Mondays are often dreaded by many people as it marks the beginning of another work week and the end of the weekend. However, Monday, February 10, was a day to be celebrated at the Birmingham Terminal Railway (BHRR). It marked the beginning of a new partnership with International Container Logistics (ICL). ICL is an intermodal facility in Bessemer, Alabama which transfers shipping containers between rail cars and trucks. The BHRR will now switch this site five days a week and will be involved with building outbound trains for CSX, the rail provider, and spotting cars within the facility.

Currently, the majority of the containers move to and from the Mercedes plant in Vance, Ala., which is the only place in the world that produces the M-Class, GL-Class and R-Class lines of vehicles for the German automaker. Engines and transmissions are brought in from Germany and then the containers with the empty engine and transmission racks are being sent back. Each container holds approximately 216 transmissions or 72 engines. The Vance plant also ships out service parts such as bumpers and fenders to the distribution center in Germany.

ICL is looking for things to ramp up mid-2014 when the plant in Vance will begin building the C-Class line which was being built in Germany. In preparation for the increased business they have added an additional 8,000 ft. of track for storage to the current 8,000 ft. already in service. This additional track will allow for extra capacity so that empty cars can be available upon demand to provide continuous service.

ICL President Steve Hossa said, “I see the ramp expansion as a lighting rod for the city of Bessemer that will create jobs and opportunity. The ramp will also connect the area to all the gateway ports in the US and Mexico and establish central Alabama as a go to destination for distribution.”

Not only does the facility serve the Vance plant but also customers using the ports in Charleston and Savannah. “They are also hoping that the additional space will attract customers from Chicago and Nashville as well.”

David Tarwater, BHRR general manager, said, “This has truly been a team effort, from marketing, operations and the team members. We are extremely excited to have our core values of the Customer First Foundation Principles show their fruits in this venture.”
There are some places that all you have to do to earn a paycheck is to show up and do the job you were assigned to. Not at Watco. One of the conditions of employment at Watco is to work safely. You must perform your work task and you must perform that task safely. If you do this, you will be rewarded in several ways. The first and most obvious way is that you and your teammates will leave work in the same condition you arrived. Another way is through the Safety Incentive Bucket Program that is being used to promote safety throughout Watco’s service areas.

The Safety Incentive Bucket Program has been in existence for a few years but has recently been modified to fit the unique aspects of the three different service areas, to promote a proactive safety approach, and to reward team members for such behavior.

A general explanation of the program is that each team member gets a certain dollar amount put into a “bucket” that will be their incentive for the quarter. The “bucket” amount is reduced for all associated team members when a qualifying incident occurs in their area. At the end of the quarter the remaining bucket amount is distributed to all of the area team members which remain qualified. This is not new as the previous safety incentive program operated similarly.

What is new is that qualification for the new safety incentive program now requires each team member to attend their area’s monthly safety meetings and to do at least one documented proactive action toward improving the safety environment of their area each quarter. This criteria isn’t hard to meet, it just takes a focus on safety and action. The proactive action can be accomplished by the team member in a couple of different ways:

1. Become actively involved in their locations safety related teams (TS&IC, Safety Committee, Emergency Response Team, Job Safety Analysis, Special Safety Training, etc.).
2. Turn in a Near Miss/Safety Suggestion card.

The purpose of asking the team members to turn in the Near Miss/Safety Suggestion cards is to be proactive and find issues before they become serious incidents. Team members note on the cards the safety issues or suggestions they have and their supervisor is required to investigate the Near Miss/Safety Suggestion and follow up with communication back to the team member within seven days. The Near Miss/Safety Suggestion cards require documentation of a Corrective Action (what is being done to correct the issue at hand) and a Preventive Action (what should be done to prevent this issue from developing again in the future). The action items will be documented in a database and monitored for completion.

