Team member names new on-line learning system

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

When Kris Sherry, Watco’s director of training and organizational development, was trying to think of a name for the new on-line learning system she thought it would be outstanding if the people who were going to use it got to select the name, or better yet, come up with one.

“I thought it would be a good way to introduce the new system and have the team members feel like they had some ownership in it,” said Sherry. “I was pleasantly shocked at the number of entries we had and the creativity was amazing.”

A total of 122 entries were submitted for the opportunity to name the system and win an iPad as well. First place winner was Josiah Gonzalez, a car blaster from the Neodesha mechanical services shop. Josiah submitted the name, The R.A.I.L. (Reaching Advancement in Leadership/Learning). Second place went to Trae Taylor, assistant trainmaster on the Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad. Trae won a 16 gb Kindle Fire HD for his entry.

Upon hearing of Trae's accomplishment, Jimmy Patterson, assistant general manager of the KO said, “Trae is known for his sense of humor and quick wit. I'm not surprised at all that he was able to come up with an award winning slogan for the contest”.

Trae started with the KO in 2006 as a conductor and was promoted in 2007 to engineer. In 2012 Trae was promoted to assistant trainmaster.

Third place winner was Kyle Gould from Green Port Industrial Park's Real Estate department. Kyle won a $50.00 Amazon gift card for his entry.

Winners were selected through a rigorous four week multi-survey of 400 randomly selected Watco Team Members.

“Out of 122 entries there weren't any duplicates, some of the acronyms were the same but what they meant was different,” said Sherry.

The R.A.I.L. is available on the Watco web site using the Watco Team link on the left hand side. There are more than 380 courses and simulations available through the R.A.I.L. including, but not limited to, the following topics: Microsoft Office 2007 Suite (Word, Excel, Access, Powerpoint, Sharepoint), Customer Service, sales, strategic thinking, conflict resolution, communications, team building, finance for non-financial professionals, project management, management and leadership and environmental, hazardous and safety.

The training and development team is also developing customized content for field level job specific training.

Watco hosts annual Customer Appreciation Days

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Young and old made tracks to Pittsburg, Kan., on October 23rd, 24th, and 25th for Watco's Customer Appreciation Days. The event started out years ago as an excuse for Watco CEO Rick Webb to goof-off and hunt with a couple of Customers and it has grown into an annual event that gives the Watco Team the opportunity to thank many of our Customers for choosing to do business with us and allowing us to grow our businesses together. This year more than 200 Watco Customers converged in Pittsburg, Kansas, to hunt, golf, shoot clay, sing karaoke and build new friendships.

Our Customers from CBH take the prize for not only traveling the furthest but also for bringing the youngest Customer to attend the event. Matt Mews, CBH Group, attended the Tuesday evening dinner at Parrot Bey with his wife Natasha, four-year old daughter Makenzie, and the youngest in attendance, eight month old Ava.

Wednesday ended up being a (Continued on page 5)
Fifty-eight years ago history was made in Emporia, Kansas with the proclamation of Veterans Day. November 11 had previously been called Armistice Day and celebrated veterans of World War I, but to one Kansan, Alvin King, it became apparent all veterans deserved recognition.

Although King was not a military man himself, his nephew was killed during the invasion of Normandy, France. King soon suggested Armistice Day be changed to Veterans Day to celebrate all veterans. The proposal was taken to Congress, which approved, as did President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In 1954 Veterans Day was celebrated nationally for the first time.

Some people are unsure of the difference between Veterans Day and Memorial Day. Memorial Day is a day for remembering and honoring members of our military who died during service for our country, particularly those who died in battle or from wounds received in battle. While those who died in service are also remembered during Veterans Day, its main purpose is to thank and honor all who served honorably, but is largely intended to thank living veterans for their service.

Veterans Day is one day of the year set aside to recognize veterans of both wartime and peacetime. However, it’s best to celebrate Veterans Day every opportunity you get. Although these military men and women are blessed to have not given the ultimate sacrifice, their contributions to our country and willingness to put their life on the line is appreciated and they should be celebrated.

We thank the following Waco Team Members who have served time in the military. Be sure to take the time to tell them that their service to our country is appreciated.

(Continued on page 6)
“THE GORILLA” ROLLS IN

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

It’s not everyday that a 263,000 pound gorilla shows up in town, but in Pittsburg, Kansas, the Home of the Pittsburg State Gorillas, we’ve learned to expect the unexpected. The 263,000 pound gorilla is actually a locomotive, recently painted in Pitt State colors and boasting pictures of Gus Gorilla on all sides.

