West Region focused on TS&IC success

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

“If you want to improve the bottom line you need to talk to the guy doing the work”
- Rick Webb, Watco CEO

This comment, repeated often by Webb, is the whole premise behind the Team Safety and Improvement Committee (TS&IC). If you want to improve safety, ask the people doing the work. Back in 2009, when the formation of the committee was being discussed it originally was meant as a tool for teams to discuss and improve safety - starting with the members who know the most about the jobs they do. However, after initial discussions, Watco president Terry Towner thought it could be so much more, it could serve as a tool to engage our team members emotionally and mentally in the jobs they do.

Safety is just one component of what the committees do. Safety comes first but emphasis is also placed on making our work environments cleaner, friendlier and more productive places to be. They also focus on building relationships with the community.

The process begins with the team leader, who has been selected by the manager for his or her leadership skills, being sent to Watco U classes in Pittsburg. The classes teach the leaders how to conduct meetings, prioritize goals, conduct cost benefit analysis, application of the Customer First Foundation Principles for projects and how to identify details needed to complete projects. They are also taught team building and how to work with different personalities.

The West Region has done an outstanding job of working with the TS&IC to achieve the desired results. The leadership team there was very concerned about preserving the spirit and scope of the program, so they came up with the idea to conduct a monthly TS&IC conference call. The call was originally intended to promote accountability on all levels. The general manager, TS&IC leaders and regional team all participate in order to promote transparency with the program. It ended up doing way more – team development instructors Bob McElwee and Mark Bolinger were invited to sit in on the calls and offer their input, and then the TS&IC leaders started sharing ideas with each other.

“We finally realized that this is not our call; it’s theirs,” said Matt Lewis West Region human resources manager. “We started sitting back and listening instead of driving the call. At that point, Jerry Carter, West Region director of operations started asking for volunteers to chair the next call. As it stands today, the TS&IC leaders chair and drive the call, and we simply participate and answer questions. The reciprocal communication and involvement from the regional directors, profit center managers and TS&IC leaders has been one of the key drivers to our success.”

Boise Valley Railroad - TS&IC worked with their marketing manager and had a letter sent to all Customers on the railroad about Blue Flag safety and how to use them. They ordered a computer for the operations team and depot to help with Customer Service and communication. They met with Customer Pacific Steel to get scrap bins at the yard to keep the yard looking neat. The committee has helped organize team events celebrating injury-free anniversaries, Summer Spike, and team building.

“Safety has increased on the BVRR because everyone is more aware of what is going on around them. They want to participate in the meetings and become more involved because they now feel they have a voice in what goes on with decisions and everything else at the BVRR. They take more pride in their jobs and duties and are buying into making this a great place to work. Also, TS&IC is preparing future leaders in our company to help move us forward,” said Gary Wagenseller, BVRR general manager.

Western Idaho Railroad - Many different areas of the EIRR have received attention thanks to the TS&IC. The Jerome depot was replaced and relocated, the Rupert locomotive shop replaced the lighting and flooring. In Idaho Falls lighting was installed outside of the building and... (Continued on page 4)
Texas railroads join terminal and switching operations

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

Two Texas railroads that recently started up share more than just the state they operate in. Both the Pecos Valley Southern Railway and the San Antonio Central Railroad officially began operations on the same date, September 1. In addition, both short lines got their start in other divisions of the Watco family before the railroad portion kicked off.

The Pecos Valley Southern Railway (PVSR) sits in the heart of the Permian Shale Oil basin in west Texas. In May of this year Watco’s Terminal and Port Services Team (WTPS) transloaded crude oil from tank trucks to rail. “We maxed out the existing loading track infrastructure within the first two weeks of transload operations,” says Allan Roach, senior vice president business development for Watco. “Watco has doubled the loading capacity since that time and we have track crews on the ground now working on a project to increase interchange capacity. The line has additional parcels of land for future development, all of which can accommodate unit train loading and/or unloading terminals. Interest in bringing crude and frac sand onto the railroad for transloading is very high and we are excited about the opportunity to grow new business on the line.”

The PVSR was historically operated by Capitol Aggregates to serve their sand and gravel quarry which is located near the end of the line. They interchange with the Union Pacific Railroad which allows crude oil Customers the flexibility to access a variety of markets.

