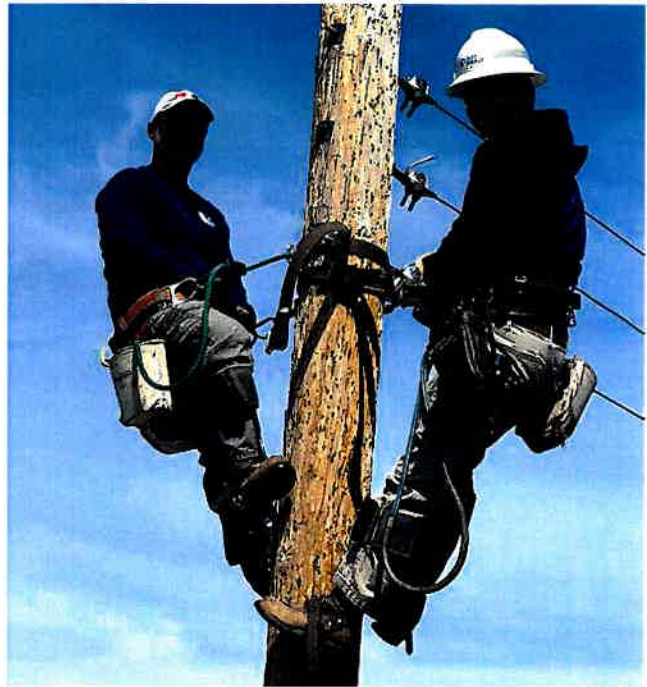
Here is a look at some of these special legacy linemen and their experiences growing up in and around the trade.

## Linemen as Storytellers: The McWhites

As a child, Grady McWhite remembered his grandfather, Marshall, sharing his stories of working long hours and on storms such as Hurricane Hugo.

"The earliest memory I have was sitting in his lap and explaining to him that I wanted to be a lineman just like he was, and he gave me his hard hat from Carolina Power and Light," said Grady, who now works for Sumter Utilities, a Quanta Services company. "He was my role model growing up, and to this day, I still try to fill his shoes and be half as good of a lineman as he was."

Grady's grandfather passed away in 2005, but his legacy still lives on. For example, Grady still hears stories about how his grandfather and another linemen were working a pole together off of hooks, and his grandfather was nearly vertical reach-



Grady (at right) shown with his father, Cory, grew up hearing stories from his grandfather, Marshall.

ing out for a service wire.

His father, Cory, who works as a line technician III for Duke Energy, said one reason why line work is a trade that passes down from one generation to another is the storytelling.

"Linemen love to tell stories, and a son spends a lifetime hearing those stories," Cory said. "Maybe he thinks he is already somewhat familiar with the job or he wants stories of his own to tell."

For Grady, the main driver for him to be drawn to line work was seeing how happy his dad was with his job. While he was able to provide for the family, he could also spend time with him on hunting and fishing trips. However, like any son of a lineman, he remembers his dad being away for long periods of time doing storm work.

"One day, when he and I were talking, I remember that he got a phone call," Grady said. "He had to go to Oklahoma for a storm, and he was gone for two weeks."

Grady said it was difficult to see him go out on storms and work in the middle of the night. On the plus side, however, he often came home from storm duty with all kinds of souvenirs.

## Generation to Generation: Five Advancements in the Line Trade

From the early years of the line trade to today, the industry has experienced many changes and advancements. Here are some of the evolutions in the trade that have been experienced by legacy linemen.

**1. Spotlight on Safety and Productivity.** The power industry is now a lot more concerned with safety than in the past, said James Proctor. He also said the tools and equipment are now better than ever, which makes the work safer and more productive. "One of the biggest changes I've seen in the industry is the advancement in tools that we have that have the safety of the lineman in mind like the Buck-Squeeze, battery-powered tools and better PPE that the lineman will actually use."