Painting something this large and complex takes a team of experts and that’s exactly who Watco had working on the locomotive. Top notch painter Rich Johnson, with the help of six other men; Broc Bryant, Jeff Denton, Wade Lunt, James Andrews, Kenny Rowell and Dion Wilkens, transformed locomotive 3834 into “The Gorilla” in less than three weeks. The locomotive was painted with 25 gallons of a special graffiti-resistant paint in case any of the team’s rivals decide to monkey around with it.

“We were under a pretty tight timeline,” explained Kenny Rowell, shop foreman. “A normal paint job would take us about 125-150 hours, but the design on this one was quite a bit more complex. By the time it was all said and done, we put in more than 300 hours on it. It was hectic, but we wanted to have it ready for Homecoming. I really think it was worth it.”

Several people from the University, the community and Watco were on hand on October 19th when “The Gorilla” was introduced. Cameras were out in full force to catch pictures of Gus Gorilla, the PSU mascot, with “The Gorilla” and the young and young at heart. One attendee was overheard saying, “you’re never too old for Gus!”

“I don’t know of another university that enjoys such strong support from its community,” said Pittsburg State University President Steve Scott at the dedication. “We’re fortunate to have home-grown industries such as Watco in our city, and I know that this locomotive will be a source of pride for Gorillas throughout the world. University Presidents are competitive just like university coaches, this is something to brag about.”

Susie Lundy said the idea to paint a Pitt State locomotive had been discussed many times during Sunday lunches at the home of her father, Watco founder Dick Webb, years ago. The Webb/Lundy family boasts many Pitt State alumni, including Dick Webb (Watco founder) and wife, Kaye Lynne; Gary Lundy, executive vice president for support services (who played PSU Gorilla Football in the ‘70s) and wife, Susie, (who holds two degrees); Rick Webb (Watco CEO) and wife, Stacey; Afton Lundy (a member of Watco’s Marketing Division); Kevin Deao (who played baseball for Pitt State) and wife, Fallyne, (a member of Watco’s Mechanical Division), and Bubba Lundy (also a member of Watco’s Mechanical Division and a member of the PSU football Gorillas until an injury ended his career). The family thought it would be really great to show their pride by having a Watco locomotive bringing shipments to our Pittsburg Customers.

Now that it’s happened “The Gorilla” has already generated buzz not only in Pittsburg but with rail fans throughout the nation, and many will likely make their way to Pittsburg to see the locomotive in person. Rail fans have a great deal of passion for these engines, they love the history, they love the new paint jobs and they love to follow where these locomotives travel. Watco has already had several comments posted on railfan blogs regarding “The Gorilla”.

“I really wish dad could’ve seen this,” said Lundy. “The guys did a great job.”

At the end of the ceremony a long whistle was heard in the background, almost as if Dick Webb were giving his nod to “The Gorilla”.

A safe Halloween for the Refugio Team

The Refugio, Texas Team carried on the message of “safety first” to Halloween when they participated in Refugio’s Safe Trick-or-Treat.

The main sponsor is the town of Refugio’s Police Department and the event was held from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm on Halloween. This is an annual event supported by over 40 local businesses and government offices.

The event was a huge success with about 350 to 400 children taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in the event. The main coverage area for the event is in the downtown area of Refugio but also includes participants from other areas of the town. The downtown area is blocked off so that families can walk freely without having to be cautious of vehicle traffic.

Some of the members of the Coffeyville Mechanical Services Team who were involved in transforming “The Gorilla” with another gorilla, Gus, PSU’s mascot. From left are: Jeff Denton, Dion Wilkens, general manager; Kenny Rowell, shop foreman; Broc Bryant, and Rich Johnson.

Matt Andrade, Refugio operator, looks quite devilish at the Safe Trick-or-Treat event.

Eva Salinas, Refugio receptionist, passes out treats on Halloween for the Safe Trick-or-Treat.

Jesica Mascorro, Refugio operator, couldn’t resist this stinky trick-or-treater.

The event was a huge success with about 350 to 400 children taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in the event. The main coverage area for the event is in the downtown area of Refugio but also includes participants from other areas of the town. The downtown area is blocked off so that families can walk freely without having to be cautious of vehicle traffic.

Gus Gorilla, PSU mascot, welcomes “The Gorilla” locomotive to Pittsburg, Kansas.
Neodesha mechanical shop restores traditional Legion symbol

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Dusty Dodd, son of Jimmy Dodd, smiled and waved while performing his duties as honorary conductor of the Watco Forty and Eight train that rolled down the streets of Independence, Kan., at the annual Neewollah Parade. Neewollah (Halloween spelled backwards) began in 1919 in an effort to provide activities in place of the usual pranks that typically occurred in the community and is touted as the largest annual celebration in Kansas.