“Being proactive to suggestions instead of reactive to incidents can increase safety participation by our team members” noted Rick Baden, President of Watco. “Using the Near Miss/Safety Suggestion cards will help build a stronger safety culture by promoting team members to be more aware of the possible safety issues in their area and fostering good safety communication between supervisors and their team members.”

Paul Schiefelbein, who was involved in the development of the new program and has seen it work elsewhere said, “This program really is just an extension our Watco Customer theme of Listen, Understand and Grow. Our Internal Customers, our team members, have a lot of common knowledge of possible safety issues in their daily tasks. This program facilitates getting that knowledge in front of our mangers, and initiating positive actions to improve both safety and team member-supervisor communication. The result will be a safer work environment and a growing relationship between team members and their supervisors. Both of which are good for our long term relationships, within Watco and with our Customers.”

The program was kicked off on January 1 and involves approximately 2,700 Watco field team members. The first set of checks from the new program will be sent out the later part of April. Each location will hold a “Distribution Meeting” to pass out the checks and discuss their safety performance.

Thirty years ago being a friend of Rick Webb could get you involved in a number of interesting situations, just ask Jim Herman, Cornell (Kan.) mechanical shop plant manager.

“Back in college, when I was living with Rick, we used to go up to Kansas City and stencil cars or do other work in exchange for tickets to watch the KC Royals play ball,” said Jim. “I got volunteered for a lot of jobs just from being there.”

Jim’s “interview” for his first real job at Watco was a unique experience. He had just graduated from Pittsburg State University with a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a master’s degree in counseling and was trying to figure out what his next step should be. Dick Webb, founder of Watco, walked into the house that Jim was living in with Rick and stated bluntly in his hoarse voice, “Herman, you’re not doing anything, you need to go to DeRidder.”

DeRidder (La.) was Watco’s first switching location which had been in operation for about eight months before Jim followed Dick’s instructions and loaded up his 1965 Chrysler New Yorker and headed south.

Jim’s brother Linn had started working in DeRidder the previous October, so Jim moved in with him while he learned the ins and outs of the switching business. There were a lot of different jobs and everyone did them all.

“I got to work with the original team of Mark Blazer, Ed and Jeff Mayberry, Herb and Carl McKeown, Curtis Hare, Benny Wise, and my brother, Linn. They were a hard working group of guys. If a car needed cleaning, you cleaned it,” said Jim. “You could be an engineer one day and scrubbing the most disgusting stuff out of a car the next day. It didn’t matter who you were, if a job needed done - it got done. Many of our switching leaders, like Keith Lacaze and Tony Clark got their start from those same beginnings.

“It was good to be where it all started, the Customer First Foundations Principles weren’t written anywhere but they were practiced, just look at the original start-up, which we still operate today.”

Jim stayed at DeRidder for about 14 months and then headed up to Coffeyville to work in Watco’s first mecha-
You Have The Power To Make This Happen
by Kris Sherry
Director of Training and Development

“When I grow up I want to be a….”
Have you ever asked a child what they wanted to be when they grew up? Do you remember the dreams or aspirations you had? More than likely you have heard “astronaut,” “fireman,” “ballerina,” “president,” “scientist,” or “doctor.” More than likely you NEVER heard “mediocre” or “average.”

If this is the case, why do we find ourselves, at times, settling for just that? So many times in life the reason we don’t succeed is that we make excuses for ourselves that we believe alter our ability. When we start taking control of our own actions and eliminate excuses from our vocabulary we give ourselves permission to succeed and persevere.

Let’s look at a few of the excuses people give themselves for not succeeding:
1. It’s impossible. When faced with an extremely difficult task, it’s natural to want to give up and consider the task to be impossible. If any person has ever done it, you can do it too. If not, you can be the first!

