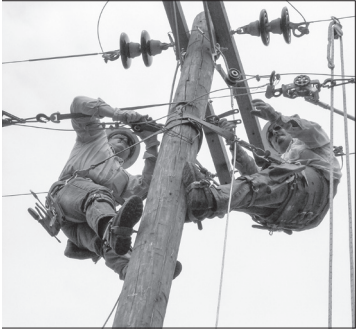


# Lineman's Christmas Eve



Graham County Electric Cooperative's Myles Ray, left, and Ryan Botkins make repairs to a line from atop a power pole.

'Twas the night before Christmas  
And all through the house,  
Not a creature was stirring  
'Cause the power was out.

How could this happen?  
What trouble could be?  
The house is all dark,  
Even lights on the tree.

The lineman's asleep  
All cozy and warm,  
His power apparently  
Was spared by the storm.

Deep into slumber  
But soon to awake,  
'Cause a tree on the line  
Has caused it to break.

The calls swamp the office.  
"MY POWER IS OUT!"

Get them here quickly,  
'Cause I carry clout."

The dispatcher calls  
And with a hint of despair,  
He informs the lineman  
The need for repair.

In three or four hours  
The trouble is found.  
You see, the road didn't pass  
Where the tree went down.

Out in the snow  
They carry their tools  
And fix the fault  
As they learned in the schools.

They leave the scene  
And drive back in the dawn.  
The line is now clear  
And all power is on.

And now it's the morning  
The kids shout with glee,  
And their eyes shine as bright  
As the lights on the tree.

The lineman goes home now  
As tired as can be.  
The storm just ignored  
It was his Christmas Eve.

He's not asking for praise  
Or for you to applaud,  
'Cause according to him  
It's just part of the job.

But please just remember  
As you pick up the horn  
And you call to the office  
He may be out in the storm.

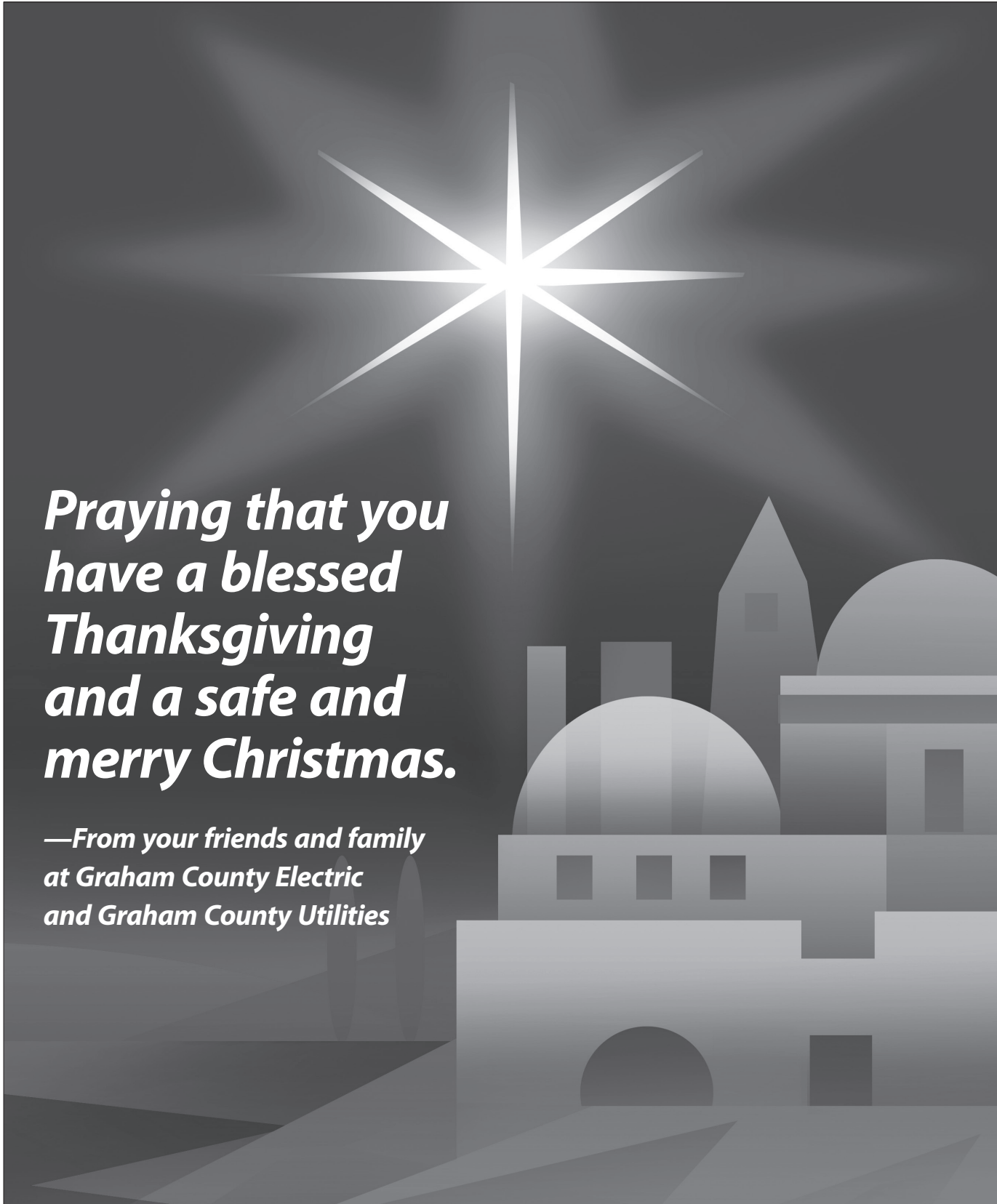
—Adapted from Kevin Hughes

The Graham County Electric Cooperative line crew is ready to respond to trouble at any time. From left, Cliff White, Trent Bingham, Jacob Trujillo, Mitch Brown, Myles Ray, Fernando Macario, Chris Hancock, Ryan Botkins, Victor Trujillo, Jesus Legarda, Kendall Lunt and Preston Seale.