Michael Gibson, vice president of transportation safety and Gulf operations, said, “My hat goes off to our Gulf Region start up team of Keith Barksdale, Paul Goins, Paul Gage, Ron Martin and Pete Tietjen on all their hard work on the start-up of this location. We are thrilled and excited about the Pecos Valley Railroad Team, while transloading crude they have been raising the bar and exceeding everyone’s expectations for the last 6-8 weeks. So far this has been a seamless transition, we appreciate all the team members have done to make this happen and we thank each one of you!”

When the PVSR was busy loading cars with crude oil in Pecos, the San Antonio Central Railroad (SACRR) Team was busy switching cars full of the same commodity. The Watco Switching Team began switching cars in January of this year and will now be running the railroad operations within the Port’s East Kelly Railport. The SACRR will interchange with the Union Pacific and the BNSE.

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Construction on the additional track for the San Antonio Central Railroad is underway, this is part of 15,500 feet of new track being added to accommodate the increase in volume at Port San Antonio’s East Kelly Railport.

The Port has experienced a dramatic increase in rail activity, almost doubling from 2010 to 2011. To accommodate this growth and take advantage of new opportunities, WTS will is building approximately 15,500 feet of new track on the land—adding to the existing 20,000 feet at the Railport.

Established in 2007, the railport houses various facilities, including those operated by rail-car builder The Greenbrier Cos.; transload firm RLI Logistics, which draws business from projects associated with the Eagle Ford Shale; and trucking firm Cornell Carriers, which also accommodates shale projects. The railroad works in unison with the other partners to deliver the best services to the Customers at the Port.

Ryan Williams, marketing manager for the San Antonio Central Railroad, said, “The East Kelly Railport located at Port San Antonio is now officially the San Antonio Central Railroad and under the direction of the Watco Team. The collective efforts by all parties involved in the planning and execution of this project have been truly remarkable. The engineering team has done a terrific job and has remained ahead of the track expansion schedule from the beginning. Our local operations team has stepped up to the challenge; keeping the Customers first while not allowing the expansion to affect service. The WATSS Team and Customer Service teams have also made a significant contributions providing the tools and services needed for making the San Antonio Central Railroad a success.”

Train ride takes passengers back in time

Although Hurricane Isaac threatened to ruin Pittsburg, Kan., Little Balkan’s Days festivities, the train ride on the passenger cars owned by Watco went on as planned. The cars, named after the three eldest granddaughters of Watco Founder Dick Webb and his wife Kaye Lynne, date back to the 1950’s. Conductors dressed in authentic uniforms from the same era took tickets and greeted passengers as they boarded the train.

There was a 9 and 11 o’clock ride on Saturday, Sept. 1, during which it rained off and on for. Sunday however, was a beautiful day and the special train took passengers to the Carona Depot, home of the Webb Family Museum. The museum is operated by the Heart of the Heartlands Railroad Club and features artifacts from the railroad industry.

While in Carona the passengers feasted on a delicious chicken dinner from Pichler’s Chicken Annies. The Little Balkans Festival is held each Labor Day Weekend to celebrate the immigrants who came to the area (mostly by train) to work the coal mines.

Passengers prepare to board the Watco 1950’s passenger cars for the Little Balkans Day Chicken Ride.

Jeremy Judd (l), supervisor and Cody McCullen, pumper/operator work at the location which is now the PVSR.
CBH Group hosts official rail fleet launch

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

While many of us in the United States were fast asleep and dreaming, our partners at CBH Group over in Australia were living a real dream, the ownership and operation of their own rail fleet. On August 24 CBH Group held the official launch for their $175 million rail investment. The event celebrated the purchase of 22 new locomotives, each named after historic rail sidings across the Western Australia wheatbelt, and 574 new purpose-built wagons. This is the first dedicated new grain rail fleet to arrive in WA in more than 30 years. The new fleet is almost complete with just a few more locomotives and wagons yet to arrive in Australia.

The main launching was held in Perth, WA at the Metro Grain Centre with regional events following in Dowerin, Newdegate and Mengene. There were approximately 700 people who attended the launch in Perth which was made up of growers, government officials, customers, business partners, and CBH Group staff. Joining the CBH Group for the launch from Watco was Ed McKechnie, CCO, his wife Kristy, and sons Austin and Jackson.

