

February 2009
EDITION

The Dispatch

An Official Publication of



2009 School Schedule

Light Duty – April 24,25,26
Ken's Auto Rescue
Kennewick

Heavy Duty – May 15,16,17
Lincoln Towing
Seattle

Light Duty – June 12,13,14
Lakewood Towing
Tacoma

Super Heavy Duty
July 15,16,17,18
Wenatchee (Malaga)

Heavy Duty – Sept. 11,12,13
Rouse's Towing
Spokane

Light Duty – October 2,3,4
Lincoln Towing
Seattle

**Remember
that good towing
operators are not born,
they are trained.**

President Kurt's "Korner"

Hi Guys,

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Rolfe and his family for the death of his dad.

Spring has officially sprung on the 20th. It's about dang time! Even though there's still snow in the west, it's really sunny and nice in the basin, cold though.

Dates to remember: Reno is in May. We're putting an RV caravan together for the trip to down there. Anyone who wishes to join up, give us a holler. We'll be leaving Monday, Memorial Day. We always take our time getting there, stopping here and there along the way. There are campgrounds in and around Reno. We have lots of fun caravanning so come join us. The more the merrier.

Keep in mind the Tow Expo in August in Ferndale. We had lots of fun last year and can't wait to see if DJ7 can top his fireworks show this year. We're looking for more surprises, Dan.

Watch for the next tow school and remember that soon certification will probably be mandatory. Rich Steele and his crew do a great job as instructors.

Support your local districts by attending meetings to keep informed on the latest and greatest things going on in our industry.

As always,
Stay safe out there

Kurt

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Thursday was not the day to call for a tow truck in the Inland Northwest.

Drivers from across Washington and North Idaho gathered in Spokane to honor an icon in their industry, ending Elizabeth A. "Betsy" Merrill's memorial service with a funeral procession of nearly 70 tow trucks.

Merrill, who owned Rouse's Towing and Recovery with her husband, Robin, died last week, five days shy of her 61st birthday.

She was the first female tow truck driver in Spokane and was known statewide for her dedication and knowledge of the business.

"When she started, it was because guys told her she couldn't do it," said Robin Merrill. "She had that spunk to her."

More than 250 people, many wearing coats and hats from tow companies across the region, packed the Riplinger Funeral Home for a service. Then 67 tow trucks drove to Rouse's tow yard on Boone Avenue for a reception.

It was the first time Rouse's had closed its 24-hour daily operation.

The Merrill's bought the tow business in 2003, 26 years after Betsy Merrill was hired as a tow truck driver.

Her love of the business never seemed out of place for her family. Her daughters, Melody Goode and Gwen Druckrey, said her jobs as a driver seemed fitting for their strong-willed mother, who'd already worked as a sheriff's deputy in Pend Oreille County.

"We lost one of the great women in the industry, and there's so few to start with," Goode said. "It's still a good ol' boys club."

Born in Chicago, Betsy Merrill moved to Hawaii as a toddler, dropped out of school after the eighth grade, then moved to Washington with her daughters in 1974 to run a grocery store in Dalkena. Merrill's ex-husband, Ray Bourquin, was a driver for Rouse's when the two married and Betsy used to ride with him on tows. "She just fell in love with it," Bourquin said.

The couple left Rouse's in the early 1980s to own a long-haul truck, but Merrill returned in 1986, then hired her ex-husband as a driver about a decade later.

Merrill's love of people and desire to help them made her a great fit for the job, friends said. She didn't hesitate to help stranded motorists find hotels or rent cars, friends said.

And though she entered the business not knowing anything about towing, friends said she left it as an expert.

"She was more than happy to help people understand the business better," said Cej Florence, a Rouse's dispatcher. "If most companies had questions, they'd call her."

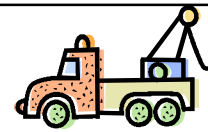
It wasn't just colleagues and customers she helped.

Her employees were her family, and company gatherings her family reunions.

"For people like her, it's more than a business," said Chuck Brewster, general manager of Jim's Northgate Towing in Seattle. "The younger towers, they don't have that dedication."

She took her job seriously and operated her tow yard that way, too.

"I think Rouse's is really the epitome of the opposite of how tow truck drivers are portrayed," said Sean Comfort, 22, one of Merrill's 11 grandchildren. "It's that way because Grandma wanted it that way."



MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFIEDS

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Birthdays /Anniversaries

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RETRO

(from a members perspective)

The Towing and Recovery Association Retro Program has been a great benefit for Mount Vernon Towing.

I operate large and small tow trucks and lowboys, boom trucks and also have a very busy 6 person auto repair shop.

The program aids all of us with the occasional visit, prepared safety program, and insistence on safety meetings. It is so easy to skip the meetings, however the little extra thought on safety has paid big dividends for everyone at Mount Vernon Towing. The lower experience rating has saved my employees dollars in their payroll deductions and my business check to the government.

More important and intangible is the injury loss that did not happen because we are more aware and proactive in safety at Mount Vernon Towing.

Of course getting that big check at the tow expo is really nice. That alone pays my dues to the association with money left over.

The retro committee works diligently on my behalf to ensure only the best risks are accepted into the program. I feel secure in their management of the program. The administrator has always been there for me when the occasional issue does pop up and really goes to bat to monitor every claim in progress.

Retro is a real strong benefit for my company.

Doug Faber
Mount Vernon Towing

Back to school.....

Highlights of the March Light Duty School in Mt. Vernon

Doug Faber and Mt. Vernon towing hosted 13 eager students for this years first towing school for drivers.

The classroom and overnight accommodations were held at the Best Western Cottonwood Inn and Convention center. A very nice classroom setting welcomed the students, with Mike and Joanne taking registrations and trying to sell coffee mugs. (sounds like a pattern, right?) Rich Steele, Mike Johnson, Ernie Martell and the godfather of towing, Steve Cardinale provided the expert instruction.

Saturday and Sunday found the students at Mt. Vernon towing doing hands-on work in less than perfect weather. Doug, Joanne and Mike hosted a barbeque on Saturday and put out a nice burrito bar on Sunday. Lots of pop and coffee rounded out a great weekend.

Thanks to the following students and the owners who sent them.

Dana Adamson from Halls body Shop towing in Moses Lake

Tom Batton from Wyrsh's in North Bend

Dave Juchmes from Wyrsh's in North Bend

Ryan Slater from Rick's Diagnostic on Vashon Island

Dave Isakson from Rick's Diagnostic on Vashon Island

Brad Barritt from Jim's Northgate towing in Seattle

John McNeil from Ken's towing in Seattle

Ed Hetrick from Dick's towing in Seattle

Corey Brown from PRO-TOW in Maple Valley

Jody Lovejoy from PRO-TOW in Maple Valley

Javier Nunez from Ron May Towing in Everett

Jeremy Faber from Mt. Vernon Towing

Michael Corillo from Puyallup Towing





INSIDE THE CAPITOL

By: Stu Halsan - TRAW Lobbyist

March 15, 2009

On Thursday the 12th of March the legislature reached what is called it's "Cross-over" cutoff date. This is the date when all bills, except those necessary to implement the budget must have passed out of it's "House of Origin".. House bills must have made it to the Senate and Senate bills must have made it to the House.

I have mentioned before that only a small fraction of bills that are filed ever become law. Usually there are about 3,000 bills each year and only about 400 make it to the Governor. They are true to form this year.

These "cutoff" dates are a self imposed schedule to try to make sure they get their business done in an orderly fashion and on time. For those of us working issues it gives us the ability to see what's "dead" and what's "alive" and focus our attention where it matters most.

Of issues that affect the Towing industry we now know that the worst bill of the session Senate Bill 5524 which would have required us to make repeated attempts to contact the registered owner of a vehicle by telephone is dead. The bill never made it out of the Senate Transportation committee. Many thanks to all those members who came to Olympia for the hearing and who talked to legislators about its impact. The prime sponsor, Senator Rockefeller, still wants to address situations where people go on extended vacations but he seems willing to work with us on a concept of allowing towers to hold more valuable cars for a longer time as is done in some other states. This idea, brought up by Randy Houston, would have the effect of reducing overages sent in by the amount of our increased storage charges but may be acceptable to the state as it would address this perceived problem. We will keep lines of communication open over the summer to prevent "telephone notice" from resurfacing and potentially turn this to our advantage.

The impoundment of the cars of prostitutes "johns", ESHB 1362 is still moving having passed to the Senate. Initially very poorly drafted we worked to change it's language to ensure that the impound orders would be clearly marked, that we wouldn't have to collect the penalty for the court and that we could rely on an official looking "receipt" without liability even if it was forged. It also clearly states that if the impound is successfully challenged the impounding agency is solely responsible for paying back the towing and storage.

The "Hulk" bill, SSB 5381, that we initially tried to amend to resolve our multiple plate dilemma for hulk licenses died in the Rules committee never having made it to the floor of the Senate. After our interest in an amendment drew opposition from the DOL, the WSP and the Hulk Haulers we pulled back rather than being blamed for killing an otherwise good bill that goes after unlicensed haulers. Although it died anyway of it's own weight we avoided burning any bridges with the agencies that we will need to move our agenda when the economy allows the budget to carry the new licensing scheme.

Our bill, HB 1426, to allow the use of "electronic return receipts" with certified mail and save close to a dollar per letter is still alive as well having passed the House almost unanimously. It is awaiting hearing in the Senate Judiciary committee.

As for the budget, a new revenue forecast is to be released next Thursday the 19th and it is expected that the deficit will grow to almost \$9 Billion. The first sign of the deep cuts that will be part of any budget are showing up with proposals to close parks, reduce college enrollment by up to 10,000 slots, release some prisoners early, roll back the class size reductions that were voted in and eliminate many positions in state government that are not front line. A possible tax increase may still be in the works as well, but would have to go to a vote of the people. It won't be pretty.

Stu Halsan
TRAW lobbyist



Washington State Patrol Memorial Foundation

PO Box 7544 • Olympia, WA • 98507 (360) 866-9555

February 2009

Dear Merchant,

The 27th annual Washington State Patrol Memorial Foundation Dinner will be held on April 18, 2009 at the DoubleTree Hotel at the Seattle airport. This Memorial Dinner is held in honor of those officers who have died in the line of duty.

The Washington State Patrol Memorial Foundation is a non-profit charitable organization, 501(c)3 that provides financial assistance to all Washington State Patrol employees in time of need. We assist employees who become disabled, surviving spouses and children of employees who die while employed, and for the families of employees who may be impacted by catastrophic injury and illness. We also provide ten renewable \$1,000 scholarships for four years to employees, their spouse and dependents.

Our organization is funded through voluntary contributions and fund raising programs. This year a raffle and silent auction will be held at the dinner to raise funds. In honor of our fallen officers we are asking you to consider donating to our raffle or silent auction. For your donation purposes, our Tax ID Number is 91-1222555.

We appreciate your support and thank you in advance for your donation. If you have questions, please feel free to call Sharon Phillips, Manager at 866-9555 in Olympia or 1-888-576-0670.

Sincerely,

Dan Eikum, President
Washington State Patrol Memorial Foundation

Visit the Memorial Foundation Website at www.wspmf.org

If you had the power to change something and didn't,
you don't have the right to complain about it.

-anonymous



AROUND THE STATE

by Mike Walcker

NOTES FROM CHAPTER MEETINGS STATE-WIDE

February 24th.....Dan Johnson and Mike Bartolotti hosted the District 2 and District 7 combined meeting at G.A. Maxwell's restaurant in Marysville. This meeting always starts off with a flag salute and reading of rules of conduct, which I think are a great way to get going. The house was packed for two product representatives, then a brisk debate over the proposed hulk license, which resulted in a vote to not pursue the legislation on the table. A good meal and great conversation followed. Gene Whiteside brought flowers for the ladies (thanks, Gene) and Joanne and I brought the new mugs for sale from the office.

March 11th.....Mike Johnson rolled out the red carpet for 20 District 1 attendees, including a new member-Aaron Rothmeyer from D and D Towing services. (see "welcome to the team" article in the dispatch for a short bio on Aaron) Mike Evans from WSDOT put on a fine presentation of the new ANSI reflective clothing law and offered to do a cable barrier class for those members interested in that issue. He said he could go to other meetings as well. With two companies renewing memberships and one new member, coupled with brisk coffee mug sales, this was our most productive meeting, financially, to date for Joanne and me. A potential one-day class was discussed for the Tacoma area with a tentative date of May 13th put on the calendar. Overall, a great meeting. Thanks, Mike J.!!

March 12th.....Ron Grant hosted 8 members at the Columbia River Inn in Kalama for the District 5 meeting. What this group lacks in size is always made up in participation. There is always great discussion and ideas that come out of this group. At this meeting, Ron gave us a run-down on his WSP CVD inspection and what to expect. Class C tow issues were discussed regarding CVD officers being consistent at accident scenes. Thanks, Ron.

March 17th.....Ken Schmidt was able to round up a few members to attend the District 3 meeting in Kennewick at the Roundtable pizza. The group of 6 did get a great presentation from Ray and Marie Ralph from operation lifesaver who brought videos and a model presentation for grade crossing safety. Complete with handouts and give-aways, the presentation took up most of the meeting. Ken and his company will host the upcoming Light duty school on the 24th-26th. Thanks Ken.

March 18th.....Ron and Theresa Gault hung out the welcome sign for 24 District 6 members. WOW! That's most of the north-central Washington area. The meeting was at the Country Inn in East Wenatchee and saw two insurance representatives give presentations on various forms of personal and business insurance. Molly Elliott from Rivercom dispatch (police dispatch for Chelan/Douglas/Wenatchee/East Wenatchee police) was present and Rivercom strives to have good relations with the tow companies. Topics included Tow-Pac, absorbent clean up issues and WAC issues. With two prospective new members and brisk coffee mug sales, this meeting was good for TRAW! Many thanks to Theresa and Ron for their hard work.

March 19th.....Betty Simmons hosted 16 guests for the District 4 meeting in Spokane. New member Ken Meyers from Evergreen towing and his family attended (see "welcome to the team" article for short bio on Ken). Top Dog dispatch representatives gave a short presentation on their services for dispatching and there was discussion on Spokane Valley's attempts at regulating towing in the city of Spokane Valley. It was suggested that we come up with a way to inform the public to move left when approaching a tow truck working on the shoulder of the road. Several ideas were kicked around, including a bumper sticker, public service spots, and posters. District 4 has the only volunteer Chaplin for TRAW in the state. Dave Bon comes to all the meetings and is a great asset to the group.

We're talking with Dave to expand this type of service statewide with a peer support program to help with any trauma that a tow operator may experience at an accident scene, or in their personal lives. Dave is a wonderful guy who does an important service and we cannot say thank you enough to him. Also, to Betty and Terry for hosting a great meeting.

**Make sure to attend your district meetings!
There is great information,
great conversation, good friends, and good food.
What more could you ask for?**

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THE GRAPEVINE

FROM THE DESK OF MIKE WALCKER, ASSOCIATION DIRECTOR

The number one question that I have heard over the last several months is, no doubt, the same question that everyone associated with TRAW has heard for years. “Why should I join an Association, and, what’s in it for me?” It’s a valid question considering that a business owner needs to balance the cash flow to be successful, and in today’s economy, cash flow is critical. I would like a chance to answer this question for both TRAW members and for those who may read this who are not currently members.

The basic idea of service and pulling together, in my mind, comes from President John F. Kennedy, who said “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country”, or something to that effect. Funny to think of a Democrat saying something like that, but those were different times in our world. As I look at that quote, and then think of people asking me what they get out of the association, I see similar circumstances in the overall problem. John Kennedy was a visionary, seeing the future of the space program and NASA, and the potential in a great country. TRAW has great potential and a great future, but how do you get that potential to surface. More importantly, how does one person joining and participating in membership make a difference?

President Kennedy saw that if everyone in the United States only took away from what the country had to offer, and never put back, that we would soon run out of the energy and ideas that created our country in the first place. That’s what we’re really talking about here, energy and ideas and growth. Things are not always calculated in dollars and cents, and that’s where the business owner and the association need to see eye to eye. We, at TRAW, need to see that the dollars and cents are the life blood of the business, and our tow owners need to see that we count each member as a voice, a bank of ideas and comments and energy that we can use to grow the towing industry. We have strength in numbers. The association, as a whole, gets better with each new member. So how does that affect you?

The better the association is, the better your business environment is. The better the business environment is, the more profit your company makes, the less the government regulates you, and the easier life is for you in general. This is somewhat of a “big picture“ look at it, but you get the overall idea. What you get out of the association is what you put into it. If you don’t put anything into the association, the less we all of will get out of it. Can you imagine what we can do with 250 to 300 towing members in the state? What we now have is impressive, and considering the small number of people who have consistently stepped up to the plate to go to Olympia, write articles, talk to legislators, attend meetings, be on boards and all the other things that go on day to day, I can only dream of what having twice or three times the members could allow us to do.

There are, of course, discounts for tires, a great RETRO program, a fuel program, and the enjoyment of socializing with your fellow business members, and now, a staff that is here to answer your questions and help you in your day to day issues. There is the Dispatch magazine, that will get better each month, the great tow Expo in August, and other reasons to pay dues and be a member, but it really comes down to what your doing for yourself and your business by becoming a member. As for me, I will do everything in my power to get this message to all tow business in the state for as long as the board puts up with me, because dreams do come true.

Mike

TRAW *“The Power of a Team”*

~bressi

MEET THE WALCKERS!!!

Mike and Joanne Walcker are your new association director and administrative assistant and people might like to know a little about them.

Mike Walcker is a native Washingtonian, being born and raised in the Monroe area just east of Everett. He attended Sultan high school and Everett Community College before being hired by the Washington State Patrol in 1975. He was assigned to Executive Protection and worked as security for governor Dixie Lee Ray. In 1979, he attended the 56th basic trooper class and was assigned to Everett as a trooper. After a year on the freeway, he transferred to Monroe and worked Stevens Pass. In 1986, he was awarded "Auto Theft" Trooper of the year and "Trooper of the year" by the National Auto Theft Bureau. In 1990, Mike transferred to Wenatchee and worked as a Trooper until 1999, when he was chosen to become the District 6 tow truck trooper. He worked that position until his retirement in 2007 after 32 years with the WSP. In 2008, he was hired by Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad as a special agent in Spokane, where he worked until coming on board with TRAW. Mike has two grown children from a previous marriage, Stephen, 30, who lives in Seattle and is a product representative for RAF/Elk, a roofing product sold in Home Depot stores across the country, and Leighanne, 27, who works and lives in Pasco with partner Nate, and Daughter Maier Rose, 16 months. She is expecting a second daughter in June, much to grandpa Mike's delight.

Joanne was born in Guilford, Surry, England and moved to the United States with her family in 1970. They settled in the Phoenix, Arizona area where she attended Kenilworth Elementary school and graduated from Camelback High School. In 1988, she moved Leavenworth, WA where she met Mike on a blind date. Together, they made a home in Cashmere and raised Steve and Annie on a small 4 acre farm just north of town. Joanne worked for the Wenatchee Valley Humane Society as an Officer, and as a reserve police officer for both the Chelan County Sheriffs office and East Wenatchee Police Department. A knee injury forced her to retire from Law Enforcement and concentrate on home businesses. She started and continues to operate Country Cat Boarding, an exclusive boarding facility for cats only. She also operated The Galloping Groomer, a dog grooming business until 2008, when she sold that business. She has been a continual 4H leader, and has been a loving horse owner since 1991, when she bought her first horse, an Arab mare who's goal in life was to kill her. She outlived that horse and now has a total of 4 horses that grace the farm. Many, many kids in the Wenatchee valley can attribute a love for animals to Joanne and her 4H program. Family, Church and Farm keep her busy, and now she is doing a great job with the business end of TRAW, keeping books and schedules.

Mike and Joanne owned and operated "Side-Tracked Hobbies" for 15 years, a small train-based hobby store that had locations in Monroe and Cashmere. From that venture, Mike has continued an interest in Model Railroading and races and builds 1/8 scale model Unlimited Hydroplanes that race at different sites around the state, a passion that started with watching Unlimited Hydroplanes in Seattle with his dad as a kid.

Joanne shows and competes in different horse events around the area and is working to compete in Dressage events with one of her favorite horses, Genisis LW, a 9 year old Arab-Appaloosa mare that has wonderful promise as a show horse.

Together, Mike and Joanne are very pleased with this new job assignment and look forward to many years working to expand TRAW and making the association one of the best in the country. They especially enjoy meeting all the great people that are involved with the towing business in the State and the energy and love they bring to what they do.



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CREDIT CARDS

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If you are under the assumption your 2009 membership dues were automatically renewed because your credit card was on file, **they did not renew.**

Please take a minute to make sure all your information is current.

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DATES TO REMEMBER

BOARD MEETINGS:

April 7th, 2009
10:00am Cle Elum Fire Station

Light Duty School

April 24th - 26th
Ken's Auto Rescue
Kennewick

2009 NW TOW EXPO:

August 14/15, 2009
Silver Reef Hotel,
Casino & Spa - Ferndale, WA

REMINDER:

TRAW will process your overweight permits for you. All you need to do is call the TRAW office at 509-782-7170 and you will be faxed a form.

Once you complete the form and fax it back, the TRAW office will process it for you through the Department of Transportation and send you the permit.

TOWING & RECOVERY ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON



TOW PAC NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

TRAW is looking for contributions to TOW PAC.

TOW PAC is the Political Action Committee of the Washington towing industry organized by towers, and for towers to support candidates for the legislature that understand the issues facing our industry.

TOW PAC is voluntary, non-profit, non-partisan and non-discriminatory and is political and educational in its purpose and programs.

TRAW – *"The Power of a Team"*

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(360) 876-8292



What's Your Sign - Who's your Mascot?

What's your Logo?



What makes your
Business Unique?

By: [Joanne Walcker](#)

Each month we will present a sign or logo for a towing members business.

Members will guess on its location and business name.

The member with the most correct guesses will be award a prize at the 2009 Christmas Party.

We will post the answer in the next Dispatch.

Please send me your guesses by email jewelcker@aol.com and I can take the first correct one.



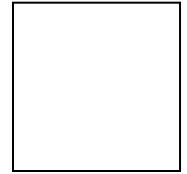
Please send me your pictures or logos so that we can put you in The Dispatch...

Welcome to the Team!⁸⁷⁶⁻⁸²⁹²

New TRAW members, lets make them feel welcome:

Aaron Rothmeyer, owner of D&D towing and Transport Inc. joined TRAW at the March District 1 meeting. Aaron's company is located in Centralia and he can be reached at 360-736-2338. His email is wreck-eraaron@yahoo.com. He has one class A truck and will be joining us at the Kalama meetings in the future. Aaron is no stranger to towing, having been in the business in the Aberdeen/Westport area before starting D&D. Welcome, Aaron, and thanks for joining the team.

Ken Meyers and Debbie Reid of Evergreen State Towing in Spokane became new members at the March District 4 meeting. Having a fleet of 5 Class A trucks and one Class E truck, Ken and Debbie specialize in private property impounds and bring a fresh and welcome perspective to TRAW. They can be found at 6511 N. Perry in Spokane and can be reached by phone at 509-489-8697. Email them and say hi at EvergreenTowing@aol.com. We're looking forward to seeing you and working with you both for years to come!



CONTRACTED STAFF

Mike Walcker
Association Director

Joanne Walcker
Administration Assistant

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We're On the Web!!!

Here are some of the things you will find at:

www.towingandrecovery.org

- Membership – alphabetically & by location
- Current Events
- Education Schools & link to registration forms
- Legislative Updates
- Tow Pac
- