Operations Manager Kevin Griffin survives early morning shooting

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Kevin Griffin had a million things going through his mind when he walked into the Citgo gas station in James Mill at 3:30 a.m. on December 31 last year. The operations manager at the nearby terminal in Osceola, Arkansas, was up against a tough deadline to get 13 barges unloaded in a short amount of time and he was determined to meet that goal. Kevin was debating what type of soda he should get when he heard the front door of the store open and then saw a man with a ski mask jump over the front counter. Kevin turned in the other direction and saw another man in a ski mask who was holding a gun turn down the aisle towards him.

“I took off for the front door as fast as I could,” said Kevin.

The clerk, who had been making sandwiches in the back of the store at the time, ran in the opposite direction and locked himself in the ladies’ restroom/shower.

Kevin was chased by one of the gunmen and was shot three times in his lower body as he was running for the door. The other robber proceeded to empty the cash register as Kevin and his assailant fought outside the store.

“I told him I had a baby on the way, and I wasn’t going to die,” said Kevin.

Kevin managed to overpower the robber he was fighting with and pull his mask off. He had maneuvered the gun under the robber’s chin, but he was unable to pull the trigger because the robber’s finger was under it. Kevin and the robber both made it to their feet with Kevin in the process of overtaking the man when his partner came out of the store and Kevin’s assailant hollowed at his partner to shoot Kevin.

“I heard him yell, ‘shoot him, shoot him,’ and then heard the gun fire,” said Kevin.

The man fired his weapon several times and Kevin fell to the ground. The robber then took Kevin’s wallet, company cell phone, and keys. The two men drove off and Kevin crawled back into the store to call for help.

“I army crawled in there, but I just didn’t have anything left in me to reach the landline on the wall to call for help,” he said. “The clerk came out at that time and called 9-1-1.”

Kevin said, “I really wasn’t too freaked out until I was on the gurney in the ambulance and the attendant asked if I’d been shot in the head because I was bleeding. It turned out that it was from getting hit in the head with the gun while we were fighting.”

The doctors told Kevin he had been shot six times, with five in and out and one that is still lodged in his thigh. Kevin was lucky in that all the bullets had just barely missed hitting any bones or major arteries. However, one bullet missed the femoral artery by a mere inch. If it would have hit that artery, the doctor said he would have bled to death by the time the ambulance arrived. At 6 p.m. that night they told Kevin he couldn’t go home until he was able to walk using a walker. By 8 p.m. that same evening, Kevin was on his way home.

While the robbery was going down that morning, Chris Maxwell, Watco’s vice president of operations, was at hotel just a mile down the road from the convenience store.

“It wasn’t until Kevin’s wife, Meredith, called me that I knew what had happened and why I heard all the sirens,” said Chris. “She had told me over the phone that he was in stable condition, so I was reassured by that. Of course, being Kevin, he was all worried about the barges and making sure we got them unloaded in time.”

After checking on Kevin, Chris went to the convenience store to pick up Kevin’s truck. The clerks who were working the day shift said that Kevin saved the other clerk by fighting so hard and distracting the robbers. The clerk who was in the store working during the robbery quit immediately after the incident.

Following the robbery, the two men ended up at a Walmart and tried using Kevin’s card to purchase a $600 XBOX. That charge was denied, so they attempted to purchase two other items before giving up and going to a kiosk to sell Kevin’s phone.

“To be able to sell your phone, you have to give them a driver’s license,” said Kevin.

“Guess who’s license they used,” he chuckled, “not the one they stole from me. One of the robbers used his own.”

Although it could’ve ended very badly, all’s well that ends well. The two robbers, Roy Pickens, 25 and Vince Smith, 30, were caught in Kansas City, Kansas, and are being extradited to Ark.

“I think they’ll be charged with aggravated robbery, which is a felony,” said Griffin.

The Osceola Terminal Team not only managed to meet their deadline, they beat it with seven hours to spare. And Kevin? He is slowly getting back to work and undergoing physical therapy while he waits for the birth of his daughter, Olivia Rose, in July.
Watco’s Gary Vaughn retires from a safer place  

by Tracie VanBeeuwsen  
Managing Editor

In 2003 Watco was operating seven short lines and had a safety record that needed some work. Enter Gary Vaughn.