Alice: “This is impossible.”
The Mad Hatter: “Only if you believe it is.”
- from Alice in Wonderland

2. I’ve never done it that way. We all have a comfort zone, and stepping outside of it can feel like uncomfortable ground. If you never step outside of your comfort zone, you can never learn or grow. If someone had been too afraid to create the first computer, we would still be using Big Chief pads and #2 pencils. Start by taking a new and fresh look at what you are doing today that would make things in your workplace better by stepping outside your comfort zone.

3. I’m too busy. Have you ever heard someone use the excuse that the reason that they ran out of gas is because they were too busy driving? Using the excuse that you’re too busy won’t get you any sympathy from anyone, and it won’t get you what you really want. The fact is, when you consider that in 2013 all Americans between the ages of 25-57 worked an average of 9 hours per day (according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics), we’re all busy. Since everyone is busy, nobody’s really going to care how busy you are. The bottom line is that if something is important to us, we make time for it.

4. I’m not sure it is a very good idea. So often we see great ideas put off because people feel they just don’t know if their idea will fly. Guess what – you won’t know. There is one guarantee though: If you don’t even try, you definitely will not succeed.

5. Every team member at Watco has the power to make great things happen when they really start remembering that they are not mediocre people and this is not a mediocre company. If every one of us frees ourselves from excuses and remember that we DO have the power we should be able together to reach excellence!

From the words of Marshall Goldsmith, Leadership Guru, “What Got You Here, Won’t Get You There.”

Recruiting in the deep blue sea
by Bob McElhwee
Watco U Training and Development Specialist

Even though she has only been with Watco for about eight months, Jen Roth has had an impact on the company by bringing the right people to Watco. Jen continues to increase just as the lionfish do. So, please continue to increase just as the lionfish do.

Jen joined Watco as a recruit shortly after her adventure at sea. She says that she has learned a lot about the rail industry in the last few months. She likes being with people who are dedicated and fun to work with.

“My team members have a passion for what they do and so do I,” said Jen. “I’m glad that I am at Watco.”

Jen in front of the schooner that she lived in for 10 days.

A photo from below of a shark swimming beneath Jen and another diver.

Jen Roth, Watco recruiter, shows off the venomous lionfish she speared.

Jen in front of the schooner that she lived in for 10 days.

Jen Roth, Watco recruiter, shows off the venomous lionfish she speared.
by Keree Currier
Communications Intern

Kyle Brown is not your ordinary IT (Information Technology) guy. Yes, he has a plethora of knowledge of computer software and programming but he is also a talented guitar player who is in a daring band called Burning Tide. Burning Tide is a dirty blues and rock n’ roll band with a large fan base in the Kansas City area. The band’s sound is inspired by Black Stone Cherry, Velvet Revolver, Motley Crue, and Silver Tide. Burning Tide encompasses four members; Wayne King on the drums/percussion, Roxxi Quinn singing lead vocals and bass, Conner Asken playing lead guitar, and Watco’s own Kyle Brown on rhythm guitar. Kyle is the latest addition to the group, joining the band while in college. Before his days with Burning Tide he had his own band called We the People. We the People was a political based band that had six songs, a music video, was ideological and somewhat lazy. The band was only together two and a half years before splitting up.

After the days of We the People, Kyle focused on his studies in communication and programming at Pittsburg State University. Joining Burning Tide wasn’t just a cake walk for Kyle. The audition process was demanding in the sense that he had to play along with the lead guitarist Conner Asken for six songs. While being initiated into the band Kyle did experience some friendly hazing but it resulted into great chemistry. “We hit it off fast like we’ve been friends our whole lives,” said Kyle.

As the new guy, Kyle had to adjust to the band’s Kansas City fan base. In the beginning, he would meet around 150 fans each time the band was done performing. The band plays in different parts of the country like Springfield, Mo., and Laguna Beach, Calif. Although being a full-time student while in a band with a large base in Kansas City, Kyle was able to adjust and enjoy creating music and hanging out with fans. Kansas City’s music environment is a different realm than Pittsburg. The fan base in KC continues to thrive but the base in Pittsburgh holds steady at about 30 to 40 die-hard fans. Burning Tide’s focus on growing its local fan base is a unique process.