Special Watco guests included John Neel and his wife Ivana and Chad Taylor and his wife Sarah. John and Chad were winners of a trip to Australia sponsored by CBH. John is an engineer for the Louisiana Southern Railroad and Chad is a trainmaster for the Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad. Chad and John were seated at places of honor at the ceremony.

Taylor commented, "After attending the ceremony it brought it into perspective for me as to why CBH chose Watco. The two companies are very much alike and without a doubt have their Customers’ needs placed at the forefront of their operations. Watco, CBH, and Motive Power were only mentioned briefly in the presentations. The ceremony wasn’t about us or them, they were geared directly towards the Customers from the way the speeches were presented, to the way the growers were interviewed, to the thought of serving only lamb and grain products that their growers had produced.”

As guests arrived at the launch interviews were held on the walk with videos being shown on a large screen of the interviews, the locomotives landing in WA, and an opening video on the arrival of the rolling stock. Presentations were given by Neil Wandel, Chairman, CBH Group; Dr. Andrew Crain, CEO, CBH Group; Watco’s McKechnie; Hon. Terry Reidman, Minister for Agriculture and Food; and Hon. Gary Gray, Special Minister for State.

CBH General Manager Operations Colin Tutt said, “This marks the beginning of a very proud chapter in the history of CBH and the WA grain industry. We will go from strength to strength this year and each train is commissioned and growers see more tonnes moving to port more efficiently.”

Following the presentations, the locomotives were christened and the five winners of the locomotive naming competition were announced.

Paul Green, Watco WA’s vice president of business development and marketing, said, “The day had many highlights with two that will always remain with me personally. An interview was shown of a 76-year-old grain grower who said, ‘I didn’t think I would ever see this in my lifetime’ referring to the CBH Rail Fleet. Then there was the statement from a CBH Group team member, ‘I have grown so much in both my career and confidence due to the rail project’. Yes, it’s great to have a great Customer like CBH as Watco’s first Australian Customer but it also shows what a difference it can make when you can be part of life changing experiences for not only the two people quoted above, but for all involved in the CBH Group and Watco teams.”

Jim Griffiths, WA Rail chief operating officer added, “The CBH launch was a huge success and marked the end of the three year rail journey and the launch of seven trains now truly in-service with three yet to start.”

CBH Group brings train to Dowerin Field Days

The Dowerin GWN7 Machinery Field Days are always a special event in Western Australia but this year CBH Group and Watco WA made it even more so. CBH locomotive CHB009 pulled into tracks near the show with ten wagons in tow, impressing many attending what is called Australia’s largest and most impressive agricultural expo. A shuttle was available to take the attendees to the track to view the locomotives and wagons close-up. On the afternoon of the first day of field days the official rail launch sundowner was held.

WA Rail’s operation zone managers Mark Feinler and Wayne Abel welcomed those who wanted to hop on board the locomotive.

“It was great to get to see the kid’s expressions when they got to haul the horn lever back,” said Jim Griffiths, Watco WA chief operating officer.

The Dowerin Field Days has anything that you can think of that is somewhat farm related. From tractors to cheeses, water tanks to stud rams, fencing products to fine wines, the Dowerin Field Days has it all. It was the perfect venue to introduce to the growers to their new fleet.
Ethanol response training offered to emergency responders in Idaho

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

While the emergency response teams are tasked with the huge responsibility of keeping the public safe - it’s the responsibility of those they serve to ensure that they are able to do so in the safest manner possible. To do that, the Watco Team in Idaho recently worked with the Renewable Fuels Association (RFA) to present a program to the responders to provide them with information on the grades of ethanol, what products work with each grade and how to work with railroad equipment during emergencies.

Missy Ruff, market development manager for RFA, said, "The seminars turned out to be a great success and the evaluations were outstanding.”

Approximately 100 responders attended the training sessions offered in Twin Falls and Idaho Falls. Day and night sessions were available to allow the different shifts to attend.