Just one short year after Gary joined the Watco Team to direct the safety efforts, there was a 300% improvement in recordable personal injuries. That record continued to improve year over year for the next 12 years as Gary led the safety performance to new levels.

"Performing at a safe level is important for many reasons, we would never have had the opportunity to grow if we weren’t safe. That’s one thing that is important to all of our Customers and they needed to see that it was a priority to us as well."

"The first thing I did was divide the railroads into regions and then I assigned someone to each area to educate the team members on safety practices," said Gary. "We had to make sure we were compliant with all the rules and regulations that had been put in place for the short lines, and there are many."

Those rules and regulations became Gary’s focus later in his career as he served on many industry committees that honed in on how increased regulations impacted short line railroads. Gary took on a consulting role at Watco in 2015 in order to use his safety expertise to advocate for short line railroads. Not only did Gary belong to many advisory committees and working groups, he has spoken before Congress several times regarding safety in the rail industry.

"Those making the rules don’t always take into consideration the difference in railroads between the Class I’s, regional railroads, and short lines," Gary stated. "Resources such as manpower and revenue are so different and implementation of some regulations could be devastating to a short line financially."

In 2011, Gary was the first recipient of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad (ASLRRA) Safety Professional of the Year Award. The award recognizes an individual in the industry who has gone above and beyond to make their railroad and the industry as a whole a safer place.

One of Vaughn’s biggest proponents is Travis Herod, who took over Vaughn’s role as senior vice president of safety and training when Vaughn moved into the consulting role.

He said, “Over his very illustrious career, Gary has so many industry firsts and accomplishments that it’s hard to even put them in perspective. He came along during a time of true industry transition, and his leadership both in operations and safety certainly leaves us in a better place than when he came into it!”

Herod added, "Interestingly enough, at his retirement celebration at his last ASLRRA Safety and Training Committee meeting, when his colleagues recognized him, they didn’t talk about his being the first short line representative to chair the General Code committee. They didn’t talk about him being recognized as the first recipient of the Safety Professional of the Year Award. They didn’t even talk about the part he played in revolutionizing how short line railroads train, or manage safety. Instead, they each talked about how he had a personal impact, by being there for the birth of their child or the passing of a spouse or parent. For being there when someone needed career advice, or personal support. And I think that says a lot about the character of Gary. He certainly impacted the industry in its entirety. But he never let that get in the way of impacting individuals in a positive way. I’m proud to have learned from him, and his example, and to be sure, his retirement is going to touch us all. He leaves a legacy of excellence, and one Watco is proud to recognize."  

Gary felt that personal aspect of the business was important. He said, “You have to look at your team and co-workers as your own family. If you do that then you’ll treat them differently,” said Vaughn. "You end up spending the same amount of time, if not more, with them as you do with your family so why would you not treat them as such?"

The Safety Team presented Gary with an engraved Henry Railroad Edition Tribute Rifle to mark the occasion.

"After over 47 years of shooting the industry straight, we felt we wanted to commemorate Gary’s retirement with something truly special," said Herod. "Besides, having moved into his retirement home in the county, he has a squirrel problem he needs to deal with, and we’re happy to help him with that too!"

ASLRRA SVP for Safety and Regulatory Policy Jo Strand has had the opportunity to work with Gary on many different projects and committees. She said, "What a great loss to our industry. Gary brought an irreplaceable depth of knowledge in his leadership of the Safety and Training Committee. There is not a more beloved and respected person in the safety community."

Keith Borman, ASLRRA SVP and General Counsel, has worked with Gary for almost 20 years and considers Gary to be a very close friend.

"What is striking about Gary is the authentic humanity of the man," said Borman. "He treats his colleagues just as I have seen him treat his family, with deep care and disregard of self. In return, his colleagues and friends love him like a family member. While we playfully nickname him “Grumpy” as a reflection of his sometimes august demeanor, in fact, his actions are just the opposite. He demonstrates that the real joy of life is in quietly giving yourself to help others. He will always be my role model for a life well lived.”