“We are looking to grow elsewhere. Its slow going because we want to give them [the fans] something they have never seen before,” says Kyle. Their debut album, Rebel Soul, was a nine month journey to complete. Burning Tide worked with Andy J Productions for this album. While in the creative process the band was able to take their time working on songs that the fans would like because Andy J Productions values the process of making music verses the process of making money.

“Andy took the time to make sure it was perfect, down to the fine details,” said Kyle about the creation of the album.

The band’s latest project will focus more on marketing to take their band from a hobby to a business venture that could reach out to more potential fans. In the future their goals are to take part in more tours and to gain guidance and support from a marketing company.

As Kyle and Burning Tide begin to look forward to the future they are being recognized for their talents and efforts of musical fusion. Burning Tide has been nominated for several awards for The Project Backstage 2014 Midwest Music Awards. The award ceremony is a two day event that will take place early April in Kansas City, Mo. The Awards are separated into two categories: industry and musician. Burning Tide’s nominations include Album of the Year, Drummer of the Year, Guitar Duo of the Year, and Party Band of the Year. In previous years the band has won Song of the Year, Female Vocalist of the Year, as well as winning Party Band of the Year two years running; while being nominated for Guitar Duo and Drummer of the Year.

Burning Tide performed at the Project Backstage Award show but this year the band will just be attending as nominees. The talents and energies of the band have been recognized so often that the band has created a tradition to win at least one award category if they are nominated for multiple awards, lest they take home the despised ‘Susan Lucci Award’.

The future of the band is burning bright but Kyle is also very passionate about the work he does for Watco. Continuing with the band and with Watco is something he plans to do as long as being in the band is something that remains fun for him.

“Programming is serious and very fun but at night it’s nice to be a part of something bigger than you,” said Kyle.

For now, his time in the band and career in programming is worth the sacrifice and balance. If you don’t get a chance to see Kyle and the Burning Tide performing at a nearby location, you can find them on Facebook and download some of their songs through Facebook links.

graduation announcements

In just a couple of months members of the Watco Team and/or their family members will be crossing stages across the continent (and ocean) to receive their diplomas from various academic institutions.

Watco would like to acknowledge the hard work of all graduates from our families by listing them in May’s edition of The Dispatch. If you would like to have your information or a graduate’s information listed, send in the information in the following format:

- Graduates name: relationship to Watco Team member, Watco Team member’s title and location.
- The school the graduate is attending and location of that school. If the graduate is receiving a degree from a college, university or trade school list the graduate degree type.
- Examples would be:
  - College: Allen Keller Jr.: Son of Allen Keller, mechanical inspector in Kansas from Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering.


Send your graduation information to:
Tracie VanBecelaere - Watco Companies
315 W. 3rd Street
Pittsburg, KS 66762
or email them to: tvan@watcocompanies.com
Please put Dispatch-May Graduation in the subject line.
March Anniversaries

Congratulations to the following team members celebrating their anniversaries!

1 Year: Chance Adair, Taylor Albert, John Bart, Jeffrey Bauman, Scott Beede, Bryant Boatman, Travis Bost, Brad Bourbina, Jacob Bumgarner, Richard Carter, Ivan Casarez, Donald Deamer, Jan Dibert, Ronald Duke, Janel Ezernack, Joshua Flaugh, Ryan Getsinger, Ryan Gossens, Robert Gross, Jammit Guynes, Tyler Haycock, Michael Hayden, Kasrny Hensley, Christopher Kirk, Andrew Long, Miles Maher, Malcolm McMullen, Shean Moore, Christopher Morton, Sager Nevarez, Bryan Payne, Colin Pinson, Michael Price, Mary Reardon, Jeffery Robertson, Javier Santana, Corey Sepulvado, Benjamin St John, Jessica Stacy, Cory Trowe, John Vance