However, the Neewollah parade wasn’t the first parade that the Forty and Eight train has been in. The train, consisting of a motor powered locomotive and box car, was built by W.B. (Bus) Johnson, father of Kaye Lynne Webb and father-in-law of Watco founder, Dick Webb. The train was originally built 1950 for the Forty and Eight society which was founded by veterans from World War I. The society was called such after the French boxcar stenciled with a 40/8, denoting the car’s capacity to hold 40 men or eight horses. The society was formed in 1920 and was originally an arm of the American Legion but the Forty and Eight became an independent and separately incorporated veteran’s organization in 1960. Membership is by invitation only and an eligible candidate must be an honorably discharged veteran of the United States Armed Forces.

Kaye Lynne Webb recalls seeing her normally reserved father dressed in a gunny sack and wearing make-up and earrings for his initiation into the Forty and Eight society.

The train had been used for many occasions since Johnson built it and Kaye Lynne remembers riding in parades as a teen. The train disappeared around the 1960’s and resurfaced when Watco CEO Rick Webb saw the engine sitting at an old gas station at the corner of 4th and Elm street in Pittsburg.

“I asked my dad if he knew anything about it and he told me that it was the train that my grandpa had built,” said Webb. “The guy who owned it said he had bought it from someone who was getting ready to sell it as scrap iron and he agreed to sell us the set.”

The train was taken to the Coffeyville, Kan., mechanical shop and repaired and sent back to Pittsburg. The shop even had it rigged so that a drop of oil could make it look like smoke was coming out of the stack on the engine. Once the train arrived in Pittsburg it again made the parade circuit with many of the Watco and Webb/Lundy kids and grandkids riding in the boxcar and engine, although the count probably never got up to the 40 that the original car could hold.

When the train needed updating it again it was taken to Watco’s mechanical shop in Neodesha where general manager Mark Baumgardner ensured that the Forty and Eight was restored to its former glory. The train was completed in late October, just in time for the famous Neewollah parade and the new shiny boxcar features logos from the many different Watco locations.

Now that the train is up and running again people in Southeast Kansas should get used to seeing the Forty and Eight train pop up at several different community and company events.

Left: Dusty Dodd, son of Neodesha, Kan., mechanical shop team member Jimmy Dodd, served as honorary conductor for the Forty and Eight in the Neewollah Parade. Below: the Forty and Eight drives in the Halloween parade as Neodesha shop members pass out treats.

Neodesha Mechanical Team cooks up a spicy treat for Neewollah

Not only did the Neodesha Mechanical Team have a great entry in the Neewollah Parade but they also had a pretty hot entry in the Chili Cook-off as well. The TS&FC held a cook-off at the shop to see who had the best chili and then that recipe was entered into the festival’s cook-off.

“We didn’t win,” said general manager Mark Baumbaugh, “but everyone had fun and a lot of the people that tasted our chili said it was the best.”

Rusty Spike Chili

4 lbs. 80/20 ground beef, drained
2 lbs. mild sausage, drained
2 cans pinto beans, drained
1 can navy beans, drained
1 full bulb garlic, minced and roasted in butter,
tumeric and chili powder
1 red onion, finely minced
3 cans crushed tomatoes
1 can tomato sauce
12 oz. water to rinse cans
1 bell pepper, seeded, minced and roasted
jalapeños to taste, seeded, minced and roasted
3 tbsp. chili powder
2 tbsp. cumin
1 tsp. chipotle chili pepper
1 tsp. black pepper
1 tsp. tumeric
2 tbsp. crushed red pepper
1 tbsp. cayenne pepper
2 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
1 tbsp. Tabasco
1/3 cup Franks red hot sauce
1 tsp. cardamom