Ethanol produced in Southern Idaho is often shipped where it’s needed by rail, Easter Idaho Railroad general manager Bill Goldsberry was on hand to let the responders know the railroad routes were that ran throughout the state.

Captain Lance Johnson with the Idaho Falls Fire Department said the class was quite an eye-opener.

Emergency responders are instructed on the various grades of ethanol and how to best deal with the different products in emergency situations.

“I never realized the amount of ethanol that was produced in this area or the dangers of handling it during spills. The class was much better than I had expected, the material and the presentation was outstanding.”

The classes were provided free of charge to all responders and a CD was given to everyone who attended the classes.

Watco hosts railroad exhibit

For the month of September Watco Companies is hosting a railroad exhibit in the Miner’s Hall Museum in Franklin, Kan. Inside there is a variety of items such as pictures, old newspapers, books and maps of train routes. The exhibit is free of charge and for all ages to enjoy, with life size toy trains and a railroad crossing sign quarter drop. Also on display is writer, Carolyn Loss Winter and editor, Kaye Lynne Webb’s book “Raisin Pie in a Miner’s Bucket.” This book is for sale and ten percent of all proceeds will go to the Miner’s Hall Museum. Kaye Lynne Webb, Watco matriarch, helped with the set-up and provided several of the items for the display.

Displays presented by Watco include information about our company, photos of old depots, a Brakeman’s uniform (top), a menu from a KCS passenger train, creamers and a sign reminding passengers not to flush at the stations (bottom). Outside of the museum is wooden train for the kids to play on (right).

TS&IC success

(Continued from page 1) parking lots and inside the shops as well. The Rupert Depot was upgraded with paint inside and out and the flooring was repaired. Twin Falls upgraded yard lights to help the visibility of train crews while switching and installed parking lot lights around the depot. Slip, trip and fall hazards were identified and resolved in the Rupert and Burley areas. Locomotive oil mats needing replacement were identified and replaced at all locations.

This new depot in Jerome, Idaho was one of the projects coordinated by the EIRR TS&IC.

William Goldsberry, EIRR general manager said, “By engaging the TS&IC leaders, the safety focus has become more intense at the field level. The peer accountability is being driven harder than ever. We are constantly hearing over the radio the peer accountability taking place by watching each other’s back and better and more in-depth job briefings.”

Yellowstone Valley Railroad - A safety issue identified at a Customer’s private facility, as a result, the opening on top of irrigation siphon was covered with heavy iron mesh and bright safety orange paint was applied around the rim making it safer for both the YSVR Team and the Customer. Reflective tape was installed on all bumpers at the same location increasing visibility. A target broken off on derail at a Customers location was reported by a team member, the Customer had the derail welded back to ensure safety for both parties.

“TS&IC meetings have been well received on the YSVR and have given team members an opportunity to provide input on unsafe conditions. Management will continue to encourage participation from all team members and support this process,” said Scott Adams, acting general manager.

Mission Mountain Railroad - The MMT Team has had great ideas that involve the community and safety issues as well. They’ve helped the local town pick up garbage, worked on cross bucks for the public and radios for the crews.

Kyle Jeske, general manager said, “The team is working hard on safety and it shows, every idea they come up with is great and they tell me they are walking, talking, safety books. We are 457 days injury-free and 493 days human factor-free. That speaks for itself.”
Oklahoma Team comes to the rescue

by Chet Ackerman
Terminal Manager, Stroud, Okla.

Oklahoma, along with many other states, has been battling record temperatures over the month of July. We received very little rainfall during this time which led to dry conditions that made us susceptible to wildfires. An outbreak of wildfires across our county has caused heartache for families as well as firefighters. Many people across the State of Oklahoma have lost their homes and belongings due to the wildfires.

Our local firefighters, which include our fellow Watco team members, Houston Knight, Dale Dunn and Dennis Neufeld, had been working day in and day out fighting the raging fires. The Stroud team wanted to do something to help the firefighters as they battled the wildfires in the extreme heat. The team pulled together and started raising donations to help support the Stroud Fire Department. In a matter of a couple days they collected four truckloads of supplies that ranged from water, Gatorade, orange juice, peanut butter crackers to paper towels, eye drops, and socks. The cash donations from the citizens of Stroud totaled $655 and were taken to Spirit Bank to obtain a cashier's check. The check was then presented to the Stroud Fire Department.