2 Years: Anwar Aiken, Edward Appleby, Jacob Bagby, Christopher Bates, Richard Bates, Andrew Boe, Justin Brown, Salvador Camacho, Jesse Crouse, Lawrence DesRoches, Chad Easterling, Kevin Fetzer, Christopher Gamblin, Tim Haas, Tammy Hambek, Charlie Harris, Joshua Harris, Jordan Hawkins, Michael Hoglan, Joe James, Dennis Jensen, Russ Jones, Lawrence Kienstra, Brent Killian, Shane Kunnanz, Steven Lewis, Jeremy Madsen, Timothy McLachlan, Noelyn Meckle, Marvin Morris, David Ontiveros, Brad Payne, James Potts, Josh Resendiz, Christopher Roth, Bradley Seideman, Donald Smith, Wesley Smith, Delores Snead, Duane Stephenson, Michael Treace, Norman Turner, Jordan Wells, Jeffery White, Scott Wible


4 Years: James Blevins, Justin Coester, Trinity Condon, James Daly, Brett Golz, Kyle Hittsforder, Anthony Jones, Jesse Kosekis, Vicki Langford, Andrew McBride, Louis Pena, Dean Schexnayder, Jason Stout, Chadrick Suiter, Cesar Valentin, John Woods

5 Years: Jason Atteberry, Gerald Kerns, Timothy Langston, Gerardo Martinez, Jacob Meyers, Bernardino Osorio Vargas, John Rood, Daniel Smith, Cecil Taylory

6 Years: Sean Corr, Kevin Duncan, Divod Faison, Gwen Foster, Robert Gable, Jennifer Johnson, James Maddux, Brett Norris, Judson Rogers, Eva Rokezewski, Adam Shaffer, Lloyd Wilson

8 Years: Stephen Brath, Marlin Garcia, Robert Gilbert, Barry Karlberg, James Mayfield, John Neel, Michael Rogers, Joe Sandoval, Heath Sepulvado, Kellie Sideer, Mark Tarr, Gary Westphal, Douglas Williams

9 Years: Patti Audet, Adelita Barajas, Tyler Batley, Robert Boyd, Michelle Fellers, Brandon Freeman, Gary Fultz, Michael Gallia, Adam Harper, James Rein, Eric Sabatucci, Kim Van Royen

10 Years: Kent Ainsworth, Sherry Bulot, Brenda Caruthers, Alvin Dorn, Anthony Gill, Keith Goodsell, Charlene Huskey, Robert Martinez, Christopher Mier, Rocky Ramey, Kevin Watkins, Kevin Wells

11 Years: David Bullion, Frank Davis, Roger Easterling, David Gibson, Kenneth Lucht

12 Years: Bernardo Cuevas, Terry Kudick, James May, James Napier, Judy Schumacher, Walter Stromberg

13 Years: Julie Fortman, Joshua Kramer, Brad Snow, Joe Welch

14 Years: Kathy Carr, Edward Garcia, Carlita Guiles

15 Years: Mark Krause, Ron Martin, Tony Parsons

16 Years: Randy Letner, Brian Waters

17 Years: Dee Dee Anderson, William Coffman, Ronald Topley

18 Years: William Carroll, Anthony Jernigan

19 Years: Steven Coleman, Dick Fogliasso, Dexter Reeves

20 Years: Mark Green, Steven Morgan

21 Years: Herb Lamkin, JeffreyLievers

22 Years: Silas Whiteley

25 Years: James Crawford, Charles Layfield

26 Years: Bryan Benson, Bernard Kezerle

28 Years: Billy Eddington

30 Years: Jim Herman

31 Years: Daniel Malignani

33 Years: Cynthia Harden, Steven Lang

37 Years: Daniel Fetzer

38 Years: Billy Hargrove

39 Years: Timothy Wombacher

"One time Dan Linden was helping with a switching location in Pa. He'd been up there for 25 straight days and the day after he left to go see his family, a situation came up and no questions asked - he came right back to help out the very same day, and those are the type things done over and over by our fellow team members that built what we see today and it continues now," said Jim.