In his retirement, Gary now is looking at safety in a different venue, his home workshop. Three and a half years ago, Gary and his wife Monica built a house in the country and one feature Gary required was a shop where he could retreat to and use his creative skills to build and design items made of wood. His skills are self-taught and Gary jokes that the building is heated only by a wood burning stove that is fueled by his mistakes. He laughed as he said it has gotten quite warm in there at times.
KNWA EXPANDS SERVICE IN WEST VIRGINIA

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Kanawha River Railroad Team has experience loading coal trains and they are putting that expertise to use on another railroad near Charleston, West Virginia. The KNWA recently signed a contract to take over the loading of coal cars on the former Winifrede Railroad, now known as the Big Eagle Railroad. The team began loading railcars the last weekend of January.

The Winifrede Railroad was incorporated in 1881 and is one of West Virginia’s oldest railroads. The line is approximately 7.5 miles long and was originally built to haul coal. It has carried this commodity ever since.

KNWA General Manager Derrick Jackson sent a crew over mid-January on a reconnaissance mission to determine how best to serve their newest Customer.

Jackson said, “We were proactive in our approach and sent a crew over to familiarize themselves with the operation and devise a plan to provide services to them.”

The team will load approximately 3-5 coal trains per month at the Kanawha Eagle Coal Mine owned by Blackhawk Mining. The CSX brings in the empty cars and sets them on the company’s siding and then the KNWA Team will go in and take cuts of 25 and load the cars and bring them back to the siding. Once all of the cars are loaded, the CSX will go back and get the train and deliver them to their destination.

“We’re going to experiment a little to see what works best and provides the most efficient and cost effective service to our Customer,” said Jackson.

The branch line interchanges with CSX Transportation’s former Chesapeake & Ohio mainline near Chesapeake, W.Va., southeast of Charleston. The line is located across the Kanawha River from the KNWA’s main line.

Pacific Sun meets 2018 requirement for PTC Compliance

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

This past holiday season had a few challenges in store for some of our Watco Team Members. The Pacific Sun Railroad (PSRR) had already met the 2018 PTC (Positive Train Control) deadline for equipment installations. While all other Watco Host Railroads had received extensions to complete interoperability testing by 2020, the North County Transit District decided not to file for the extension. This meant all testing and qualifications had to be complete by the end of 2018 for the PSRR.

The team working on the PTC project put everything into high gear.

“We had a long road ahead of us and a short time to get there,” said Derek Prestholt, project manager.

Normally the testing will take more than eight weeks to complete, but the team working on the project worked day and night, weekends and holidays to get it done.

“It was down to the wire, we were having calls and working on it Christmas Day,” said Prestholt.

There were two locomotive types that had to be tested and the group set a goal to get one type completed by 2018 so that it could be out providing service to Customers while the team completed the testing on the other locomotive type.

“With the hard work from of our team and HTI, we got our GP40’s qualified right before Christmas and completed the GP35 testing the following week,” said Prestholt.

“Herzog Technologies was a big help in getting the implementation finished on time. Their group assisted with the testing and documentation of the project,” Prestholt said. “Without their expertise, we wouldn’t have made it.”

One down, and only eight more to go.

All Aboard Foundation provides scholarship opportunities

The All Aboard Foundation is pleased to announce its Scholarship Program is now open for applications. The scholarship will be available to dependents of Watco Companies’ Team Members. The recipient must be in good academic standing and plan to attend a post-secondary institution within one year following high school graduation.

Scholarships will be awarded in the amount of $500 each and will be issued in two $250 disbursements for the first two semesters of college and will be credited to the recipients account at the financial aid office of the college of their choosing. The number of scholarships awarded will be determined by the number of applicants with a minimum of two awarded per year.

Applications are available at http://allaboardfoundation.com/scholarships/. Please submit your application to info@allaboardfoundation.com or mail it to:

All Aboard Foundation
315 West 3rd Street
Pittsburg, KS 66762

Applications need to be submitted no later than March 30, 2019.

A committee will review all applications and the winner(s) will be notified and announced in the June issue of The Dispatch.

The All Aboard Foundation was established to provide funding for a better quality of life in the communities in which Watco serves.

The Kanawha River Railroad is expanding its presence in West Virginia with the operations of the coal loading on the Winifrede Railroad.

Watco’s Pacific Sun Railroad has met Positive Train Control (PTC) requirements and now operates jointly with passenger rail providers Amtrak, Metrolink, and Coaster.
Plaster City added to Watco map

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

A new switching location was just added to the Watco map, making a total of 33 switching operations that Watco serves throughout the U.S. This pinpoint gets dropped on Plaster City, California, the home of one of many United States Gypsum (USG) Corporation manufacturing plants.