Brown beef, sausage and onion then add all other ingredients. Boil for 30 min., reduce heat and simmer for 1-2 hours, stirring occasionally. Makes 1 gallon.
beautiful warm fall day
and after a long day of shooting and golfing, everyone gathered at Chatter’s for an amazing dinner and
great entertainment. Marsh’s Jim O’Hara started off
the night with his unique rendition of the Carpenters,
“Close to You,” and was shortly joined by John
Durante and Marcie Stephan. Not to be outdone
though, Neil and Mary, Wandel, from CBH in Espe-
rance, Australia, got the crowd going with a round
about a hen and a rooster, which was quite fun. Of
course, the evening is never complete without Rick
Webb’s version of “Johnny B. Goode” aptly called
“Watco B. Goode.” Joey Schulte with Martin Mariet-
ta Materials was the lucky Customer who took home
the Wednesday evening prize, a Henry .22 long rifle
donated by John’s Sporting Goods in Pittsburg.
Thursday’s weather caught everyone by surprise
and a cold front arrived early along with a bit of
rain. Many of the shooters at the Claythorne Lodge
headed to the bowling alley for some warmer com-
petition.
On Thursday evening the guests were joined by
Watco team members and their families from the
Pittsburg location at the Mindenmines, Mo., railcar.
The railcar is located near a couple of the many strip
pits that Southeast Kansas is famous for. A bonfire
warmed the guests while the Thompson Brothers,
a welding supply company out of Coffeyville, Kan., set
up a tent and proceeded to cook an array of deli-
cious treats. Not only did everyone get to sample
the pheasant and chucker that the
hunters had shot
earlier, but they
were also served
ribs, brisket, tater
tots and some pie
for dessert.
Each guest was
sent off with a gift
bag and memo-
ries that will last
a lifetime, or at
least until next
year’s event.
Many of our Cu-
sumers sent thank
you notes following
the event to let us
know how much
they enjoyed their
time with us and meeting new friends.
Joe Griffith of Barlett Grain wrote, “I wanted to
thank you again for such a great time and excellent
hunting on Friday. Those couple of days are a real
treat and I look forward to it every year.”
Ken Pennington, with our first Customer Boise,
Inc. said, “I wanted to let you know that I had a great
time with the Watco family last week. I like to be
around people that have enthusiasm and a desire
to make things happen. Now I know why Watco is
a growing company. Rick and I got to spend some
time together. I told Rick about the day Watco
showed up on the job and how I met Danny Bar-
lington on the flume in the wood yard. What a suc-
cess story, from that day to 29 years later it has been.
Rick made a good statement during our conver-
sation “we have to keep telling these stories that made
our success and never forget them and where we
came from”.

Matt Mews, CBH Group, with
his wife Natasha, and daugh-
ters Makenzie, four, and eight
month old Ava.

Above: Ace Mathews, Mathews Construction, Julie
Fortman, Watco and Ken Pennington, Boise, Inc., at
Chatter’s on Wednesday.
Below: guests line up for lunch between hunts at Paw-
nie.
Watco Veterans

(Continued from page 1) TX-EOG, Navy, Virginia; Florida, Texas, Louisiana; Wayne Stevens, WMS, Fitzgerald, GA, Navy, Jackson, FL; William Byrd, WCLLC, WCI-Allocation, Army, US, Panama, Vietnam; William Coffman, WMS, Wood River, IL, Army, Ft. Banning, GA; William Wise, WCLLC, Jacksonville, FL, Army, Germany; Willie Pierce, BHRR, Birmingham, AL, Marine Corps, Jacksonville, NC; Zachary Dement, SLWC, Oklahoma City OK, Marine Corps, Camp Lejeune, NC, Camp Pendleton, CA, Little Rock, AR.

Thanks to each and every one of our Watco Veterans for your service and the sacrifices you and your families have made. If you served in the military and your name did not show up on this list please send the information to tvan@watco.com and we will be sure to recognize you in next month’s issue.

Junction City Team picnics

The Junction City, Kansas, mechanical shop celebrated the end of a safe summer with a picnic that had record attendance.

“Ninety-five percent of the team showed up for the picnic,” said Red Nelly, general manager. “It’s been awhile since we’ve had one and we are definitely going to turn this over to the TS&IC to organize in the future.”

The picnic was held at the 5th Street Park in Junction City and the team enjoyed a fried chicken dinner with all the trimmings including some wonderful cobblers as well.

“I was really pleased with the attendance and everyone seemed to have a good time,” said Nelly. “It was nice to be able to get together away from the shop and get to see everyone with their spouses and kids.”

Watco locations in the movies

by Kersee Currier Communications Intern

It’s going to be difficult to get an autograph from a particular Watco movie star who appeared in the action comedy 30 Minutes or Less. The Grand Elk Railroad Locomotive WAMX 3829 made its movie debut during the beginning credits of the show when the main character Nick (Jesse Eisenberg) is recklessly driving through the city and cuts in front of a moving train. The movie shows WAMX 3829 barely missing Nick’s car in a scene that makes all railroaders cringe.

The old Armco warehouse at Watco’s Greens Port Industrial Park in Houston, Texas was used to film the scenes at the later part of the movie RoboCop.

In reality, this reckless driving never actually happened. The movie’s digital composer combined multiple images that were filmed at separate times into one image which creates the illusion that the events happened at the same time.

Throughout the movie many scenes entailed car chases, explosives, and fire arms. Just like our team members practice safety at all times, the cast and crew took their own steps to maintain safety in their working environment, the movie set. There were 250 people were working on site, with 12 plus police officers, and the fire department. Production assistants were also on hand to direct and assist pedestrians in and out of local business so they wouldn’t be in the shots or in harms way. Cast members went through fire training to learn how to handle a situation if something were to have gone wrong.