**2. Less Climbing.** When he first started working in the trade, Proctor said if a bucket truck was available, it was generally the journeymen linemen who were in them. Grady McWhite remembers that when he hired on as a trainee with CP&L, he still free-climbed because his supervisor told him that eventually, he may be by himself in the middle of the night and need to climb a pole, and he shouldn't be afraid of falling. He also had one supervisor whose favorite saying was "that truck is tired. Step up there and do it and let the truck rest this job." Tommy Jinks recalled that back in the 1980s, a dozen guys rode in one truck to the line, and they worked off of ladders and baker boards. "Today the poles don't even have a place for steps. They have bucket trucks and boom trucks to do everything so there is less physical labor."

**3. Allowing For Rest Time During Storm Work.** When he first started working in the trade, Cory McWhite said companies would work the linemen for as long as the storm took. "They weren't as concerned about the fatigue of the linemen, but now I see more thought about rest."

**4. Improved PPE.** Ryan Kelly remembers his father and grandfather going to work in regular cotton shirts and blue jeans and coveralls on occasion so they wouldn't get their work clothes dirty. Today, the linemen must follow arc ratings and layer clothing for arc flash protection.

**5. Heavy Equipment.** Tom Penner said his grandfather used to dig and set poles in backyards by hand. Today's linemen now have new methods to be successful, such as machinery that can do this same task.

"He went to Florida on a hurricane one time when I was younger, and to this day, I still have alligator head that he gave me."

Cory said when his son was small, it was often difficult because his son didn't understand why he had to leave to go to work or miss certain activities or holidays.

"The hardest was Christmas mornings," Cory said. "One year I had to leave while he was playing with his gifts, and a few other times, he had to wait for me to get home before he could open them. I tried to do as many little things as I could with him that only involved the two of us."

Now that they are both linemen, Grady said he is able to turn to his dad for advice.

"Working in a line family is amazing because if I ever need some pointers, or just want to talk about what happened at work, my dad understands exactly what I'm talking about," Grady said.

Grady remembers when he told his dad that he was going to work for Sumter Utilities.

"You would think I just hit the jackpot in the lottery — he was so excited," Grady said. "We sat there and talked for hours about what all I should expect and what there was to look forward to."

Cory said he was excited when his son decided to try a career as a lineman because he knew if he applied himself, he could have a rewarding career and provide a good life for his own family one day. While Grady knows his dad is very proud of him, he realizes his dad is also apprehensive because he knows firsthand the dangers of electricity.

"He knows that the safety precautions have changed dramatically since he started, and he knows my crew will watch out

for me, but there is always that fear in the back of his mind with me being his son," Grady said. "The crew I started with taught me a lot about line work. I learned really quickly that line work isn't for the faint hearted. You have to physically and mentally prepare yourself for this job."

In the future, Grady sees himself running a bucket full time and learning all he can about line work — and also passing his love for the trade to future generations.

"One day, I hope to have a conversation with my son or daughter about how amazing this job is and what all it can offer someone if they put their mind and heart into it," Grady said.

### Family of California Linemen: The Kellys

Sometimes, line work doesn't only run in families, but also generations of linemen work for the same company. For example, Ryan Kelly, a journeyman lineman for Southern California Edison (SCE), has a father, uncle and grandfather who all work or have worked for SCE and a younger brother who is an apprentice trainee for the City of Riverside, California.

His grandpa, Patrick, was hired in 1961, his father, Kevin, joined the company in 1988, and his uncle, Curtis, started working for Edison in the early 2000s. Ryan remembers his father and grandfather competing in the Lineman's Rodeos together.

"When I was five years old, I went on a bucket truck ride with my dad, and they took the boom all the way up," he said. "I could barely see over the lid of the bucket, and it was so cool to be up so high and be able to see everything."

Growing up, he wanted to get into the trade from an early age. His grandpa had six children, and Ryan was one of nine children, and he saw that line work was a job that could support



Line work is a way of life for the Kelly family in California.



SCE's three generations of Kellys include, left to right, Patrick, Kevin and Ryan.

a large family without two incomes. While his dad and grandpa worked as linemen, his mom and grandma were able to stay home to raise the children.