The Plaster City location makes sheetrock gypsum panels from gypsum mined from a quarry 17 miles from the facility. Interestingly, the gypsum is hauled from the mines to the plant via the last industrial narrow gauge railway in the U.S. The 3 ft. gauge line was originally built by the Imperial Gypsum Company Railroad in 1922.

The official start up was January 1 but the Watco Switching Team began operations on the second day of the month. The team consists of Tyler Pruitt, who is the location supervisor and responsible for training at the location. Alexander Rodriguez, USG crew leader, Matthew Camacho, Pablo Cota, and Carlos Lopez round out the list of team members serving the location.

The Union Pacific drops off cars of paper and starch at the plant and the switching team spots the cars for USG to unload. The team also spots centerbeam cars and then loads, wraps, and secures outbound cars. They also bring additional products into the facility and unload them and put them on trucks. They have a shuttle wagon and two locomotives assigned to the facility.

The shuttle wagon was brought in just to ensure equipment would be available while the other units, WAMX 1528 and NREX 1388, were en route to the site.

The team is responsible for loading 1-2 cars a day and will be working five days a week. They got off to a quick start though and had 16 cars that they had to load up right off the bat.

James Moore serves as the general manager of the Pacific Sun Railroad which is also in Southern California and he is overseeing the operations at the facility.

Moore said, “People that we have hired here are the same that we hire across the railroads - we are the guys and get to see the inside of the locomotive.”

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James Moore serves as the general manager of the Pacific Sun Railroad which is also in Southern California and he is overseeing the operations at the facility.
It is exciting to be a part of helping team members all across Watco find learning and development opportunities that will help them grow in their role,” said Kelli.

Her first introduction to Watco was through her husband Ryan. He joined the Supply Chain Services Team in June 2017 as an account manager, and started to learn about the company.

“Ryan started telling me about Watco, and as I became more familiar with it, I was intrigued by the Watco culture of strong family values and teamwork,” Kelli said.

A few months later, when Watco U was looking to expand the team, Kelli came on board and started working in the Overland Park, Kansas, office where she and Ryan were both based. Expanding the scale at which she could help support development and Watco U Online were major draws to Watco.

“Online training in all industries and the Watco U Online Program is rapidly growing—just like Watco as a whole. Using the Watco U Online platform delivers that learning to team members in a way that allows flexibility,” Kelli said.

Since joining Watco, Watco U Online’s catalog of courses has been bolstered, and her presence has helped Hatcher and Farris lead more face-to-face classes at Watco locations across the country. That intrigue she felt when Ryan described the company to her hasn’t faded either.

“The Watco culture—it’s amazing to me that even though team members are spread out all across the world essentially there is a unifying mindset and feel that we really are all on the same team. You can visit any Watco property at any time and you know you will find hard working, good people that share in the Watco vision and Customer First Foundation Principles,” Kelli said.

With both Kelli and Ryan being team members, Watco truly is a family affair, and they made the decision last year to move back to Southeast Kansas. Both had the opportunity to move to the Pittsburg office. So, they, and their sons, Luke (11) and Alex (4), were able to move back closer to family. Ryan will soon be leaving the Pittsburg office to join the recently established SCS office in Joplin.
Ann Arbor de-ices derailment

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

The wintery weather can not only cause all kinds of issues for our teams out in the field, it also hits our Customers just as hard.

In late January, the Ann Arbor Railroad (AA) received a call from one of their Customers regarding a private industry railcar derailment. While shoving a railcar on their property with a private track mobile, the car hit an icy drift and derailed.

The plant manager, who is new to the rail business, was looking for advice on how to re-rail the railcar in a timely matter in order to continue their operations.

The Dispatch

Ann Arbor Railroad Team Members who helped a Customer with some winter weather issues are (l-r): Matthew Adams, Chris Hayes, Art Perez Jr. and Jeff Adams.

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The plant manager, who is new to the rail business, was looking for advice on how to re-rail the railcar in a timely matter in order to continue their operations.

AA Track Inspector Art Perez Jr. was immediately dispatched to the scene in order to assess the situation. He called out the Locomotive Team, led by Jeff Adams and his crew, Chris Hayes and Matthew Adams, who volunteered to help the Customer safely re-rail the railcar.