“There were so many safety precautions… and they ran us through all these things that could happen. So it was almost disappointing when nothing bad happened,” said actor Danny McBride.

The Louisiana Southern Railroad (LAS) is another Watco location that has been in the movies. It appeared several times in the movie The Longshots. The main characters, Ice Cube and Keke Palmer, are shown in several scenes walking down the LAS tracks on the way home from school. The movie is a true story about Jasmine Plummer who, at the age of eleven, became the first female to play in Pop Warner football in its 56-year history.

The old Armco warehouse at Greens Port Industrial Park in Houston, Texas was a movie setting for a production many people have seen, RoboCop. Scenes from the futuristic movie were filmed in the warehouse and surrounding area as the hero and the show’s villains were trying to elude and capture the other.

The movie received positive reviews and was cited as one of the best films of 1987, spawning a large franchise, including merchandise, two sequels, a television series, two animated TV series, and a television mini-series, video games and a number of comic book adaptations/crossovers.

The warehouses at the location make it an attractive setting for movies. “One company even contacted us about using the warehouse for an exclusive party for a group that likes to hold events in industrial settings,” said Tim Holan, vice president of port services. “We nixed that idea pretty quick because of the safety issues.”

Not only have these locations been in the movies but Watco and many other railroad companies are now the target of reality show producers wanting to capitalize on the nation’s attraction to trains.

“Since their inception trains have held a fascination for the young and old alike. There have been numerous movies and shows that have been enhanced with the use of trains,” said Tracie VanBecelaere, Watco’s director of communications. “It’s funny though to view the movies through the eyes of a railroader, we constantly analyze the scenes for both how realistic they are and the safety of the events taking place.”
Refugio Team Member Appreciation Day

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

There is no bigger honor than when a Customer wants to hold a day to celebrate the team that serves them. The Refugio, Texas Terminal Team was recently honored with such a day in conjunction with their one year anniversary of serving EOG Resources. Dinner was catered in and team members received jackets and coolers to commemorate the anniversary. Names were also drawn for a variety of prizes such as lawn chairs, coolers, gift cards and tools.

Rich Burton, EOG’s regional operations manager, said, “We wanted to take the opportunity to let the guys on the ground know that they’re doing a good job and that we support what they do. The volumes have been increasing and we are excited about working together in 2013.”

There were about 34 of the 40 team members present at the celebration. Burton and Scott Waters from EOG Resources attended the event along with Watco representatives Rick Baden, Dan Smith and Ray Tucker.

Terminal manager John Wiebelhaus said, “I’m very proud to be part of the Watco Refugio Team, or should I say family, We call ourselves a team but we function very much like a family. We have worked together to make a difference and we have a saying here, ”Good Enough is not Good Enough”. We ask ourselves every day; is the task I am working on good enough or can I do it better or safer? EOG’s Appreciation Day was an honor and exciting for all of us. To have Dan Smith, Rick Baden and Ray Tucker attend was an honor as well. Without their dedication and support, as well as the support of all the Watco people behind the scenes, we would not be able to serve our Customers needs as we do.”
Watco Team Members heading for Australia

by Tracie VanBeclairee
Managing Editor

There are ten Watco Team members who are still reeling from the sudden paths their lives have just taken. Just two weeks ago they were busy working as engineers for their respective railroads and now they are brothers in arms heading on an Australian adventure. With the grain harvest in Western Australia getting ready to go into full swing extra single young men that will be heading over. Jonathan’s a Southern boy from the Vicksburg Southern Railroad and Justin is from the KAW River in Kansas City. Maybe he can introduce KC barbecue to the Australians.

Lucas Conrad will be going from the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad. His wife Areona will be holding down the fort with their three kids, Paxton, 7, Rory, 2, and Tatum, 1.

Another Central Region team member heading over is Billy Bollinger. Billy is from the Stillwater Central Railroad in Oklahoma and he will be busy messaging his two kids, Will, 7 and Bella, 5 while he is gone.

The West Region is sending over Art Camerena. Art is with the Pacific Sun Railroad and his wife Yara and son Benjamin, 6, will be awaiting his return home to California.

The group will be leaving for Australia on November 15th and will be returning on May 15, 2013. Each one will be able to make a week long return home during their stay but they will have to take that week at separate times. The WA-US team will be staying in York which is 30 minutes from Perth and will be working in the Northern area.