There are so many examples to share from all of the start-ups and work performed that I could fill this newsletter and then of course, others that are not printable. I wore many hats from car cleaner, switchman, purchasing, switching manager, railroad GM, switching safety manager, and railroad mechanical manager. Some think it's because I didn't fit any hat well, I prefer to think different!"

"We wore a lot more hats and didn't have the advantages of technology that now exists. We continue to improve our safety focus, technology and long-term focus and that's a significant fact.

"I am very pleased and proud to have worked with so many great people through these years and it began with an old grumpy man's cordial invite. Mr. Dick Webb gave all of us this opportunity and privilege to call Watco home."

"Watco Chairman Gary Lundy said, "I want to congratulate and thank Jim for over 30 years of dedicated service to Watco. Jim's talents have allowed him to serve in various capacities within the company and he has played a very important role in the growth of Watco."

If you ever get the opportunity, take a minute to visit with one of our long-time team members like Jim Herman. I guarantee you there will be a good story or two that they can share, you just might not be able to retell it."
Every region of the country has certain weather-related issues that need to be dealt with during various seasons, but The Palouse River & Coulee City Railroad (PCC) recently faced a combination of conditions that resulted in a large portion of their track being taken out of service for 10 days. In a short amount of time, the PV Hooper line of the PCC received a large amount of snow – more than a foot in some locations – and had temperatures that jumped from the low 30’s to 48 degrees, resulting in rapid snow melt. Additionally, this was followed by rain, more snow, and then freezing rain. And then the thawing began again.

“The area around the PCC has had below freezing temperatures for most of this winter, so the ground under the railroad was frozen a few inches down. When the thaw began there was nowhere for all the water to go. The water flowed down the Palouse hills and washed out numerous locations on the Hooper and Pleasant Valley subdivisions of the PCC,” Scott Adams, West Region chief engineer of track, said.

On the morning of February 12, PCC track team members Scott Lynas and Josh Roberts inspected the track at about 9 a.m. and everything looked good. However, by noon that day the high temperatures, rain and rapid melting of snow had taken their toll and there was water over the track in numerous locations.

At the time of the flooding, the PCC team had a loaded grain train on spot at Endicott, Wash., which needed to be moved to an unloading location on the Columbia River at Wallula, Wash. The track team worked with PCC engineer Larry Smith and conductor Scott Winther and, with track

A combination of weather conditions resulted in the flooding of some parts of the Palouse River and Coulee City Railroad in February.

PCC AFFECTED BY WINTER WEATHER

(Continued from above) team members supervising train movements, they were able to get the train safely off the areas of the PV Hooper that were being flooded. The team then assessed the situation and determined the resources required to get the track back up and operating.

The PCC team rounded up all necessary supplies and materials, including ballast cars, ballast, rip rap and other equipment. They also brought in additional team members. Jeremy Hund, track supervisor on The Great Northwest Railroad (GRNW), and Bo Baker, track laborer on the GRNW, helped crib up areas that were washed out and unload ballast. Stacy Grant, GRNW assistant general manager, was also on hand to help with repairs and movement of the ballast trains. The PCC team also worked to coordinate with its Customers to ensure that grain and other commodities moved from the PCC during the shutdown.

The PV Hooper line was taken out of service on February 12. After initial repairs were made and the track was inspected to determine that it was safe for operation, the PV Hooper line was returned to service at the end of day on February 21 – a full seven days ahead of original estimates.

“I would like to thank this team for their dedication, hard work and teamwork in taking care of the railroad and getting it back into service so that our Customers were taken care of,” Adams said.

“I was able to see and observe their efforts, job briefings, plans and progress on this project and I would like to commend them on a job well done.”