They had the Customer back in business within a few short hours, saving the Customer from having to spend thousands in contractor labor and down time. Perez was able to take some extra time with the Customer coaching and teaching them how to keep their private rail safe while experiencing adverse winter weather conditions.

AA General Manager John Vance said, “This has been a great example of the Customer First Foundation Principals at work by our very important team members.”

Then, the Customers tried to re-rail the railcar on their own.

In a press release announcing the bill, Crapo stated, “Our agriculture communities rely on small business freight railroads to connect their products to markets across the nation and around the globe. These are crucial economic corridors that serve our communities across the nation. This measure will allow short line railroads to make long-term plans for infrastructure repairs and upgrades, improving the link between our rural communities and the national freight railroad network.”

Wyden added, "Short line and regional railroads provide an essential economic link for small manufacturers and communities in Oregon and across the nation. This legislation will make sure these railroads have the certainty they need to keep every mile of their tracks up and running as they move goods made and grown in our state to factories, grain elevators, mills, and other parts of our economy.”

Crapo and Wyden’s legislation would make permanent a tax provision used to repair and upgrade short line railroads, which are defined by the Surface Transportation Board as railroads that generate between $36 and $458 million annually that move largely agricultural and manufacturing freight.

In Idaho, this type of tax credit, secured previously by Crapo in other legislation, is credited in part for a rail expansion project that has benefited communities across Idaho being served by short line railroad. These communities include Idaho Falls, Burley, Twin Falls, Boise, Cottonwood, St. Maries, Bovill, Spalding, Harald, Moscow, and Lewiston. Making this tax credit permanent would allow communities to repair, maintain, and upgrade additional short line railroads nationwide.

Watco’s Laura McNichol said, “On behalf of our short lines railroads in Idaho and Oregon, as well as the over 600 short lines across the country – we thank Senator Crapo and Senator Wyden for their past and continued leadership in helping the communities we serve – most of them rural – stay connected to the national freight network. The 45G short line tax credit remains instrumental in allowing us to more safely and efficiently serve our Customers by driving greater investment into our railroads.”

Senator Jerry Moran, Kansas, supports the bill and stated, “The BRACE Act would make certain that short line railroads and the communities who depend on them can stay up-to-date on critical maintenance and track improvements. This bipartisan legislation would mark significant progress as we work to make critical, much-needed investments in our nation’s transportation infrastructure.”

Since 2006, Congress has acted periodically to extend the credit, often retroactively. This uncertainty causes private investment in short line rail to decline, reduces safety and customer service, and provides uncertainty to businesses, farmers, and employers that cannot be globally competitive without freight rail.

In addition to making this tax credit permanent, Crapo and Wyden’s BRACE Act would provide a safe harbor to allow credits to retroactively be allocated to investments made in 2018, as the credit was last extended only through December 31, 2017.

Crapo and Wyden’s bill enjoys bipartisan support from senators Blumenthal (D-CT), Casey (D-PA), Inhofe (R-OK), Isakson (R-GA), Moran (R-KS), Roberts (R-KS), Schumer (D-NY), Stabenow (D-MI), Thune (R-SD), and Wicker (R-MS).
Congratulations to the following Team Members celebrating anniversaries this month.

1 Year: Nathan Beecher, Robert Birch, Travis Brant, Paige Bryant, Lisa Cardenas, Steven Cinko, James Clyde, Shannon Colon, Jason Currence, Joseph Daniels, Audley Elder, Manuela Enriquez, Brandon Fitch, Travis Ford, Rodney Foster, Eric Franco-Velez, Rhett Frydenlund, Yimin Garcia Hernandez, Tony Tyler, Garner Gilley, Daniel Good, Adam Gray, Marshall Herbst, Ashley Hood, Quinten Hoyle, Steve Janak Jr., Jaycee Johnston, Brian Kelley, Peyton King, Charles Lundy, Matthew Machell, Dorian McCorkle, Mary McDuffie, Kerry Morgan, Kenneth Morrow, Marcus Nixon, Johnny Ortegon, Nathanael Riddle, Daniel Roberson, Jacob Roll, Joseph Sarwinski, Jeremy Schwarzhuber, Lucas Smith, Gabriel Spencer, Clarence Swann, David Thurman, Jenile Tolley, Brandon Tyler, Mariano Uribe, Jennifer Vasquez, Kristiana Walker, Alyssa Wesemann-Bartels, Stefan Whiteseler, Justin Wilkins, Douglas Williams, Kathryn Williams, Dexter Wilson, Jose Zarazua