"It didn't hit me until I graduated from high school that it was a pretty good job," he said. "I never talked money with my family. It just all seemed to make sense."

His dad and grandpa also shared a love for the trade and their job with SCE.

"My grandpa told me besides God, he owes almost everything to the Edison company, and he talked highly of Edison," Ryan said. "My dad also said it was a good company to work for."

He remembers going to family parties where his grandpa, dad and uncle would all sit around and talk line work.

"At the time, it was Chinese to me, and I didn't understand any of the lineman lingo," he said. "I grew up, however, hearing about the camaraderie they had. They would sit there all night and talk line work, and because they had something in common, they could relate to one another. It was something that I wanted to be part of, so I started pursuing the trade. When I started picking up on everything, it made sense. Now when I go to family functions, I can sit with them now and talk about the same things they do."

His dad was very supportive of his decision to pursue a ca-

reer in line work.

"When I was growing up, he always told me to look for a job that was stable and that would be around," he said. "He didn't care if I became an underwater basket weaver. It just made perfect sense to get into the trade and work with electricity."

His brother, Shea, who is three years younger than him, also followed in his family's footsteps and is now a groundman/apprentice trainee.

"He thought if I could do it, he could do it," he said. "He also wanted to share the same thing with his dad and grandpa."

Ryan has been topped out as a journeyman for a year and said he loves the trade, just like his dad and grandpa.

"We go to work and have fun, but everyone is focused on the same thing — getting the job done right without cutting corners," Ryan said. "In the end, we all want to go home because we work to live, not live to work. We all try to keep each other safe and make sure nobody is going to do anything that is going to get them hurt."

Today, his grandpa, who was in the trade for 35 years, is in his mid-70s, and his dad has issues with his knees, precluding them all from competing together in a Lineman's Rodeo. Now that he is in the trade, however, he can relate to both his dad and grandpa.

"Not many people can say that they have something in common with their dad and grandpa," Ryan said. "The industry has changed, but the personalities you work with are still the same. I will talk with my dad and tell him I work with so and so, and he would say that it reminds him of this guy. It's neat to be able to share something like that with different generations."

As the father of two daughters — ages two and four — he could one day see them pursuing a career in the trade.

"I will tell them the same thing my dad told me, and my grandpa told my dad — line work is the best job you can get," he said. "You don't need to go to college to get a good job. It's been one of the most rewarding things I've ever done, and my grandpa and my dad would say the same thing."

### Three in the Trade: The Proctors

In 1973, when he was 18 years old, James Proctor started his career in the line trade as a meter reader. Four years later, he started his line work apprenticeship in Virden, Illinois, and he topped out in 1982. After he and his wife had two sons, he remembers his wife was very understanding about the demands of his job, helped to keep his mind on safety and took care of the needs of his children when he was away. When he got home from work, James hung up his climbing gear.

"Occasionally, he would get them out on the weekend and do some tree trimming," said his son, Adam. "I'm pretty sure he used them to build our first treehouse too."

Adam later joined his father and brother at Ameren, where noticed the bond of the linemen early on.

"My dad would talk about his coworkers as if they were his best friends or family," Adam said. "The camaraderie between them was incredible. Whenever we went, and still to this day, my dad, and now my brother, know everyone. The people who they come into contact with and the customers they treat as friends



James (Jim) Proctor (front) has two sons who work in the line trade: Clay (back left) and Adam.

seem to have a great appreciation and respect for them.”

He said growing up, he was always proud of what his dad did for a living. “He worked hard, often in poor conditions, and many people would express their appreciation to our entire family,” he said.

During many family events, Adam’s brother, Clay remembered that one or all of the family members would be called out. Even still, growing up, Clay remembers his dad finding a way to carve out some special time with his sons.

“He was always working but still found the time to be our coach, help us practice, volunteer as a fireman and take us hunting and fishing,” said Clay, who has worked at Ameren Illinois for the last 16 years.

Likewise, Clay finds himself dedicating a lot of time to work, just as his father did. “His experiences in the industry, or at least my perception of them, have helped keep me balanced,” he said.