Team member Dennis (D.C) Neufeld, who volunteers for the Tryon Fire Department said, “Every person that showed up to fight the fires or support the fire fighters was necessary and in most cases we found ourselves short handed. Each man or woman that was there left their jobs, families, a wedding, a planned vacation, and their child’s event just to be there. We are each required to lay down something at the “altar of sacrifice” to serve our country and community. There were a few firemen that required medical care this year. I, myself, sought medical treatment a few days later. My message to you is that each emergency responder is a necessary part of fight/rescue. Each person that doesn't or can't be there can cost us in loss of property or life.”

After ensuring that the Stroud Fire Department was taken care of, the remaining supplies were donated to some of the surrounding fire departments that were in need of supplies. These departments included Cushing, Carney, Depew and Milfay Fire Districts. Our community support we managed to save every home and dry conditions that made the fight very difficult and we had over 19 fire departments battling day and night for a week at a time. Through dedication and community support we are stronger.

Collecting donations for the local firefighters are (l-r): Jerri Titus, Chet Ackerman, Craig Long, Jeremy Shepard, Tommy Dervin, Joel Reeder, and Jason Moore. Team members that also helped but not pictured were Jason Hubach, Carl Reed, Mike Viel, Wesley Bounds, Johnny Morton, and Craig Lewis.

Dale Dunn, who is a volunteer with the Depew Fire Department said, “We are one of the smaller departments in Oklahoma and have very little to work with but at the same time we have one of the largest fire districts around. Our community is spread out over very rough area for fighting fires. The winds and dry conditions made the fight very difficult and we had over 19 fire departments battling day and night for a week at a time. Through dedication and community support we managed to save every home and business in a 6,000 acre fire. Everyone in my department is strictly volunteer that means that no one gets paid to fight these fires.”

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Grand Elk Golfers

The Grand Elk Railroad Team recently had the opportunity to benefit a cause close to their hearts. The group played in the Alzheimer Foundation golf outing in Three Rivers, Mich., and the Grand Elk sponsored two teams and a hole.

Alzheimer’s has affected many family members of the group. Rodney Gordon’s grandfather, Carl Gearhart’s father and father-in-law and Mike Gillikin’s grandmother all suffered from the disease.

Bowl-A-Rama

Members from the Pittsburg, Kan., team had the opportunity to help out our furry friends and have some fun at the same time on August 11th. Two groups from Watco participated in the SEK Humane Society Bowl-A-Rama. The team of Adam and Sara Hanson, Jonah and Debbie Bishop, Steve Smardo and Steve Davis (not a Watco team member) took first place and received a trophy for their efforts.

Watco Team #2 was made up of Lori Magee, Miranda Anselmi, Carlita Guiles, and two non-Watco members, Shane Shanks, and Gene Gorman. Participants were able to bowl, enjoy pizza, and participate in a silent auction.

From left to right: Adam Hanson, Steve Davis (not a Watco team member), Sara Hanson, Jonah Bishop (Debbie’s husband), Debbie Bishop, and Steve Smardo.
Safety and Team Development summit held in Boise

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

What's the best way to make a group work together? The West Region management team thought that throwing their managers and support staff in a raft and sending them down the river would do the trick.

Dave Ruggles, general manager of the Black Thunder Switching operation said of the rafting, "I learned that if you stay in the cold water long enough that your legs and arms quit working and if you're a big guy it will take a TEAM to get you back in the raft, Scott Adams, chief engineer, West Region track, can vouch for this as well, so luckily we were with a good team that assisted us back in."

The meetings started out with a presentation from each general manager stating their current safety records vs. goals, TO goals, and climate survey goals. They then presented plans for improving the current performance of each property in the areas of safety, turnovers, and overall work climate.

The second day they broke out into teams and each group came up with one to two ideas that would help improve safety in the West Region. Each group developed the idea, created a presentation for how the idea could be executed, and then presented the idea to the West Region Team. The team voted on the ideas that they thought would have the most impact to improve safety and developed a plan for how they would execute it.

The third day was the team building day, when the group went White Water Rafting on the Peyote River.