2 Years: Rockwell Aiken, Almanor Barrera, William Bailey, Connor Barton, David Blanchard, Tina Dowty, Andrew Ermier, Fernando Fuentes, Ramon Garcia, Samuel Herrera, Curtis Holbrook, Jerry Jones, Luis Leonard, Shawn Lindquist, Reynaldo Lobo Guardado, Kenneth McKenzie, Gunnar Miesner, Rose Oljace, John Raccasi, Steven Rolland, Michael Samples, Frederick Sanchez, Brent Sheldos, Heath Spence, Sean Strong, Jennifer Thayn, Draper Thomas, Brady Trappe, Teresa Villareal, Joseph Wendt, Dustin Wybrant

3 Years: Armando Albor Ledesma, Christopher Bollin, Phillip Borresen, Tyler Burke, Kevin Byrd, Charlie Carr, Benjamin Cox, John Cuevas, Daniel Czar, Juan DelaCerda, Jarmain Drake, Andrew Floyed, Michael Gomez, Anthony Goffiantini, Mark Gynes, Danilo Herrera, Daniel Lemon, Perry Lunsford, Bernardo Marianas III, Shane Morris, Dustin Scrivner, Joshua Sheets, Caroline Spurrier, John Weber

4 Years: Kevin Abbott, Derek Anderson, Bradley Bridges, Jacob Culp, Travis George, Gregory Gil-Ieland, Nelson Guardado, Joshua Hawkins, Molly Henneke, Trevor Jones, Steven Kimball, Christopher King, Christopher Klevenburg, Shawn Miller, Eliel Morales, Jason Prain, Edwin Rial, Kevin Seeley, Jonathon Trusler, Sandra Williamson, Gary Wilson

5 Years: Pedro Armandariz, Michael Chew, Patrick Flower, John Foster, Jesse Hatch, Sean Hayden, Jayson Keith, Chris King, Evan Klaveemann, Jeffrey Lien, Gregory Lockhart, Jeannette Middleton, Dee Mitchell, Cory Montoya, Odea Nowden, Zachary Overstreet, Juan Solis, Charles Trapp, Tana Wagoner, Mark Wottowa

6 Years: Steven Coltrin, Steve Coomes, Seth Creason, Michael DeLaneay, Travis Gathagan, Dylan Hoggle, Reed Kunnanz, Michael McMillan, Jeffrey Nugent, Derek Presthoff, Laura Schmidt, Gregory Sherman, Mike Shoemaker, Misaaz Vazquez, Melissa Winebrenner

7 Years: David Abbey, Michael Brinkerhoff, Kristina Brown, Kyle Curry, Drake Ferguson, Erin Flocchini, Antonio Green, Martin Mandujano, Jacinto Mendez, Matthew Morrison, Sabrina Mounts, Cristobal Nunez, Drew Otto, Stephanie Rich, April Rose, Chad Shaffer, Timothy Sharratt, Matt Spade, Tyler Stapleton, Jeffery Summers, Chris Wright

8 Years: Homero Aguilar, Keith Cameron, Kevin Dean, Charley Dohle, Ethen Green, Josh Gwylim, Sean Jamerson, Christopher Miller, Raymond Moore, Scott Reeves, Michael Schaffer, Joshua Smiley, Joseph Smith, Danny Spangler, William Watts, Willis Whitaker

9 Years: Freeman Harrison, Robert Johnson, Jose Reyes, Dusty Young

10 Years: Lawrence Fix, Mark Leicht, Johnny Lima, Veronica Martinez, Roy Morris, Ronald Whitewater

11 Years: Ben Coward, Brian Ezell, Ty Furgason, Joy Hill, Federico Mendiesta, Hugo Ortega, Joseph Patalano, David Riggis, Francisco Rivera, Federico Romero, Robert Smith, Danny Thomas