Stuart James, WWAR training and standards manager came over from Western Australia to teach classes to the group while their Visa’s are being processed. The classes are being held at the Pittsburg, Kan., offices and are very intense. Following each day of teaching is a day of testing. All tests need to have a final passing grade of 100%. Items covered include the Australian Rail Rules and Regulations as well as the specific vocabulary that is used in the industry. Math calculations are also a part of the courses as the team will need to understand metric conversions. Stuart works in the Perth WWAR offices and his wife Jodi and son Brock, 13, are waiting for him return home and hear of his stories of life in the U.S.

The group arrived in Pittsburg on Oct. 23 and will stay for two weeks of classes, leaving on Nov. 5. The stay in Pittsburg gave this “Band of Brothers” the opportunity to get to know the team that they would be spending the next six months with. They even helped Drew celebrate his 21st birthday, and if a video camera would’ve been running it would have gotten a comical shot of Sofrona Howard, HR manager, accidentally (or so she said) dumping the cake on Drew’s chest, which then ended up on the floor. It was a birthday he’ll probably never forget.

Lee Jasmin had the least amount of time to prepare for his trip as he just found out the day before he needed to be in Pittsburg for training that he was going. He was able to bring his wife and youngest son to Pittsburg so that he could spend more time with them before he had to leave. They were in Pittsburg over Halloween but forgot to bring a costume for one-year-old Brayden. The HR Team came to the rescue and Lee was able to take his cute little “monkey” out trick-or-treating and reports they are raked in quite a stash.

Other things that were planned for the team to do included, a Pittsburg State Football game, bowling, and to finish up their two weeks of training, a home-cooked meal of fried chicken, mashed potatoes, cornbread, and dessert.

The trip will consist of a long flight, averaging about 33 hours total, depending on where they are coming from. The flight will be an interesting experience as only two of the WA-US team members have ever flown on a plane. Once the group arrives in Australia they will undergo a physical exam and may still be sent home at that point if they do not pass Australia’s standards. They will then take a bit of time to settle in and then will start out on the railroads first as an observer and then they will partner up with an experienced driver and hit the rails running so to speak.

Although the trip will take them away from their families all the wives were very supportive about their spouses going over to help out.

Lucas Conrad, SKOL, said, “My wife is very excited for me to go, she said it’s a great opportunity and something that I would never get to do otherwise.”
Congratulations to the following team members celebrating their anniversaries!


2 Years: Courtney Burks, Alan Cheek, Bobby Curtis, Michele Howard, Matthew Kuebrich, Timothy Lewis, Shane Martin, Kyle Mayfield, Justin McMillen, Bryant Peeples, Edward Romero, Keeland Scales, James Saffer, Keith Singleton, Kevin St Aubin, Timothy Stephens, James Sudduth, James Tyler.

3 Years: Octaviano Barbosa, Jonathan Conerly, Chad Davis, Tyler Hamilton, Kevin Hampton, Gene Hargrove, Jonathan Hogan, Jason Hubach, Ryan Johnson, Tracey Jones, Brian Kemp, Jacob Link, Jacob McChesney, Jason Moore, Devanel Nash, Carl Reed, Jose Romero, Bradley Scott, Jeff Swenson, Allen Tabor, John Walker.

4 Years: Ken Addison, Taylor Anderson, Earnest Austin, Derek Brau, Shamard Drighet, Andrea Harville, Travis Hodge, Joseph Magruder, Donald Mixon, Jeffrey Pierce, Wyndell Rochell, Gennifer Swisher, Melinda Swisher, Aaron Williamson.

5 Years: Edgar Bazaldua, Randy Bryant, Kelly Callahan, Charles Chipman, Shawn Coates, Austin Combs, Lydia Davilla, Armando DeLeon, Jon Fortner, John Grant, Michael Harlan, Kevin Jeter, William Norris.

6 Years: Kevin Dillard, Robert Groff, Robert Hampton, Joshua Jewell, Atlon Lundy, Marvin Miner, Luis Rivera, Earl Sims, Kenneth Socie, Ron Spencer.

7 Years: Phillip Billingsley, Dale Bright, Robert Bruner, Jeffrey Darnell, Betsy Foster, Robert Godfrey, Matthew Leifer, Larry Lenington, Barbara Moore, Dave Ruggles.

8 Years: Rick Baden, Joshua Braden, Zachary Henwood, Michael Marino, James Meyer, Dale Reeser, James Stapleton, Thomas Woldford.

