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'Dirty Jobs' meets Southern Corrosion

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Host Mike Rowe, center, sat with crew members of Southern Corrosion Inc.

Submitted photo

Local company Southern Corrosion Inc. was recently featured in the television series "Dirty Jobs."

The show, hosted by Mike Rowe, is famously known for documenting dangerous and dirty jobs around the nation that require people with nerves of steel to complete such daunting tasks.

That is when production reached out to Southern Corrosion, a Roanoke Rapids-based company that cleans and inspects water tanks and towers.

Owning 50% partnership and president of the company Jim Skilton and his wife, Director of Marketing and Human Resources Lynne Skilton, said a producer contacted them in March of last year about reviving a television show. They said the producers gave a geographical filming of a tugboat series in Mobile, Alabama, and asked if they had anything an hour and a half from there to work with.

"We have close to 300 contracts with different entities to maintain your water tank," Jim said. "So we look down our list to see what customers we may have had near there. That was requiring, you know, scheduling of some work."

That's where they found that the City of Magee in Mississippi was due for a wash out.

"It all happened very, very quickly," Lynne said. "I'd say all within a month of them contacting us to the actual filming. I believe we filmed it the Thursday before Easter in 2021."

Jim and Lynne said the crew that went to the location are from Roanoke Rapids, who were doing some work in the panhandle of Florida at the time.

"And so we kind of moved them over there," Jim said. "It really wasn't how we normally would have done things, but to accommodate their schedule, we did it the way we did it."

Lynne said it was a great honor for their company to be a part of the Dirty Jobs series.

"I had someone this morning actually email me about getting a price because they saw us on Dirty Jobs," she said. "So I think it's a good marketing avenue for us."

Jim agreed and said it helped put their name out in front of a lot of people.

"You get a lot of name recognition, and I guess some type of credibility where they chose our firm over and above, you know, our competitors," he said. "So it gives you a little bit more clout when talking to prospective customers."

The episode aired on Jan. 16, but Rowe left a heartfelt tribute to one of the crew members from Southern Corrosion involved with the episode.

On social media, Rowe offered his condolences to the family and co-workers of George Brooks Jr., who died in September, two months after filming the segment. Rowe said over the years of being welcomed by many throughout the Dirty Jobs show, he has never before worked with someone who died before their episode aired, which he said after watching left him with a "unique mix of gratitude and sadness. Grateful for the chance to meet and work with a man like George, and sad that he didn't get to see the finished product. I think he would have liked it."

Lynne said it was amazing what Rowe said about Brooks.

"It's like he said in there, that he had only met George for a day," she said. "But it just seemed like they had a connection because everything he said about George just seemed like he had known him for a very long time, because George just had this quirky sense of humor where it was just very dry, but it was very funny, and Mike definitely got George's sense of humor that day."

Jim said, "He was able to recall all those details. And it really hit his character on the mark, which is surprising for so little interaction with him."

Lynne and Jim said their company does more than just wash out tanks. It also focuses on maintenance contracts with municipalities where water towers are inspected regularly, repainted, and other services.

"Washing the tank out on one end is one of the quickest things we can do, and it is probably the safest thing I think," Jim said. "So it kind of worked for the show. But it's a very small part of what we do."