Ruggles said, "The summit was extremely beneficial because it brought the general managers together to share ideas and points of view on a person-to-person basis; we all had a chance to hear one another's thoughts and ideas. The largest new tool that will be a huge long term benefit was the creation of the mid-level management safety call! One of the issues identified is the communication from the general manager right down to the new hire, this call will aid in that and also connect trainmasters and supervisors from all the profit centers. We can share with each other on what works and what doesn't in getting all team members involved in the goal of improving safety and reducing human factor incidents and injuries."

"One of the biggest things that I took from the meeting was from Gary Wagonseller's (Boise Valley Railroad's general manager) Power Point on 'How well do we know our team.' Knowing and understanding the people that do the job on a daily basis and identifying their needs on a more personal basis was heavily discussed. If our teams know we truly take the time to know them and listen, there will be a stronger desire to achieve a safer more efficient work place, thus resulting in the best customer service a company can provide."

Right now is the last chance to enter the First Annual Calendar Contest. Photographers this is your last chance for fame and fortune, Watco is announcing our first ever Calendar Contest. The contest is open to any and all photographers not just those on the Watco Team. Railfans - now's the time to show your stuff!

Requirements for the contest are that the photographs must include Watco properties as the subject matter. They can include trains, mechanical shops, terminal facilities and ports. When sending in your entry include where and when the photograph was taken. Newer photos are preferred but historic photos will be considered as well.

Winners will be selected by the Executive Team and awards are as follows:

- First place (cover) $500
- Second place: $250
- Ten additional prizes to include photo for each month - $100 each

Submissions must be received no later than September 30, 2012.

For digital photography, 4-color high quality printing requires 300 dpi images at 100%. Digital SLR cameras can save photos in the RAW format. This is the format we prefer for the calendar and if you are able, send the photo in both RAW and JPG files.

Send submissions and questions to tvan@watcocompanies.com.
**Weddings**

**Wurtzler - Akers**
Cristina M. Wurtzler and Jason R. Akers were united in marriage on August 25, 2012. They were married at the Grandview Municipal Building in Springfield, Ill. Cristina works in the billing department at the Wood River, Ill., mechanical shop and Jason is employed OHL in Edwardsville, Ill., as a forklift driver.

The couple plans on taking a belated honeymoon in Hawaii next year.

**Stump-Duffy**
Shasta Stump and Troy Duffey were united in marriage on July 21, 2012. They were married in an outside ceremony on the groom's farm in Stillwater, Mich.

The bride is the vice president of sales and marketing for the East Gulf Region CMO.

The couple plans on celebrating with a belated honeymoon in Hawaii next year.

**Births**

**Brystal Faith Reeves**
Daniel Reeves and Megan Allan are proud to announce the birth of a daughter, Brystal Faith. Brystal was born on April 11 and weighed 5 lbs., 15 oz., and was 20 1/2 inches long.

Brystal was welcomed home by sisters Aubree, 9 and Natalie, 7 and brother Aust'n, 5.

Daniel works on the Stillwater Central Railroad's Lawton Sub and is a conductor and engineer.

**Easton Cole Robert**
Tony and Pamela Robert are proud to announce the arrival of a son, Easton Cole, who was born on August 16.

Easton weighed 7 lbs., 3.5 oz., and was 19 1/2 inches long.

Easton was welcomed home by big brother Caleb who is eight years old.

Tony is a locomotive mechanic for the Autauga Northern Railroad in Prattville, Ala.

Grandparents are Eddie and Reeta Lapine. Eddie is also a locomotive mechanic for the Autauga Northern Railroad in Prattville.

**Chloe Rae Cantrell**
Katelyn (Goins) and Andrew Cantrell are proud to announce the arrival of a daughter, Chloe Rae, on July 30 in Irving, Texas.

Chloe weighed 6 lbs., 1 oz., and was 19 inches long.

Proud grandpa is Paul Goins who serves as the Gulf Region CMO.

