

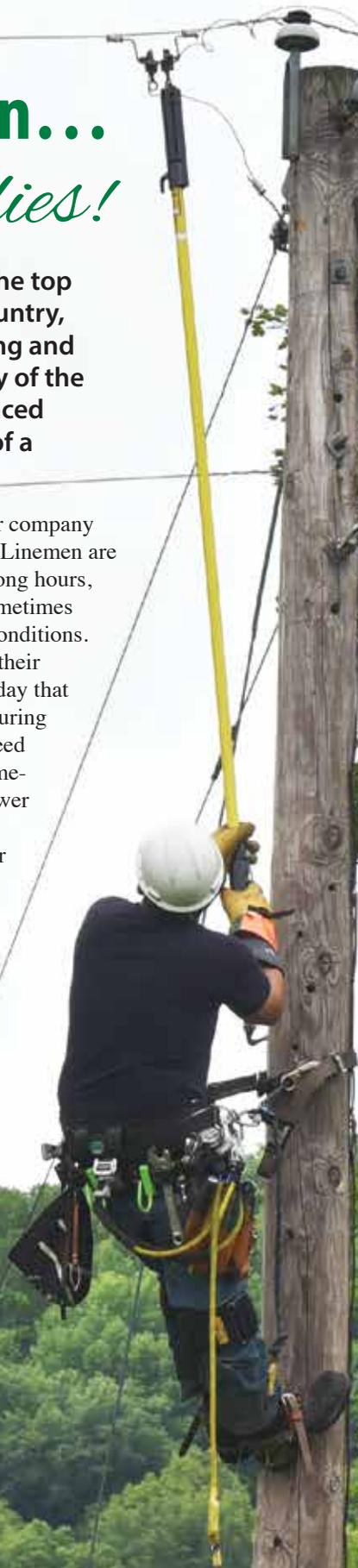
Thank you, linemen... *and their families!*

Being a lineman is often ranked near the top of the most dangerous jobs in the country, but the advancement in safety training and equipment has improved the overall safety of the occupation. However, no amount of advanced training or equipment can ease the mind of a lineman's spouse.

When people learn that someone works for a power company you can bet they will assume that person is a lineman. Linemen are the faces of the electrical business. They often put in long hours, having to leave family events and school activities, sometimes leaving late at night, to work in unfavorable weather conditions.

So why is it people are so quick to complain when their power goes out? We are so dependent on electricity today that we have forgotten how to get along without it, albeit during winter months it can become more difficult with the need for heat. But those who are so eager to post on social media about how long it has been since they have had power often don't realize there's likely a spouse on the other end of that who has been without their significant other for just as long.

Most people are very understanding when they lose power, and sometimes they're even grateful because doing without electricity can bring a family closer together, even if it's just for a short time. On the other hand, there are occasionally those who are not so understanding. They typically don't realize that we may not know what caused the outage, its exact location, or what the problem is. Or that our crews are working outside and it's 30 below zero, so





we must have two crews working, taking turns every 30 minutes.

No matter what the scenario is, our linemen are ready to answer the call, even if it means leaving one of their children's events. Not only do Richland Electric linemen have to be ready, so do their spouses and other loved ones. Often, they are the ones explaining to the kids why Dad had to leave their event or couldn't tuck them in at night.

Jennifer Bartels has been married to lineman Casey Bartels for four years and has been with Casey throughout his line-work career. They have four girls ages 5 and younger. How do you explain to the little ones why Dad has to leave? Bartels said, "I tell the girls that the power is out, people can't see, and they think he has magic powers. He's going to help people with his magic powers."

Believing that your dad has magic powers when you are young is one thing, but as a child's imagination fades it becomes harder to explain why Dad has missed events. Dawn Horter has been married to longtime REC lineman Mike Horter for 36 years, and they have two grown sons. She stated, "Boys want their dad. Doesn't matter what it's for, but boys always notice when their dad is not there. Same can be said for girls—take father daughter dances, for example. They want their dad."

"When Casey goes out it can be crazy around the house between getting one of the girls ready for school and the others for day care while I'm getting



Front row, L to R: Jim Kaderavek, Casey Bartels, Zach Swenson
Back row, L to R: Curt Brockway, Dave Darling, Mike Horter, Grant Worthington.

ready for work, or having to get them ready for bed. The most difficult thing is when he will get a call and we have to drop everything at a moment's notice so he can get to work. Having four kids can make that difficult but we get through it," said Bartels.

Here at Richland Electric we can guarantee that our linemen do not want to be away from their families any more than they must, especially as their kids become more involved in activities. However, our linemen understand there is job that needs to be done. They are on call on a rotational basis and will often work with one another on scheduling if

there is family event.

It is not just their children they are away from, however. It is also their spouses, who linemen must rely on to take care of things while they are gone. Horter said, "With Mike being gone I understood whatever happened in the household I was the only one there to handle it and take care of it. You just dig in and do it."

But it is one thing to handle when you are distracted by children, and another thing when you are alone and haven't heard from your spouse for several hours. One might assume that the spouses get "used to it." However, Horter said, "Every time he goes out it is something different. I am not used to it but it is definitely a part of my life and has been for a very long time. If he goes out before we've gone to bed I still try and stay up as late as I can until he's home."

Then there's the worrying. Even with the amount of training linemen receive and the safety procedures they must follow, it doesn't make it any easier on the spouses when they leave. Linemen are constantly working around 7,200 volts, and one mishap could potentially cost them their life or at the very least, significant injuries.

"I do worry every time he goes out," Bartels said. "I even worry when he goes to work. I don't think that I will ever adjust or not worry no matter how long



he is a lineman. I'm worried about him having an accident because one wrong move could injure or even cost him his life. He does do a good job of giving me updates when he gets a chance."

"I sometimes overhear the calls from CRC (Cooperative Response Center) and can kind of tell how long he will be out," said Horter. "But if it is longer than I expected then I start to wonder why he isn't home yet. Before the time of cell phones, I would sometimes call the office just to see if I can have an idea how long they are going to be out. Not to complain but just to check in and make sure that everything is okay. But for the most part I try to leave him alone."

You can rest assured that each time REC linemen head out they are always looking out for one another. One could say when you become a lineworker you join a brotherhood. Lineworkers make sure that each person is working safely. They want to get the power back on as quickly as they can, but not at the

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expense of their safety. You can bet that if one did something another deemed unsafe, they would hear about it, not necessarily from their supervisor but from their peers. Lineworkers understand that they are responsible for each other and there are others counting on them to do their job safely.

We often take for granted how lucky we are to have electricity at the flip of a switch. What we don't think about is the time and effort that go into making that possible. We often don't consider the dedicated men and women who work for any power company who go out during

thunderstorms, snowstorms, freezing temperatures, or scorching heat—the ones who risk their safety to help restore power for complete strangers.

The next time you lose power during a storm, take a moment to reflect. Know that there are people working to restore your power. But also take a moment to realize there may be a spouse without their significant other, or a child without their mom or dad, all because those people are working to restore your power.

April is lineworker appreciation month, and we are extremely grateful every day for the linemen of Richland Electric Cooperative. However, we are just as grateful to the spouses of these linemen. It takes a special person to be all right with their loved ones leaving in the middle of the night in less than ideal conditions without knowing when they will return. So not only do we give thanks to our linemen, but also to their dedicated families.

Thank you! 🙏





REMEMBERING WWII RATIONING

On December 7, 1941, the United States entered World War II, and although farm prices had been rock bottom all during the Depression years they increased somewhat during the war. But rationing presented a whole new set of challenges. The government issued ration books to every person, adults and children alike. Families were allowed limited amounts of gasoline, tires, shoes, rubber footwear, and many food items such as meat, sugar, coffee, and canned goods.

As farmers we raised our own hogs for meat so that was not a problem, nor were we troubled by having limits on canned vegetables as we raised a big garden. The biggest hardship my mother faced, who enjoyed cooking and baking, was sugar rationing. She was never able to purchase the amount of sugar she needed for baking. So she turned to an alternative source of sweetener—sorghum syrup.

We grew up to two acres of sweet sorghum during the war years. Harry Korleski, who owned and operated a water-powered sorghum mill, made sorghum syrup by running the sorghum stalks through the mill, which squeezed out the juice. Harry then boiled down the sorghum juice, much as one boils down maple sap to make maple syrup. Most years we would have 10 gallons, and sometimes more of the tan, sweet

tasting syrup. My mother canned it, stored it in the cellar, and used it in a variety of recipes.

Sorghum Cookies

- 1 cup sugar
- ¾ cup shortening, melted
- 1/3 cup sorghum
- 1 egg
- 2 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- ½ teaspoon ginger

Combine 1 cup sugar and melted shortening and beat until creamy. Let cool for 10 minutes. Add sorghum and egg to sugar mixture. In another bowl, combine flour, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves and ginger. Stir in to sugar and egg mixture. Cover the dough and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease a cookie sheet. Roll chilled dough into balls, dip in sugar, and place on cookie sheet 2 inches apart. Bake until edges look brown, about 7 minutes. Let cool 1 minute on cookie sheet and then transfer to a wire cooling rack.

When the war ended in 1945, great changes occurred on the farms. In that year Pa bought a tractor. But he also kept our team of horses, as he never quite trusted a tractor to be as dependable as his faithful team. When sugar once more became available, Ma bought 200 pounds, storing a hundred pounds in our attic. “I don’t want to run out of sugar ever again,” she said. Nineteen-forty-five was the last summer that we grew sweet sorghum, even though Ma continued to buy some each year from neighbors who continued growing it. The family had developed a liking for sorghum cookies.

We continued using the icebox, heating our home with woodstoves, and putting up with no indoor plumbing. *(Excerpted from Old Farm Country Cookbook, Wisconsin Historical Society Press)*



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