9 Years: Robert Powell, Eric Slimp, James Wolf.

10 Years: Francis Mangiacarne, John Streich, Roy Wallace.

11 Years: Jimmy Johnson, Randall Martineau, Gerald Wise.

12 Years: John Grassinger, Kelley Scarrow.

13 Years: Fernandez Avila, Robert DeLuna.

14 Years: Edward Cullinan, Don Slaughter.

15 Years: Paul Loper, Brian McCoy, Jerry Pierce.

16 Years: Chad Byles.

17 Years: Carlos Barnes, John Brown, Jack Lisle, John Ostrander, Terry Showalter.

18 Years: Charlie Everson, Thomas Murray.

19 Years: James Belsha, Bennie Hill.

20 Years: Floyd Swope.

21 Years: Charlie Estes, Howard Green, Kenneth Jordan.

22 Years: David Louk.

23 Years: David Bidleman, Victor McClure, William Norris.

24 Years: Tom Kennedy, Lisa Palomo, David Rotz, Efgenio Tovar.


26 Years: Courtney Burks, Alan Cheek, Bobby Curtis, Michele Howard, Matthew Kuebrich, Timothy Lewis, Shane Martin, Kyle Mayfield, Justin McMillen, Bryant Peeples, Edward Romero, Keeland Scales, James Saffer, Keith Singleton, Kevin St Aubin, Timothy Stephens, James Sudduth, James Tyler.

27 Years: Octaviano Barbosa, Jonathan Conerly, Chad Davis, Tyler Hamilton, Kevin Hampton, Gene Hargrove, Jonathan Hogan, Jason Hubach, Ryan Johnson, Tracey Jones, Brian Kemp, Jacob Link, Jacob McChesney, Jason Moore, Devanel Nash, Carl Reed, Jose Romero, Bradley Scott, Jeff Swenson, Allen Tabor, John Walker.

28 Years: Ken Addison, Taylor Anderson, Earnest Austin, Derek Brau, Shamard Drighet, Andrea Harville, Travis Hodge, Joseph Magruder, Donald Mixon, Jeffrey Pierce, Wyndell Rochell, Gennifer Swisher, Melinda Swisher, Aaron Williamson.

29 Years: Edgar Bazaldua, Randy Bryant, Kelly Callahan, Charles Chipman, Shawn Coates, Austin Combs, Lydia Davilla, Armando DeLeon, Jon Fortner, John Grant, Michael Harlan, Kevin Jeter, William Norris.

30 Years: Tom Kennedy, Lisa Palomo, David Rotz, Efgenio Tovar.


32 Years: Courtney Burks, Alan Cheek, Bobby Curtis, Michele Howard, Matthew Kuebrich, Timothy Lewis, Shane Martin, Kyle Mayfield, Justin McMillen, Bryant Peeples, Edward Romero, Keeland Scales, James Saffer, Keith Singleton, Kevin St Aubin, Timothy Stephens, James Sudduth, James Tyler.

33 Years: Octaviano Barbosa, Jonathan Conerly, Chad Davis, Tyler Hamilton, Kevin Hampton, Gene Hargrove, Jonathan Hogan, Jason Hubach, Ryan Johnson, Tracey Jones, Brian Kemp, Jacob Link, Jacob McChesney, Jason Moore, Devanel Nash, Carl Reed, Jose Romero, Bradley Scott, Jeff Swenson, Allen Tabor, John Walker.

34 Years: Ken Addison, Taylor Anderson, Earnest Austin, Derek Brau, Shamard Drighet, Andrea Harville, Travis Hodge, Joseph Magruder, Donald Mixon, Jeffrey Pierce, Wyndell Rochell, Gennifer Swisher, Melinda Swisher, Aaron Williamson.

35 Years: Edgar Bazaldua, Randy Bryant, Kelly Callahan, Charles Chipman, Shawn Coates, Austin Combs, Lydia Davilla, Armando DeLeon, Jon Fortner, John Grant, Michael Harlan, Kevin Jeter, William Norris.

36 Years: Tom Kennedy, Lisa Palomo, David Rotz, Efgenio Tovar.


38 Years: Courtney Burks, Alan Cheek, Bobby Curtis, Michele Howard, Matthew Kuebrich, Timothy Lewis, Shane Martin, Kyle Mayfield, Justin McMillen, Bryant Peeples, Edward Romero, Keeland Scales, James Saffer, Keith Singleton, Kevin St Aubin, Timothy Stephens, James Sudduth, James Tyler.

39 Years: Octaviano Barbosa, Jonathan Conerly, Chad Davis, Tyler Hamilton, Kevin Hampton, Gene Hargrove, Jonathan Hogan, Jason Hubach, Ryan Johnson, Tracey Jones, Brian Kemp, Jacob Link, Jacob McChesney, Jason Moore, Devanel Nash, Carl Reed, Jose Romero, Bradley Scott, Jeff Swenson, Allen Tabor, John Walker.

