



Barr brings to a close his 43-year career at Southern Pine

Southern Pine Electric Power Association delivers electricity to members through some 10,000 miles of power line. Johnny Barr had a hand in the construction of most of those lines.

Barr, Southern Pine's construction superintendent, retires Sept. 16, bringing an end to a 43-year career distinguished by dedication, knowledge and integrity.

The Smith County resident spent about half his career working on a line crew. Southern Pine hired Barr in 1965 to work as a groundman. He was promoted to apprentice lineman before becoming a journeyman lineman. About 22 years ago, Barr was promoted to construction supervisor to oversee the work of a line crew: "We were the experimental crew that would put new ideas into effect," he explained.

Barr's crew was also responsible for major upgrades of existing power lines and related work at substations.

Barr was instrumental in restoring power to Southern Pine members affected by hurricanes Camille, Katrina "and a dozen more," he said. He and his co-workers hated to see storms tear up the lines they had so carefully built, but they got to work



Johnny Barr, Southern Pine construction supervisor, checks on his crew's progress at a new substation nearing completion in Jeff Davis County. The substation will serve the electrical needs of an underground salt-dome natural gas storage facility being developed by Mississippi Hub LLC.

rebuilding them as quickly as safe practices would allow.

Barr served about 25 years as an instructor at basic and advanced lineman training schools, sponsored by the Electric Power Associations of Mississippi. He estimates he taught basic skills and transformer banking procedures to more than 1,700 linemen from electric power associations throughout Mississippi.

"Johnny is well respected for his knowledge and was always willing to lend his expertise to the fellows who came through the school," said Stan Rucker, lineman school coordinator and vice president of Safety and Loss Control for the Electric Power Associations of Mississippi.

Barr's decision to retire was not an easy one. He feels a strong kinship with his crew, co-workers and employees of other electric power associations in Mississippi and other states with whom he has worked

through the years.

"People at co-ops are all the same: just good, honest people. It takes a special kind of person to do this type of work," he said.

Barr praised the devotion and skill his crew demonstrated daily on the job. "Can't" wasn't in our vocabulary. When we went to do a job, we did it."

A good lineman, he said, is one who could be sent to repair a problem with a line and "you have 100 percent confidence

he'll come back safe to his family—and the trouble will be fixed."

Barr and Carolyn, his wife of 45 years, have three children—Dana Vowell of Taylorsville, John Barr Jr. of Raleigh and Ben Barr of Raleigh—and five grandchildren, from 3 months to 16 years old.

In retirement, Barr plans to devote more time to vegetable gardening and crappie fishing. "The reservoir needs to see me three days a week," he said.

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—Johnny Barr

Graham ready for a fishing pole after 39 years on the job

Kenneth R. "Kenny" Graham will retire Sept. 17 after devoting 39 years to his work for Southern Pine.

Graham was laying bricks in 1969 for Southern Pine Electric Power Association's new engineering building when the association offered him a job. Graham eagerly signed on as a groundman for a line crew. Within three weeks, he was promoted to apprentice lineman.

Three months later, Hurricane Camille roared through Southern Pine's service area, smashing power lines in its way. Graham found himself in a trial by fire: the skills he was still learning as a new employee were put to test while helping co-workers restore power in the wake of a major natural disaster. But Camille wasn't enough to discourage Graham; he stuck with the job and continued to give it his all.

"It got in my blood and I enjoyed it," he said.

He was promoted nine years later to journeyman lineman, the job he held until 1990 when he became line foreman for the association's newly formed



Kenny Graham uses a laser rangefinder to record the position of utility poles. Graham, a retired National Guard sergeant first class, retires from Southern Pine this month as a staking technician.

Brandon district.

In 1998, he returned to Taylorsville to become a staking technician. His duties included marking routes for new or upgraded power lines, which would guide the crews building the lines, and writing specifications for electrical

equipment required for construction.

Graham also was involved in a major, long-term project to convert Southern Pine's distribution system from 15KV to 25KV to prepare for future growth in electrical demand.

Graham always enjoyed working out-

doors and the camaraderie he shared with his co-workers. Working in an industry that demands constant attention to safety precautions, Graham and his co-workers looked out for each other to ensure their safety.

He retired in 2006 from the Army National Guard as a sergeant first class. Graham was activated for work at Camp Shelby in both Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Graham will kick off his Southern Pine retirement with a trip with his wife, Teresa, to visit relatives in Oregon. He hopes to extend their journey into Washington and Canada. "We're not promised tomorrow, so I want to get out and see things," he said.

He's also an avid catfish and crappie fisherman who looks forward to teaching his two grandchildren to fish as soon as they're old enough to hold a pole.

The Grahams' daughter, Bridget Cahill, a nurse practitioner, lives with her husband, Army Capt. Michael Cahill, in Ellisville. The Grahams also had a son, Chad, who is deceased.

Area Events

New Hebron Pulpwood Festival

Sept. 6, New Hebron, Main Street

Registration for the antique car show at 8 a.m. kicks off this day of fun. Proceeds from the car show will go to the New Hebron Volunteer Fire Department. A flea market on Main Street opens at 9 a.m. Events to follow include children's games and activities, a health fair, quilt expo, music in the park, pulled pork lunch and supper, food vendors and rocking chair raffle. The Concert Under the Stars at 6 p.m. will feature the music of Ghost Town; admission is \$5. Details: (601) 694-2532; flea market: (601) 587-3007.

33rd Annual Crazy Day

Sept. 20, Magee, Downtown

This long-time favorite festival takes place from 7 a.m. until 4 p.m. in downtown Magee. Events and attractions will include a golf tournament (on Friday, Sept. 19), a mechanical bull, arts and crafts, games, train rides, pony rides, food, antique car show and beauty pageant. Entertainment will include gospel and country music, a talent show and karaoke. Details: (601) 849-2517.

Third Annual Polkville Day & Bluegrass at the Music Barn

Sept. 20, Polkville, Polkville Park and Music Barn

A day of fun and music begins at 9:30 a.m. in Polkville Park, beside the Polkville Library. A day of fun and music is

promised, featuring arts and crafts, antique tractor and car show, food, cake walk (2 p.m.), political speaking (noon), children's games, raffles, pony rides and the Bluegrass 5K Road Race (4 p.m.). Visitors can camp and jam at the Music Barn, where bluegrass, gospel and country music performances, featuring The Polkville City Limits Band, cranks up at 6:30 p.m. Details: (601) 537-3115; www.polkville.org.

Raleigh Heritage Festival

Sept. 27, Raleigh, Main Street

Raleigh celebrates from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. with arts and crafts, food, music, car/tractor/antique engine show and children's activities. A 5K run/walk and a 1-mile run/walk begin at 7:30 a.m. behind the Methodist church. Other attractions include a farmers market, Woman's Club exhibit of hand-made items and silent auction, and blacksmithing and corn grinding demonstrations. Details: (601) 782-9651.

Mississippi Women in Agriculture

Oct. 28-30, Hattiesburg, Forrest County Extension Building

This program is designed for women involved in farming with a desire to learn increase knowledge and skills in intensive seminars. Registration is limited and required for each seminar; deadline is Oct. 14. Get details at your local county extension office or from www.msucare.com/womeninag.

Powerful tips for paying your bill

- If you pay your Southern Pine bill in cash, please include your bill stub to ensure your account will be credited properly.
- If you do not have the bill stub or the account number, include the name as it appears on the account.
- If you use a night-deposit box at any Southern Pine office, please be sure to include your bill stub.
- If paying by money order, your name, address and account number should be printed plainly on the money order.

If the phone number or address is incorrect on your monthly bill, please notify your local Southern Pine office.

Visit us online at www.spepa.com

How to reach Southern Pine Electric Power Association

For quicker service when you call Southern Pine to report a power outage or just to check on your bill, call the district office that serves you and have your account number ready. Use the phone numbers below or look for the number of your district office on your Southern Pine bill.

District Offices

- Taylorsville: (601) 785-6511 or 800-231-5240;
- Hattiesburg branch: (601) 264-0185
- Newton: (601) 683-2200 or 800-698-9573
- New Hebron: (601) 694-2711 or 800-698-9571
- Brandon: (601) 824-7070 or 800-698-9574

Visit your electric cooperative online at www.spepa.com