

# country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



**2** *Notes from the Chair*

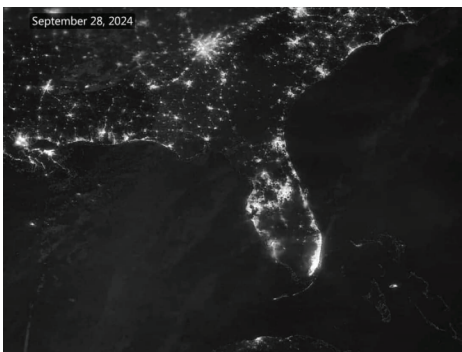
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## The Lessons of Hurricane Helene

**LEFT TO RIGHT: ECE linemen Trevor Cheatwood, Stacy Bourne, Line Superintendent Pete Hogan, and linemen Tate Peters, Michael Muller, Easton Soucy, and Rodney Nixon provided mutual aid to Jefferson Energy Cooperative in Georgia after Hurricane Helene.**



**ABOVE: Power outages associated with Hurricane Helene were visible from space in photo from the National Weather Service.**

**BELOW: Photo shows the height of the pines with an extended digger truck and linemen for perspective.**



In the recorded history of the deadliest hurricanes hitting the mainland United States, Hurricane Helene firmly took its place in the top 20. The Category 4 storm ripped a 500-mile gash across six states, killed over 230, and left 300,000 people without power.

Headquartered in Wrens, Georgia, the linemen of Jefferson Energy Cooperative (JEC) faced a dire task. 100 percent of the co-op's 36,878 were without power. And so the call went out, a request for mutual aid.

At home in Henryetta, Oklahoma, one of the linemen to answer that call was a young man who had just graduated from Apprentice to Journeyman days earlier.

Having done a stint of in-state mutual aid, Easton Soucy felt that he had a pretty good handle on what the job entailed.

He chuckled in retrospect.

After 14 days of 16-hour shifts with tight quarters and disrupted sleep, Soucy admitted, "It was definitely a learning experience for me."

Each workday started at 6 a.m. with a cafeteria style breakfast. Hundreds of men gathered in one space to review safety guidelines and get their orders for the day.

Some photos from JEC show linemen working out of boats instead of bucket trucks. One video shows a crew wading in waist deep water to retrieve a transmission line from under a fallen tree.

The first lesson for Soucy was that there are many different ways to string wire on poles.

"The way they build their line was an eye opener to me," he said. "When we go to an in-state storm, like Claremore for instance, their framing

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notes from the chair  
**Enthusiasm and  
 Dismay**

*By Lowell Hobbs, President, East Central Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees*

We had a good attendance at our recent legislative dinner. Our neighboring co-ops joined with us to recognize and thank our area legislators for their continued support. ECE has been recognized and commended at the state, regional, and national levels and in the legislative arena for our leadership in the Co-op world. We want to continue in that atmosphere as we secure our next CEO. Hopefully by the time you read this we will have that person identified.

My Dad always wanted to help underprivileged boys have a better chance to advance, so when he became vo-ag teacher at Cleveland, Oklahoma, he developed an idea of helping anyone have a pig, if they wanted one. With the help of other adults, he formed the Duroc (pig) Association in Pawnee County. It became very popular and soon Cleveland was called the “Duroc Capital of the World.” Minnesota and Iowa were noted for their superior blood lines of Duroc pigs, so some representatives of our group traveled North to purchase some premier bloodlines to improve our bloodlines. One such boar was sent from Minnesota to Tulsa in an airplane. This made headlines as the first ever pig to fly into Tulsa. He acquired the name “Airplane.” Each member of the association (dues were \$5.00) got one breeding, and had the responsibility of boarding “Airplane”.

Daddy began providing a gilt to each student that wanted to be involved. After the gilt (young sow) had her first litter, Daddy would get the gilt back

and one female pig. The student would keep all the other pigs of that first litter. Before long we expanded that program further out, and I remember taking sows from Cleveland as far away as Ft. Gibson and Muskogee. On one such trip to Muskogee we had 2 sows in a bumper pull trailer behind our old Chevrolet car (the one Daddy wrecked later on). My dog Cub was in the back seat and I was the passenger in the front seat.

The hitch pin came out, the safety chains were secure, and the trailer zig zagged back and forth behind our car almost causing us to wreck. Cub was thrown from side to side in the back seat, and the trailer dumped upside down. Daddy said “oh my, we’ve killed both sows.”

I looked back, and they were both crawling out from under the trailer, unhurt. Daddy told me to take Cub and follow the 2 sows wherever they went while he went to town for another trailer and returned. I was 9 or 10 years old, scared, nervous, and crying. Daddy said if they wandered off to keep them together and stay with them wherever they went till he got back....he would find me.

The sows went up along the fence line, laid down in the shade, and stayed there until Daddy came back...I cried the whole time. The sows loaded easily, and away we went on to Muskogee.

*Lowell Hobbs represents ECE District 2. To reach him, please call his cellphone at 918-695-5289.*

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**We pray your Christmas  
 is Merry and Bright!**

**The holiday season can be difficult.**

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**To participate please:**

1. Drop your donation at the ECE drive-thru window or night drop at 2001 S. Wood Drive in Okmulgee.
2. Mail your donation to East Central Electric Attn: Give A Watt PO Box 1178 Okmulgee, OK 74447-1178.

