

After 30 Years , Lineman Is Ready For a Little Time Off

By Lori K. Froeblich

After 30 years of service to Klickitat PUD, Mike Lutz's last day of work was May 6.

His retirement affects his fellow employees, the White Salmon community and all of Klickitat County who have benefited from his hard work, experience and knowledge through the years.

"It took me about a year to figure out that Mike's gruff manner was just a big cover-up," says Wanita Gordon, the customer service representative for the White Salmon office. "We had many good conversations about books, politics and especially grandchildren. I miss him already."

After graduating from White Salmon High School in 1965, Mike was drafted into the Army for two years. He was wounded in Vietnam.

When Mike returned, he obtained seasonal employment with Klickitat PUD as a groundman. He worked three summers with the PUD before being accepted into an apprenticeship with the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee.

Three years of school followed, while continuing to work full time. During these years, Mike obtained his basic transmission knowledge in Idaho, underground distribution experience in Salem, Oregon, and overhead distribution knowledge working three years in Portland.

A total of 7,000 hours in the apprenticeship program were logged. He passed his journeyman examination in February 1976.

Mike then moved to Alaska and



Longtime Klickitat PUD lineman Mike Lutz retired in May.

worked for three years in all phases of distribution, from Juneau to the North Slope.

In his Klickitat PUD application, Mike stated, "I have worked in Oregon, Idaho, Washington and Alaska which has given me a lot of variety and changes which I have had to cope with. This has made me a better lineman, and I know that your system here in Klickitat County will not pose any problems I cannot handle."

Mike has proven this statement to be true throughout his career.

Mike began his career at the PUD in October 1978. He was hired as a lineman in the White Salmon office and worked for Foreman Al Sanders, his fellow lineman and mentor Shadow Gruen.

The hourly rate for a journeyman lineman in 1978 was \$10.47 an hour.

After nine years, on January 12, 1987, Mike became the White Salmon line crew foreman.



Through the years there were numerous members of the community thanked Mike for his hard work, his professional manner and his willingness to serve his community.

He also served as shop steward on behalf of IBEW Local No. 125 for the White Salmon office for a number of years.

"If you did not know Mike personally, his demeanor at times might seem like a hibernating bear, but when you really got to know him, his personality was really as soft as silk," says Julius Robison, who was hired in 1986 and worked under Mike as a groundman in the White Salmon office.

During a 10-year span, it was calculated that Mike worked 2,694 hours of overtime. It is estimated that as White Salmon crew foreman, Mike and his crew installed an average of a half-mile of overhead primary line and 5¾ miles of

underground primary line each year. About 180 new installations were completed per year, in addition to 50 services being removed.

In December 2003, Ron Schultz became the White Salmon branch manager. He interacted with Mike on a daily basis and gradually formed a friendship with him.

“Growing up in White Salmon, I always knew who Mike Lutz was,” says Ron. “Occasionally, through my job, I had the opportunity to watch Mike at work and get to know him a little. Once I gained Mike’s trust, he gradually let me into his world, and he took me under his wing. A *big* wing.”

“Mike spent a lot of time with me studying system maps, showing me where things were, and giving a history lesson along the way. It seems he knew everyone who had ever lived in a residence or on a property.”

And everyone knew Mike.

“One thing I learned was that under that gruff exterior there is a kind and gentle soul.” says Ron. “Mike and I soon shared something in common, being a grandparent. Mike is proud and passionate about his children and grandchildren.”

“I always knew that someday he would retire and things would be different. On his last day at work, I stayed in the White Salmon office to tell him goodbye and wish him luck.”

“As I shook his hand that last time, I couldn’t help but to feel a tear in my eye and hope he didn’t see it, but I know he did.”

“So to Mike, goodbye, my friend, and I wish you happiness and prosperity in your retirement.” ■

Mike plans on never again missing an opening day of hunting season due to work, and will be spending his free time with his two grandchildren, teaching them about the great outdoors.

KPUD Employees Have New Jobs

Klickitat PUD has had several recent position changes and new employees joining the ranks.

Julius Robison (JR) was selected as senior storekeeper/material person in April. JR previously was the storekeeper and is enthused about moving forward in his career and getting the chance to work with Bill Rogers, who was chosen to fill the storekeeper position in May.

Bill has been a meter reader for 10 years and is ready for the new challenges his job will bring.

In May, Kip Graves filled the position of White Salmon crew foreman that opened up when Mike Lutz retired.

Additionally, in May, Rob Rising filled Kip’s position of construction crew foreman. Both Kip and Rob realize how much responsibility goes along with being in the foreman position, and both are equipped with the necessary skills of a leader.

Darren Shattuck is now a journeyman wireman and will be working out of the meter shop.

John Tallman is now the ground-



JR Robison



Bill Rogers



Kip Graves



Rob Rising



Darren Shattuck



John Tallman

man for the Goldendale crew, which Darren previously occupied. John had worked on the tree crew and is excited to be learning a new trade. ■

New Face in the Water/Wastewater Department

Klickitat PUD welcomes Greg Watson as its newest water/wastewater operator.

Greg moved from Aumsville, Oregon, to Goldendale in 2001 with his wife, Michelle, to work for the city of Goldendale.

Greg gained his initial experience and skills while employed at the city of Salem. While in Goldendale, Greg also has worked for the Washington State



Greg Watson

Department of Transportation.

Greg enjoys spending time with his wife and two daughters, Tiana, 5 and Kali, 3.

Some of his favorite hobbies include hunting, fishing and spending time outdoors.

During the summer, you will most likely find Greg outside, barbecuing for his friends and family.

Greg looks forward to using his water/wastewater training again, as well as learning new skills. He is excited to have the opportunity to work with the PUD crew in Goldendale. ■