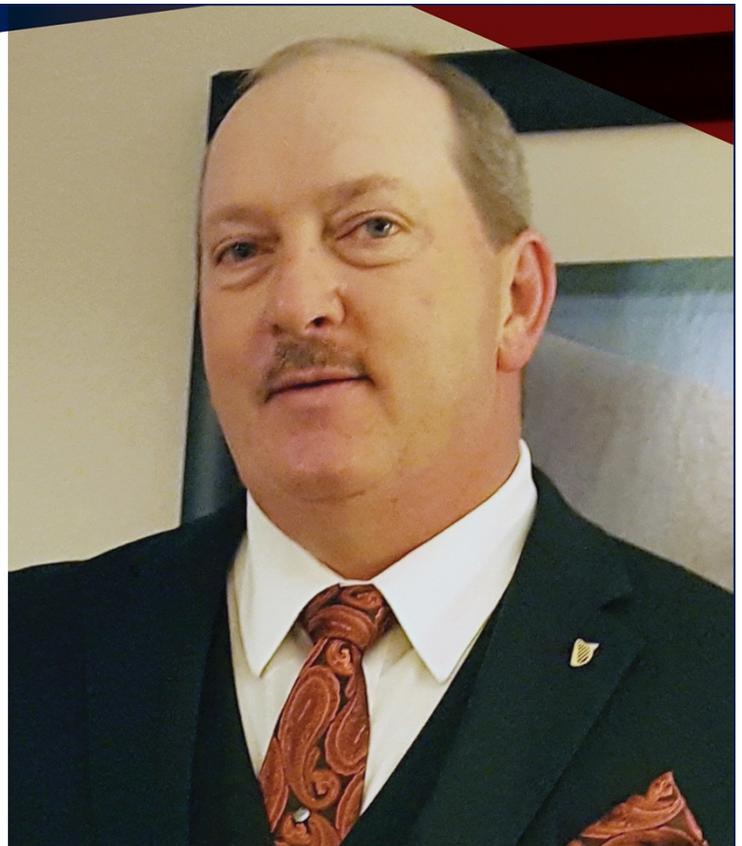


## Member Spotlight: Gene Howard

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“Gene came to us after an evaluation where he missed only two questions out of 100. He’s a very knowledgeable man and a great leader on and off the jobsite.”

– *Keith Branham, business agent, Local 1421*



After spending more than three decades as an ironworker, Gene Howard, now 51, became a union millwright two years ago.

Howard said he likes challenging himself, and the variety of work millwrights engage in appeals to him. “There are so many trades millwrights enter into, going from turbines and nuclear power plants to conveyor systems to automobile plants,” he said. “It’s an ongoing growing process of producing the best specialists in the world to hit all these different varieties of trades.”

Howard is currently a millwright foreman at the UPS Lonestar Facility in Arlington, Texas.

Read more about Howard in the conversation below.

#### **Q: What got you interested in this career?**

**A:** My son has been in for going on three years now. He started out as a second-level apprentice. He's moving up the chain and I've been building racecar engines and race boat engines and I have a mechanical background. I've worked in all kinds of car plants and machinery plants all over the United States. And it's just something I like doing. I like working with my hands. I like building things. I like making things operate.

There's way less variety of work out there for ironworkers. I mean other than building and bridging and rebar for concrete. As a millwright, you're getting to build machines. You can tear them down and rebuild them or put them in new. That aspect is just phenomenal.

**Q: I understand working with apprentices is important to you. Could you tell us more about that?**

**A:** When the union or the hall sends apprentices out, as journeyman we should all treat them like they've never been in this situation before. You try to weed out the bad habits and insert the extremely good habits, the safe habits, the proper habits, and help in the field by giving these apprentices hands-on training. Because everybody is different, you have to come up with different ways to get a point across to younger apprentices who have never walked into a job like they're in right now. And it's up to the older generations to really take that deep breath and have the patience to try to teach the proper methods.

**Q: Is there any kind of millwright work you are particularly drawn to?**

**A:** I like to be able to look back at the end of the day and see something that has been put together and works properly, the way it should. That's where the joy comes from – getting to work with my hands, getting to work with different varieties of tools, solving unforeseen problems that arise, getting to teach other people things that are dying trades, and keeping it going because the apprentices are our futures.

**Q: What types of facilities have you worked in as a millwright and where?**

**A:** I have worked in oil refineries and gas refineries and on turbines. My son, Chris Cantrell, and I are on a very large-scale conveyor job now. All my work so far has strictly been out of Local 1421 here in the state of Texas.

Since I came in, my son and I have worked on every job together. There are things he's been to school on and there's things I've been to school on, and none of it's been the same, so it's been a helpful situation both ways.

**Q: How do you feel about your current work at the UPS Arlington facility?**

**A:** I would say working there during these trying times of COVID-19 has poured blessings upon blessings for not only me and my family, but for other families also. We've kept our families fed, we've kept them safe.

**Q: What are your hopes and goals for your career as a millwright?**

**A:** Going into a nuclear project is one of my big dreams. I had a brother who was in the military and he worked nuclear in the military. I'd like to see some of the things he's seen and work on some of the things he might have worked on.

Someday I'd like to be able to help train new and upcoming apprentices or help refresh the journeymen in different classifications. I'd even possibly like being able to become the next business agent of our local if Keith gets to step on up.