12 Years: Robert Balzer, Jeffery Denton, Albert Glenn, Andres Lachino, AJ Mee, Derek Nyma

13 Years: Michael Lewis, Daniel Reeves, Joseph Reid, John Scheehle, Carla Wilson

14 Years: Douglas Fleming, Matthew Hinojosa, Gregory Lovelace, Howard Verner

15 Years: Terry Gilbert, Michael Janke, Brandon Otter, George Villa

16 Years: Scott Adams, Edgar Espitia, James George, Gary Goodwin, Joseph Hines, Alejandro Perez

17 Years: Sara Hanson, Monica Kellin

18 Years: Serafin Contreras, Robert Cunningham, Kevin Schoenofer, Robert Stewart

19 Years: James Andrews, Steven Bringer, John Clark, Russell Huber, David Terry

20 Years: Thomas Shirey

22 Years: Robert Williams

23 Years: Carl Clausen, John Henderson, Michael Manion, Troy Tracy

24 Years: Michael Sebecic

25 Years: Rodney Hamilton

26 Years: Filiberto Barrientos, Richard Berkheimer, Mark Hoskinson

28 Years: Ricky Woods

29 Years: Horace Gilbert

31 Years: Steven Cauley

32 Years: John Everson, Theodis McClain, Bonita Perkins

33 Years: Cecil Copeland, Kenneth Joyce, Roy Roam

38 Years: Nathan Cooper, Rickey Eaton

39 Years: Geront Crotwell

Births
Jaxon Steven Duesi Maiseroulle

Jenna and Trevor Maiseroulle are proud to announce the birth of their son, Jaxon Steven Duesi Maiseroulle.

Jaxon was born on December 31, 2018. He weighed 8 lbs., 5 oz., and was 20.5 inches long.

Jenna is a Customer Service Representative for Division 3 and works out of the Pittsburg, Kansas, office.

Xilah Faye Smith

Herbert Smith and Jordan Grinstead are proud to announce the birth of their daughter, Xilah Faye Smith.

Xilah was born on January 8, 2019. She weighed 7 lbs., 3 oz., and was 18.5 inches long.

Xilah was welcomed home by her big sister Kadence, 3. Herbert is a railcar repairman at the Mill Creek, Oklahoma, mobile mechanical repair location.

MINI WATCO LOCOMOTIVE ROLLS AROUND AUSTRALIA

Spalding Park Miniature Railway in Geraldton, Western Australia, features a mini Watco locomotive. The locomotive runs on a 7.25 inch gauge track and pulls three to four little passenger cars behind it. WA Team Member Russell Griffiths took the below photo of his son at the park. Maybe someday he’ll drive a real one!
San Antonio celebrates 7

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Congratulations to the San Antonio Central Railroad Team on hitting seven years without any recordable personal injuries. General manager Jeffrey Pacheco prepared steaks along with side dishes for the team to thank them for keeping their focus on safety.

The Team not only celebrated their safety anniversary but also the anniversary of the start-up of the Texas short line.

Pacheco said, "I'm extremely proud of the work the Team does, not only in following the Customer First Foundation Principles and safety rules but also in the way that they look out for others. Whether its a fellow team member, or a Customer, they are always looking to be sure everyone is safe and will let the Customer know if there is anything they need to watch out for on their end to be more safe."

"I'm really glad I get to work with this crew," added Pacheco. "They are reliable and can be counted on to do the right thing."

The San Antonio Central Railroad is an 8.5 mile long line whose primarily business is spotting frac sand cars to the Customer and then delivers the empty cars to the Union Pacific Railroad. The Team also sees some business in delivering boxcars for Fiesta Warehousing for the storing of canned goods. Additional business includes delivering cars to Greenbrier for repair.

Scottsville Mechanical Team celebrates 1,000 days injury free

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

The San Antonio Central Railroad wasn't the only Watco location firing up the grill to celebrate safety. Joe Welch, the Scottsville (Texas) mechanical shop's plant manager, rewarded the team members with a steak dinner complete with all the trimmings.

Welch grilled t-bone steaks to celebrate 1,000 days of no recordable injuries, fulfilling a promise that when they reached the milestone he would personally cook for them.

Shannan Penrod serves as the environmental health and safety manager at the location and said she is so proud of the team members for looking out for each other and for putting safety first in all they do.

"They make my job so easy," she said.