**Congratulations to the following team members celebrating their anniversaries!**

**1 Year:** Robbie Aucoin, Aron Autio, Demarcus Braxton, Bill Brown, Carlos Brown, Harold Brown, Brandon Burton, Colten Bustos, Caney Carlton, Arthur Clark, Aaron Doyle, David Elick, William Ewing, Ernie Farrand, Jason Hatcher, Jason Haynam, Byron Herron, Fred Hinson, Justin Hoggle, Edward Hutsky, Ashley Jarvis, Justin Jenkins, James Lego, Willis Murohana, Jason McMillen, Albert Merritt, Faredin Muedini, Donald Myrick, Matthew Nelson, Bruno Ottaviano, Carlos Ortiz-Chacon, Frederick Parsons, Daniel Peacock, Brittany Peery, Kenneth Rasmussen, Scott Sears, Steve Sheldon, Thorus Steen, Carol Thompson-Billows, Garrett Vratli, Nathan Weber, Adam Weddle, Lisa White, David Williams, Christopher Wiworski, Ernest Wulf

**2 Years:** Benjamin Beers, Lavarus Brown, Damien Cantrell, Bobby Garmon, Michael Girdner, Cedric Graham, Jeanette Grunow, Scott Hopkins, Andrew Johnson, Steven Johnson, Matthew Kerns, Michael Kerns, David Mathews, David Miller, Kandace Miller, Andrew Moots, JaCorey Murray, Jeffery Nadeau, Clinton North, Bradley Shows, Schyla Slade, Michael Smith, George Tuton, Benjamin Tarrant, Dusty Tenney, Pete Tietjen, Justin Troule

**3 Years:** Stephen Baker, Lewis Barlow, Marcus Curran, Gary Doherty, Craig Dutenhauer, Duane Helms, Troy Johnson, Curtis Joyce, Brecken Larson, Mark Miller, Ray Pericola, Michael Reeves, Chadd Thimesch, Cody Winkleman, Efren Zuniga

**4 Years:** Daniel Archer, Robin Combs, Jeffrey Dick, Janet Gordon, Michael Hankins, Milo Jackson, Kevin Kennison, Joseph Lapiere, Zach Luckie, Charles McLean, Todd Poland, Kenneth Ross, Richard Ryder, Lodi Vaden, Joshua Winegarner

**5 Years:** Clayton Causey, Dale Cross, Rodney Davidson, Timothy Dykes, Gary Graham, Claude Lamb, Misti Lewis, Patrick Lewis, John Nepote, Shane Rickabaugh, Danny Rivers, Brian Robinson, Jamie Wilson

**6 Years:** Cale Burton, Nancy Dickey, James Hagans, Brandon Ingraham, Marco Jamerson, Thomas Laugavitz, Megan McDaniel, Brent Meado, Bill Miller, Doyle Oliver, Michael Pyeatt, John Teglovic, John Wetzel

**7 Years:** Jonas Colley, Matthew Davis, Randy Davis, David Gallien, Annetra Garcia, Matthew Hare, Mark Harrington, Paul Hattaway, Nicholas Laney, Allan Roach, Lonnie Stamper, Kari Stephens, Reynaldo Vargas, Steve Westfall, Thomas Williams, Steve Yates

**8 Years:** William Balzen, Charles Clay, Brandon Craddock, Stacy Grant, Sheldon McClain, Artis McGinnis, David Perry, Thomas Ritchie, Daniel Turberville, Joseph Walker

**9 Years:** Matthew Bachtel, Randal Lewis, William Lockwood, Timothy Parker, Gary Vaughn

**10 Years:** Terry Holloway, David Showalter

**11 Years:** Chuck King, William Patterson, Gary Rosenow

**12 Years:** Ramon Castro, Theron Pope, James Yon

**13 Years:** Roger Miller, Dee Mitchell

**14 Years:** James Bailey, Eric Davison, Lawrence Swenson

**15 Years:** Jackie Brady, Richard Gruber, Dena Patterson, Alforenza Ray, James Selle

**16 Years:** Robert Brooks, Kenneth Fletcher, Anthony Johnson, Stephen Sams, Larry Smith, Rick Swinney

**17 Years:** Brad Hayes

**18 Years:** Michael Waggoner

**19 Years:** Danny Sepulveda

**20 Years:** Ross Olson

**21 Years:** David Tarwater

**22 Years:** Marcello Marcelono, Pete Wilczewski

**23 Years:** David Appleman, William Hendricks, John Nims, Richard O’Connor, Joseph Wagner

**24 Years:** Gary McKern, Michael Zirbel

**25 Years:** Timmie Benson, Eric Davis, Cathy Shaffer

**26 Years:** Steven Fox, Timothy Goeden

**29 Years:** Rodney Campbell

**32 Years:** Alfred Anderson, Fred Porter

**35 Years:** Robbie Meshell

**34 Years:** Ray Lee, Cas Love

**43 Years:** William Weichel
Watco Team says good-bye to longtime member

by Tracie VanBecelaere
Managing Editor

It seems odd to call a young man of 34 a longtime team member but that's exactly what John David Spahn was. John or “Spahnny” as he was affectionately called, began hanging around the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad crew when he was a young boy of twelve, asking to help in any possible way. He didn’t care how dirty or difficult the job was; he was thrilled to scrub the floor or paint a post.

Once Watco Founder Dick Webb figured that John was here to stay, he would give him odd little jobs to keep him busy, which the young boy would always embark on with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye. One summer day when it was really hot out, Dick figured out a task that he thought would send the young man home so he could relax. John was handed a hammer and told he could start pounding the coal out of a railcar being changed over to sand. Several hours later, Larry, (John’s dad), peeked over the top to see a very dirty and sweaty young man pounding away at the side of the car. He went home at the day’s end and showered but, instead of quitting the task, he just woke up earlier the next day so he could beat the heat.

Becky Fearmonti, senior marketing manager said that was a typical Spahnny story. “He had a true love for everything railroad and was always willing to pass his knowledge on to others. When I first started at Watco there were a few terms I didn't quite understand so he told me to show up for work in jeans and boots and he had me ride along on the train so I could see firsthand what they did for all our Customers. Seeing it in person made it all come together and I finally got what they meant. John was good at that, he was a real "go to" guy, not only could you count on him to be there when you needed help but he always had great ideas and liked being part of the process to come up with solutions to problems that arose.”

Randy Letner, SKOL assistant trainmaster agrees, “I could always rely on John for any job at any time. He was like a son to me and we always liked talking about old cars and motorcycles. He was a special kid. Just fun to be around. I miss him.”

When John was sixteen he become the youngest person on the Heart of the Heartlands board of directors and served as secretary of the group as well. Heartland members are dedicated to providing railroad histories, short excursion rides and motorcar trips during the year. When John turned 17 he served as president of the group and was instrumental in obtaining the Carona Depot building and relocating it to it’s current location.

John Chambers, fellow Watco Team Member and Heartland director, recalls this story about John’s mechanical abilities, “When John was just 16 we went down to Fort Smith (Ark.) to visit the trolley museum so he see the trolley cars. We ran into a couple of guys in their 40’s or 50’s who were working on a motorcar trying to get it to run right. John asked if he could take a look at it and in just a short while he had it running up and down the tracks. They couldn’t believe this 16 year-old kid could do that. They didn’t know he had been working on his own motorcars for two years already and had a real knack for it. He could just listen to the engine and know what adjustments the cars needed to get them running smoothly. I think he even learned how to drive a motorcar before a real car.”

“John would’ve liked to have grown up in the 1930’s or 1940’s. He wore old hats from the era and loved to take his dad’s Model A out for a drive when he could,” said Chambers, “They talk about people with old souls and that was John.”

Once John and Deidre married and had children, you would often see him with his kids; Bryson, Kyler and Karlena, at different Heartland events and chugging about Weir in the Model A.

John enjoyed sharing his love for rail with his family and when it was time for the traditional Disney trip, John, being the history buff, had to take them to the original Disney in California - the railroad way. They traveled on the Amtrak train and made it an even more memorable trip.

Regardless of the job he was doing and where he was doing it, everyone loved to be around him and his enthusiasm for railroading was contagious.

John’s wife Deidre said, “We were married in the same church that John’s services were held in. There was a train whistle blowing as we lit our unity candle fifteen years ago and a train whistle blowing at our final kiss good-bye... there's a kind of cosmic poetry to that.”

Spahnny’s family, the Watco Team, and the world lost a wonderful young man, but we are all so very blessed to have known him and to have had him in our lives.