The Graham County Electric Cooperative crew replaces a switch pole along Highway 70 east of Safford following a major storm-caused outage in August. From left, Kendall Lunt in the digger, Chris Hancock in the digger, Jacob Trujillo in the bucket, Victor Trujillo in the bucket, Ryan Botkins standing between the trucks and Mitch Brown in the digger.





***Praying that you  
have a blessed  
Thanksgiving  
and a safe and  
merry Christmas.***

***—From your friends and family  
at Graham County Electric  
and Graham County Utilities***

## Employee Spotlight GCEC's Kouts Specializes in Figuring Things Out

At Graham County Electric Cooperative, Dennis Kouts is considered “Mr. Stability.”

Since graduating in 1972, Dennis has had only three jobs. He has worked at GCEC since 1976, currently serving as the operations specialist.

Dennis oversees construction of all facilities, line upgrades, substation maintenance and system operations.

During his tenure, he has coordinated building the Cork, Pima, San Jose and Swift Trail substations. His largest undertaking was supervising GCEC crews and subcontractors when GCEC built the Talley Substation in 2014.

“You always run into trouble with distribution when you are upgrading lines,” says Dennis.

Keeping the power flowing to members is the highest priority. Dennis reroutes distribution through other substations.

“I have had the privilege of working alongside Dennis since 1979,” says General Manager Steve Lines. “The thing that impresses me the most is his ability to learn quickly. His title of operations specialist is for a good reason. He does not give up until he figures things out.”

“I would describe Dennis as a perfectionist at everything he does for the cooperative.



**Above, Dennis Kouts at the Talley Substation. It is the largest self-constructed project he has supervised in his 39 years at Graham County Electric. Right, Dennis at work in the office.**

He has been a very valuable asset to the co-op members. Dennis is also a valued part of upper management for me as general manager.”

During his 39-year career with GCEC, Dennis has done almost every job.

Hired initially as a groundman/meter reader, a few years into the job he began a lineman apprenticeship. Two years into the program, the position was frozen. Dennis has been an equipment operator, meter reader, meterman and purchasing agent. He has managed the water wells; connected electric, gas and water customers and supervised the meter department.

Dennis says he has made the best of each job duty.

He has seen GCEC grow. When Dennis started, the



cooperative had one billing cycle and read meters seven days a month. Now, meters are read in different areas of the county each week and the co-op has four billing cycles.

Asked to identify his favorite job, Dennis laughs.

“It just might be retirement,” he says, noting he is considering retiring in 2017.

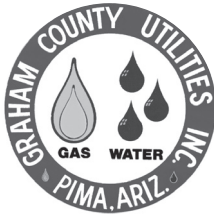
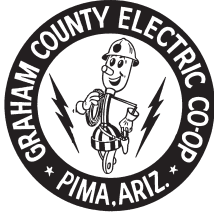
Dennis says he has enjoyed working in every position.

He remembers preparing for potential chaos from entry into the new millenium—dubbed

Y2K—by camping out at the Dos Condados Substation until after midnight, ensuring nothing went wrong with the power supply.

Born at the old hospital in downtown Stafford, Dennis and his wife of 42 years, Kelsey, have lived in Thatcher since 1973.

He loves to hunt, fish and camp. He says that when he gets around to retiring, he plans to spend more time with his three kids and eight grandkids. ■



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**Manager's Message**

# Time Moves On

In 1946 something special happened: Graham County Electric Cooperative was formed and incorporated.

The founding fathers of GCEC—who were the first board of directors—employees and co-op members all had a vision. That vision, concept and purpose was to create an electrical co-op for the people in Graham County, where those members would own and operate the business through their membership; a cooperative whose goal was to serve the members with the lowest cost, most reliable power possible.

Many directors, employees and members of this co-op have come and gone since 1946. Now here we are, approaching 2016. However, one thing remains the same: That vision, concept and purpose formed in 1946 is still being fulfilled today. It is alive and well.

I mention this because we have some employees looking at retirement come the first of the year. Change will take place once again for the co-op management and employee team.

Two of my operations managers have announced their retirement for the first of the year: Dick Berryhill, electric line superintendent, with 41 years of service, and Jason Hughes, gas and water superintendent, with 27 years of service. These managers will be replaced by in-house personnel: Rusty Sherman and Wes Reidhead, respectively.

The co-op is always looking for ways to save on operating costs. Downsizing our labor force through attrition, if the timing makes it



**Steve Lines**

possible, is what we will do. This is the advantage we have that comes from our current employees being well trained, qualified and ready to step up and take over when the co-op needs them to do so.

I came to this cooperative back in 1979 as a journeyman lineman and worked my way up through management. In February, I will have 37 years with Graham County Electric, with the last 15 years as general manager.

I feel like my time has also come to step aside and pass on the torch just like all those before me since 1946. It has been hard for me to commit to a retirement date because I love my job and career here at GCEC.

The thing I think I'm going to miss most is the people who make up the cooperative business model—from the national group, to the statewide group and our very own local co-op group. They are all good people. The co-op business model has proven to be the best for its members because it's a not-for-profit organization operating on behalf of its members.

Directors, managers, employees and members of Graham County Electric Cooperative and Graham County Utilities will come and go through the lifetime of this great organization, but the vision, concept and purpose will never change.

## Congratulations!

Graham County Fair drawing winners were Danny John, \$150, and Mark

Adamson, \$50. Thanks to all of the Graham County Electric members who entered.