Clay said during his career, he was able to work with not only

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his dad, but also his brother. His dad was his foreman for more than eight years, and during this time, he could see his work ethic and how he interacted with his co-workers.

"If I had a question or couldn't figure out a problem, I would just call him," Clay said. "I still call him for help troubleshooting sometimes. If I have an issue he has probably seen the same thing and knows how to fix it."

In turn, his father, James, said he worked with his son, Clay, on several projects and storm restoration jobs and was impressed with his work ethic. While Clay doesn't work directly with his brother, he sees him on occasion as he helps to coordinate logistics for Ameren on major storms and hurricanes, including the one in Puerto Rico.

"It makes me a proud brother when you hear co-workers compliment him on what a good job he did on those storms," he said.

With three of the Proctor family members in the trade, Adam said he can now relate to what his brother and father are talking about at home.

"One of the biggest rewards for me is being able to have a conversation about work and actually understand what they are talking about," he said. "Before I began my career with Ameren, I was often lost in their conversations."

He remembers telling his father five years ago that he wanted to start working for Ameren Illinois. He told him that Ameren was a good company to work for, and that he would be working for his former boss.

"Our father is proud that we both have good careers, are contributing to society and are creating their own legacies," Adam said.

When he first started in the apprenticeship, Clay's father told him that he would make a good living, and the line trade was hard, challenging and dangerous work, but also very rewarding.

Their father said he is proud that his sons are able to work in the industry. "I am concerned, as most parents are, about their safety," he said. "I hoped that they would be able to learn from their foreman and the journeymen they were working with."

### Learning From Experience: The Penners

Tom Penner is a third-generation lineman and he, his father and grandfather have a combined 100 years of experience in the high-voltage utility industry. His grandfather started in 1947 as a lineman with Pacific Gas & Electric, and his dad started in 1961 as an apprentice lineman. Tom, who now works as a transmission line supervisor at Tri-State Generation and Transmission, said his earliest memories revolve around

conversations about line work when he was a little boy.

"Every family gathering, my dad and grandfather would talk amongst themselves about the latest and greatest outages," he said. "They worked for the same company out of the same service area, and their conversations would constantly gravitate towards line work."

He also experienced first-hand the dangers of line work when his grandpa got injured and went from being a lineman to a troubleman.

"He was involved in an early accident with a crane tipping over while lifting a pole in the 1950s," Tom said. "My own father was injured as well while doing this line of work, and I remember his coworkers bringing him home and laying him on the front room floor of the house due to a severe back injury incurred while at work."

That incident, however, didn't change Tom's desire to pursue the same career.

"When I got to be of the age that I could move away and pursue my own career, I saw line work as my only one career path," he said. "I wanted to move forward."

Before he joined the trade, he spent the first part of his career in the U.S. Air Force building towers and setting poles. When he got out of the military, he went to work for PG&E, the same company that his dad and grandpa both retired from.



Tom Penner (right) had both a grandfather (upper left) and a father (shown at left in the photo below) who both worked as linemen.



After transferring to Georgia to work for a small cooperative, he moved to Colorado, where he worked for Yampa Valley Electric Cooperative for 12 years, before joining Tri-State in Craig, Colorado, in 2008.

"I have been in the trade since 1988 — for 31 years," he said.

When looking at the overall culture from his career all the way to his grandfather's time in the trade, he sees a difference in core values, technology and training.

"When I came through the trade, there were not as many line training schools where young people could get a vision of what line work looks like," he said. "All of my training was on the job, and it has advanced far beyond what I had when I started and certainly what my grandfather and father went through."

He said the evolution to better training programs has improved the safety in the industry.

"People now understand the hows and whys through the training," he said. "It makes our employees better, smarter and more attentive to certain parts of our business."

While he said his dad tried to talk him out of a career in line work and instead encouraged him to go to college, he said the job has exceeded his expectations.

"Through the years, I have done line work throughout the country like my dad or grandpa never did," he said. "It was interesting to talk to them as the years progressed, and they were very excited that I was able to do the things I was able to do."