If paying by check, please make your check payable to East Central Electric and write Give A Watt in the memo area.



# Meet Our Next Level Team: Executive Team and Corporate Services

All year you've read about the different departments of the co-op and the work they do. Our executive team and our corporate services team offer the direction, and emphasis on safety, security, and human resources to ensure that all the departments work together as one. With their leadership, the Cooperative has gone almost 800 days without a lost time injury and has set a record of financial stability that has contributed to the co-op returning capital credits for 60 consecutive years.

## The Pioneer of Purpose



“One of the most rewarding things about my job is learning daily from the leaders of the cooperative and using my skills to make a difference at the Cooperative.”

- GENIE TRAMMELL,  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Our Chief Executive Officer serves as a translator, taking the vision and long-term strategic goals of the member-elected Board of Trustees and breaking it down into actionable items that can be carried out by all the employees of the Cooperative. While each department focuses on the nitty-gritty, the CEO is focused on the big picture of providing safe, reliable, and affordable energy to all members while keeping the co-op fiscally sound.

## The Gatekeeper



“One of the rewarding parts of my job is observing the young linemen and how they evolve in the career from where they started a short time ago.”

- GARY BAKER, SAFETY  
COORDINATOR

Our Vice President of Corporate Services oversees human resources, safety, and the Cooperative's facilities. He is responsible for recruiting and retaining talent, implementing employee development programs, ensuring the work environments adheres to all laws and safety guidelines, enforces impartial and consistent policy application, manages labor relations, and keeps facilities and grounds secure to minimize hazards to employees and the community.

## The Purposeful Planner



Our Executive Assistant works closely with the CEO, senior staff, and the Board of Trustees to provide comprehensive support services. For the employees of the Cooperative, she serves as the primary point of contact for the CEO and the liaison for the Board of Trustees. She anticipates the needs of the Board and management team as a record-keeper, travel agent, and problem-solver.

## The Safety and Security Squad



Our Corporate Services Team oversees a variety of duties related to the safety, security, and human resources of the Cooperative's 110 employees. Our Safety Coordinator ensures personal protective equipment is tested and rotated out regularly. He is also responsible for the Apprenticeship Training Program as well as CPR, first aid, and AED training. Our Human Resources Assistant coordinates new employee orientation, coordinates employee trainings, organizes employee records and generates reports. And the gentleman in charge of building maintenance handles various facility maintenance requests while also assisting with facility set-up for events and co-teaching CPR courses. As a whole, this team ensures employees are doing their jobs safely and in a safe environment.

# Lessons

Continued from Cover

is very similar to ours. Over there in Georgia, it was completely different. They still had the same basics, but as far as their cutouts and their fusing, it's completely different."

As a tornado alley resident, Soucy is familiar with storm damage. The shocking difference in Georgia was the size of the trees.

"I saw a house that had three different trees fall through it and cut it in three different pieces. Big, big pine trees," he said.

Most of East Central's apprentice linemen cut their teeth on construction crews doing new builds, only running outages in an emergency.

"Out there, it's all emergency. You're working as safe and fast as possible to get these people's power back on," he said.

In an emergency, Soucy said, "I work just a little bit harder. If it were me, if I were out for two weeks, I'd be dying to get power back. I'm happy to do it."

As restoration estimates dragged into double digit days, members of JEC continued to show gratitude.

"We had some people stop by and tell us thank you," Soucy said. "They were real friendly too, appreciative of us."

Crews wrapped up their final jobs of the day and arrived back at camp between 9 and 10 p.m.

The sleeping quarters were built into semi-trailers, with two columns of beds along the walls, stacked 7 beds deep and three beds high.



The water-logged ground was often too soft for bucket trucks, forcing ECE Apprentice Lineman Tate Peters to do a lot of climbing.



The living quarters for linemen during their two week stay were bunks stacked three high and seven deep, retrofitted into semi-trailers.



ECE Lineman Easton Soucy helping a neighborhood in Georgia get power restored weeks after it went out.

"You can hear everything that goes on. You can hear people snoring. You can hear people getting up. The first couple days I woke up a lot, I was sleeping very lightly," Soucy said. "Towards the end though, nothing could wake me up."

"When you wake up in the morning with everyone else, you're trying to get ready and they're trying to get ready. Bumping shoulders constantly, stuff like that," Soucy said. "Everybody eats in the same place. You've got your shower trailer, laundry trailer."

JEC contracted with a storm services company that provided three meals a day, the mobile sleeping and showering accommodations, and a full time staff of women who just did laundry.

The hours of work and lack of sleep took their toll on Soucy. At the end of two weeks, he had lost 15 pounds. He was thrilled when he got to come home to his wife.

"I've always been kind of a homebody myself," Soucy said. "There's a different

kind of relaxation you can get from being home at the end of the day versus being out of state on a storm."

"Everyone was friendly, they're all there for the same reason," he said. "In the end it was worth it, because you know those people will be living in comfort, or at least most of

them anyway. To me that's worth it. I'd do it again."

For Jefferson Energy Cooperative, it took 21 days and 1,200 mutual aid lineworkers, but on October 17th they happily announced that all 36,878 meters were back online.



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