40 Years: Ken Addison, Taylor Anderson, Earnest Austin, Derek Brau, Shamard Drighet, Andrea Harville, Travis Hodge, Joseph Magruder, Donald Mixon, Jeffrey Pierce, Wyndell Rochell, Gennifer Swisher, Melinda Swisher, Aaron Williamson.

41 Years: Edgar Bazaldua, Randy Bryant, Kelly Callahan, Charles Chipman, Shawn Coates, Austin Combs, Lydia Davilla, Armando DeLeon, Jon Fortner, John Grant, Michael Harlan, Kevin Jeter, William Norris.

42 Years: Tom Kennedy, Lisa Palomo, David Rotz, Efgenio Tovar.


44 Years: Courtney Burks, Alan Cheek, Bobby Curtis, Michele Howard, Matthew Kuebrich, Timothy Lewis, Shane Martin, Kyle Mayfield, Justin McMillen, Bryant Peeples, Edward Romero, Keeland Scales, James Saffer, Keith Singleton, Kevin St Aubin, Timothy Stephens, James Sudduth, James Tyler.

45 Years: Octaviano Barbosa, Jonathan Conerly, Chad Davis, Tyler Hamilton, Kevin Hampton, Gene Hargrove, Jonathan Hogan, Jason Hubach, Ryan Johnson, Tracey Jones, Brian Kemp, Jacob Link, Jacob McChesney, Jason Moore, Devanel Nash, Carl Reed, Jose Romero, Bradley Scott, Jeff Swenson, Allen Tabor, John Walker.

46 Years: Ken Addison, Taylor Anderson, Earnest Austin, Derek Brau, Shamard Drighet, Andrea Harville, Travis Hodge, Joseph Magruder, Donald Mixon, Jeffrey Pierce, Wyndell Rochell, Gennifer Swisher, Melinda Swisher, Aaron Williamson.
Houston Team Member retires

by Al Finn
General Manager, Greens Port Railcar Shop

Halloween was a sad occasion for the Watco Mechanical Services Team in Houston, Texas. Team member Joe Hickerson retired from the shop where he has served as the quality assurance manager.

Joe was born in Nashville, Ark., and then moved to Longview, Texas where he was raised and received his education. After graduating high school in 1966, Joe went to work for Warren Petroleum Corp. in a temporary summer job as a “helper” thus beginning his induction into the field of railcar repair. Little did he know that this would be his career path for the next forty-six years of his life.

There were a few journeys that took him down alternate paths in his lifetime; like his seven years of military service in the United States Army where he spent one year in active duty and six years in the Reserves. While in the military Joe had an opportunity to travel to Brooklyn, N.Y., where he met his wife Letha, with whom he has shared the last forty-four years of his life. Together they have three children: eldest son, Greg Hickerson of Gladewater, Texas; middle child and son, Brian Hickerson of Pasadena, Texas; and, his youngest, which Joe still refers to as his “princess,” Laura Hickerson of Channelview, Texas.

While wife Letha spent her career in the medical field as an LVN and later as a medical records administrator, she was the first to retire having beaten Joe to the “home plate” by one year. Both sons have successfully followed in their father’s footsteps. Greg as an assistant plant manager for a railcar repair shop and younger son Brian will be stepping immediately into the shoes being left vacant by his father when he leaves. We also want to wish Brian the best of luck as he takes over as quality assurance manager.

Joe didn’t come to Watco by accident; he came because of a deep and endearing relationship that goes back over twenty years between Joe and myself. We met while working together at another location.

Joe commented, “I taught Al everything he knows,” And with a sly look on his face, he continued, “but not everything I know.”

When the job site that Joe previously worked at was shut down, I immediately contacted Joe because I knew that Joe would be a valuable asset to our Watco Team and to the repair shop. Working here with Joe, you know instantly the great respect I have for him having served under his tutelage and now having enjoyed the privilege of working side-by-side with him.

I asked Joe what his immediate plans for retirement were and he said that he and his wife plan to see all the family that they haven’t been able to see in a while; traveling to Longview, Texas, Arkansas and Ohio. Other than that, he plans to take it easy, enjoy time with his wife, his family, his dogs and his recliner.

When asked what he would like to share with the younger guys coming in to this business, Joe responded, “Having been in this business for forty-six years, I have never been without a job or a paycheck. “The railcar repair business can be very satisfying and rewarding. There are a lot of opportunities for education and advancement. You get out of it what you put into it.”

Joe was also my mentor and trainer; and a lot of what I have learned in my very short time in this industry, I have learned from a very patient Joe. We all want to say “Thank you Joe.” You will be missed by us in our daily lives, but you will live on in our hearts and minds every time we do our job.

We wish Joe good luck with the next chapter of his life.