Case in point: Penner learned how to perform live line work using the rope access method and is now advancing this program through a device called the Atlas. Moving forward, he is also encouraging future generations to focus on hard work and become students of the trade and never stop learning.

"I tell them to not be satisfied coming to work from 8 to 4," he said. "I tell future generations to be better at what they do, pay attention to details and know their business."

### All Into Line Work: The Jinks

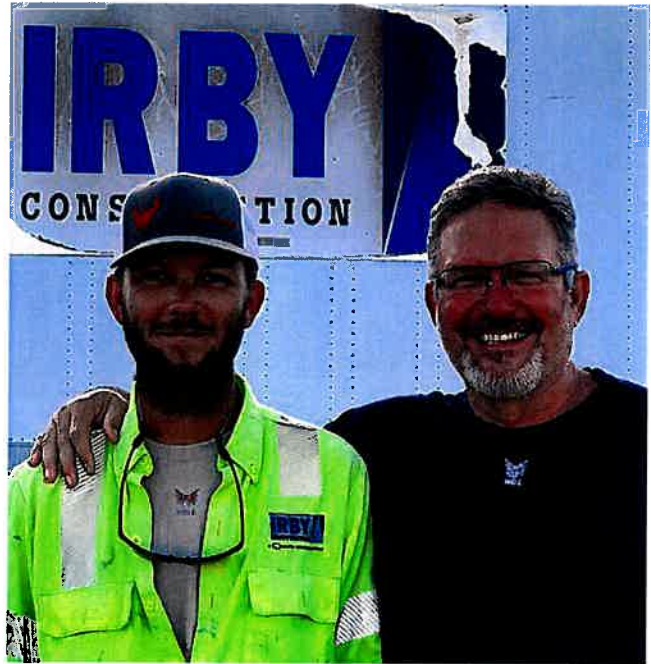
In the Jinks family, line work reaches into nearly every branch of the family tree. Coty Jinks, the 26-year-old lineman and foreman for Irby Construction, a Quanta Services company, said as the son of a lineman, he remembers moving to new places and meeting new people.

"When you are a lineman and have a family, you have two choices—either leave them at home and go to work or take them with you," Coty said. "My father took me and my siblings all over the United States, and I have done the same with my own family. It's hard, but everyone is together."

His father, Tommy, a 52-year-old lineman/superintendent for Irby, said during childhood, moving gets in your blood, and it's amazing to see different parts of the United States.

"You always talk about settling down and getting a 9 to 5, but there's no excitement in that — it's the same thing every day," he said. "But with line work, there are so many different things that can happen from job to job and day to day."

For example, every state and every job has its own challenges—from working in -50 degrees in Colorado to 127 degrees in California; sandstorms in Arizona to tornadoes in Kansas; he-



Coty Jinks (left) has many family members in the line trade including his father, Tommy (right).


licopters in Florida to barges in the Louisiana swamp to being below sea level to up in the clouds in the mountains of Virginia.

Tommy said during his career, he has worked on everything from transmission and distribution to substations and under-

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## Line Work Dominates Jinks Family Tree

Tommy Jinks of Irby says over the decades, dozens of family members have worked in the trade, and he believes there will still be more to come.

His mother gives a breakdown of just two families that have worked for Irby. His grandfather, Henry, only had two sons, and his uncle, Johnny, had four sons. The family has also had dozens of cousins, uncles and nephews that have worked for Irby over the years. Currently, six Jinks family members are working on the same job.

This is Tommy's side of the family:

- Henry Jinks - Grandfather - Superintendent
- Tommy Jinks - Father - Superintendent
- Amy Jinks - Wife - Foreman
- Coty Jinks - Son - Tech Foreman
- Spencer Jinks - Son - Groundman
- Steven Jinks - Father - Assistant Superintendent

This is another side of the family:

- Johnny Jinks - Grandfather - Superintendent
- Georgia Jinks - Grandmother - Office Clerk
- Billy Jinks - Father - Superintendent
- Jackie Jinks - Wife - Office Clerk
- Chad Powers - Son - Lineman
- Chris Powers - Son - Lineman
- Catrina Powers - Daughter - Office Clerk
- Ricky Jinks - Father - Superintendent
- Travis Jinks - Son - Lineman
- Ricky Jinks Jr. - Son - Lineman
- Randy Jinks - Father - Asst. Super
- Randal Jinks - Son - Lineman
- Barry Jinks - Father - Lineman

ground. He said line work is the only life he has ever known.

"My father was working for Irby when I was born in 1967," Tommy said. "There is a sense of community and pride amongst lineworkers. Back then, it was like a big family."

When his son, Coty announced his career choice, he knew he had some big shoes to fill.

"My dad knew it was coming because most of our family is in the power line industry," he said. "I think he was excited about me coming to work. He's taught me to listen and learn all I can about the trade."

Coty's younger brother is also just starting out in the trade as a groundman. Their dad said now that he has two sons following in his footsteps, he is very proud of them.

"They are both working with me in Florida, and we spend a lot of family time together," he said.

His oldest son has worked for him several times in the last seven years, and they have also worked on several storms together. He said right now, he is not directly supervising either one of them, which is working out better.

"I have to discipline or scrutinize them at work sometimes and then go home with them," he said. "I also demand more

from my family, which upsets them because I'm harder on them, but I just want them to be the best."

## Following in Footsteps: The Schafers

Todd Schafer, a line worker for FirstEnergy's Ohio Edison utility, said he followed his father's steps in the line trade after spending more than a decade as a paramedic, restaurateur and firefighter.

Although he earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees, he chose to pursue a career in line work two years ago because he valued the stability his father's job provided for his family when he grew up.

When he was a life-flight paramedic for Akron Children's Hospital, he said it was one of the greatest, most high-adrenaline jobs out there, and a dream job for many people. Even so, he still felt like something was missing in his career and his life.

"As a single father with two young sons, it is important for me to set a positive example of hard work and following one's dreams," Todd said. "That's why I decided to follow in my father's footsteps to become a line worker at Ohio Edison."

Todd said even though he worked as a firefighter for many years, his father is the one who is a hero who inspires him. He also knew what he was getting into when he shifted careers.

"Because of my upbringing, I understand what a lineman's family goes through with having to miss holidays and special events when the power goes out or having to spend days or weeks away from home after a major storm," he said. "Watching the support my father received from my mother and family showed me the importance of having an understanding family when you're in this line of work."

Switching careers at the age of 30 wasn't easy to do, he said, but his career as a lineman provides great benefits for his family as well as opportunities for him to grow within the company down the road.

"My dad was extremely proud when I told him I wanted to become a line worker because it's a career he's enjoyed for 40 years and it's given him many opportunities to meet new people and travel across the country," he said. "Although we work out of different service centers, we do work together during storms and on other projects across the company's service area. Working alongside my father is truly a humbling experience because he is so knowledgeable and well respected in this industry."

Todd said when he was a boy, his father taught him how to work with his hands and fix things. The characteristics that he has raised to value are the ones he applies each and every day as a line worker.

"Restoration of power is one of the most challenging, yet rewarding, aspects of being a line worker," Todd said. "No two outages are identical, and I enjoy figuring out the cause of each outage and delivering the power people depend on every day."

Todd said making the switch to line work was the best career decision he has ever made. "I've finally found my calling,"

His father, Jack, said his son's career path is unlike many of the other men and women in the field, which is an advantage.

"I am so proud that he chose line work as his lifelong career," Jack said. "He brings a unique and valuable skillset



After working as a firefighter and paramedic, Todd Schafer (right) joined his father in a career in the utility industry.

to our industry because he's worked with customers when he owned restaurants, and he's worked in high-pressure environments as a firefighter and paramedic. He's going to have a very successful career as a line worker; he's a great guy, and I'm not just saying that because he's my son."

Jack said he strongly believes that line workers' children tend to follow in their parents' footsteps because they witness the price and camaraderie that come with this type of work.

"Not many people can say their colleagues are like family to them," he said. "It's very rewarding and special to share that bond with a great group of men and women. On top of that, we have a specialized skill that not many people can do. At the end of the day, after a big storm, the people are thankful for us getting their lights back on. There's no greater feeling than that."

Jack, who started his career in line work straight out of high school in 1979, first became interested in the career because he enjoys working outside and with his hands.

"Growing up, my neighbor was a line worker and I saw how passionate he was for the work because he got to do something different each day and meet great people along the way," he said. "I enjoy trying to figure out the cause of the outage and then turn the lights back on for our customers. No two outages are ever the same and I've had the opportunity to learn a lot about our electrical system. This line of work gives me a feeling of accomplishment and pride."

### 175 Years in the Industry: The Mims

On July 1, 1915, James Claude Mims Sr. launched his career in the line trade. One hundred and four years later, two of his great grandsons are proudly carrying on his family legacy.

In the Mims family, James Claude and his son, grand-

son and great-grandsons have given a combined total of 175 years to the line trade.

As a young boy, David Mims remembers the impact his father had as a local lineman in his small town of Childersburg, Alabama. In the 1970s, before the invention of cell phones, his father would still get "called out."

"We would be in church, and while the preacher was preaching, the police would walk in the back door and walk up to my father, talk to him, and then he would get up and leave with them," David said. "The police would carry my father home to get his company truck so he could go restore power in our community."

At that time, he didn't understand all about line work, but he knew his father made a difference and that people depended on him. His father was

someone he looked up to, so he always wanted to be like him.

"As I got older, I realized his passion for line work was because he loved helping people and making a difference in their lives," he said. "And I saw it as a way for me to help and make a difference. Life is always the best teacher, and when someone you trust and respect tells you of his experiences in line work, it makes you a better lineman."

He followed in the footsteps of not only his father, but also his grandfather and also great-grandfather. In his case, he said the standard was set very high when he entered the trade.

"Most people know what profession their fathers have, but when you follow in their footsteps, especially as a lineman, you realize the hard work and commitment they have done to

### Advice Passed Down Through the Generations

Second-, third- and fourth-generation linemen can learn from the experiences of those family members who have worked in the trade before them. Here are some words of wisdom that fathers have passed down to their sons when they became linemen.

- Be open to new work methods. Cory McWhite says every foreman and lineman has a different way of working, and each thinks their way is the best. Linemen should learn all the ways, and then when the time comes, they can figure out what is the best way and why.

- Do not discuss work at home. Tommy Jinks says his dad explained it this way: "Don't build power lines at home."

- Safety rules are there for a reason. The rules were created from accidents that caused someone bodily harm, equipment damage and even a fatality, Danny Haithcock says. Linemen should always have a questioning attitude and never be afraid to speak up when they don't understand or see something that looks right.





David Mims (far left) serves as the foreman of the Oak Grove crew. His crew members include (from left to right): Jody Dark, utility assistant intern; Josh Shell, lineman; Dalton Vick, apprentice lineman; Hunter Waites, lineman; Johnny Mack Hardman, lineman; Cory Madaris, apprentice lineman; and Brett Young, lead lineman.



James Claude Mims Sr., 1915.

provide for you. It makes you appreciate them more."

When he first told his father that he wanted to be a lineman, he told him that linemen are a special breed of people due to the dangerous work and hard conditions they face every day. At the same time, he said it is rewarding knowing that you are making a difference.

"The occupation of lineman has for years ranked in the top 10 most dangerous occupations, and with his personal experience

as a lineman, he always said you can never become complacent or let your guard down when it comes to safety," David said.

As a line crew foreman today, he said his responsibility is to teach others from the past, prepare them for the future and make them the safest and most qualified linemen the industry has to offer. He said the most valuable asset that any person on Earth has is time, and it's a shame for anyone to waste that valuable resource working at a job they hate.

"I can honestly say I am honored to have followed in the footsteps of my father, grandfather and great-grandfather, and I'm truly blessed to be called a lineman," Mims said.

### Like Father, Like Sons: The Haithcocks

Some linemen come from generations of line workers while others marry into the trade. Take Danny Haithcock, whose wife's father, grandfather, uncle and cousins worked in the electric utility industry.

"After being around her family and hearing the talk of life as a lineman, it drew my interest," Danny said.

Danny got married in 1986, and a year later, his wife's grandfather, who worked as a line supervisor with Sumter Builders, offered him a job as a groundman. He remembers that the



The Haitcock family at the Lineman's Rodeo. From left to right: Josh, Christian (younger brother who also wants to be a lineman), Danny and Zack Haitcock.

crew truck was a single-cab with a half-moon cover on the back that only covered about one-third of the bed.

"The supervisor and linemen rode in the cab, and I rode in the back rain, shine, sleet or snow," Danny said. "We had a very experienced crew that taught me a lot about line work as it was done back in the day before you had a lot of specialized equipment."

He then worked his way up to a lineman position with a local co-op in 1992, when he had the opportunity to join CP&L as a lineman. After being promoted to a distribution line supervisor in 2010, he later worked in transmission line maintenance for the company, which is now known as Duke Energy.

As a lineman, he had to travel across the country to assist other companies in restoring power after weather-related events. He said it was rough to be away from his own family for extended periods of time, but it was worth the sacrifice to help other families bring their lives back to normal after power has been restored.

"The early years consisted of a lot of time away from the family and being on call many nights," he said. "I would get home and crawl in bed, and as soon as I did, the phone would ring to call me out once again."

Today, companies take a different approach to the linemen working extended periods of time by regulating how many hours in a period can be worked before they must take a mandatory break. "I think this approach has significantly reduced the number of accidents in recent years," he said.

He now has three sons who have been around the line trade their entire lives. "They have done everything from hearing my stories and my family's stories to hauling my team's equipment at Lineman's Rodeo competitions I participated in throughout the years," he said.

One of his sons, Zachary, said his earliest memory of his dad

working as a lineman traces back to when he was three or four years old. "My dad would drive home the bucket truck while on call, and I always thought it was the coolest thing," Zachary said. "He would let me sit in and play on the truck in our yard. I also remember sometimes when my mom picked me up from school and on our way home we would pass dad and his crew out working."

Zach's brother, Josh, remembers when his dad worked for a local co-op, and during several times at night, he would take him on call with him to watch him work.

"Those nights I would watch him climb poles, change out insulators and transformers, refuse cut outs, and deal with customers," Josh said. "I was probably between seven to 10 years old at the time, and I can still remember it like it was yesterday. He was definitely a hero because he had the best job and it made him look like Superman."

Josh, who now works as a crew lead after serving for 12 years as a lineman, said he has always wanted to work in the trade because it's a family tradition. He attributes his strong work ethic to his father, who supported his career choice 100%.

"Growing up with a dad as a lineman made me the lineman, father and husband I am today," Josh said. "I learned how to be a leader, deal with customers and how to be a good employee. Most importantly, I learned from him how to be safe."

Today, both Josh and Zach work as linemen for Duke Energy, and they have even been able to compete with their dad on the same team at the Lineman's Rodeo or work storms together.

"I am honored that I could participate in the Lineman's Rodeo with both of my sons seeing their skills they have learned," Danny said. "They remind me of my passion and desire to perform the skills needed to maintain service to the public."

Because Danny has so many family members in the trade, his family shares a lot of stories and experiences, sparking future interest in the trade.

"I have a younger son that is 14 years old and already knows he wants to work for the power company as a lineman, and my three-year-old grandson said he wants to be a lineman too when he grows up," Danny said. "I know it is very hazardous work, but I feel totally at ease knowing he will work for a company that takes safety very seriously. I know my sons are working for a company that puts safety first and places a high emphasis on training and development."

He said generations work in the utility industry because they see the pride and honor in their family members and allow you to provide a comfortable living for their family.

"The new saying these days is that being a lineman is a lifestyle," he said. "Linemen wear the title with pride and it never gets too old." TDW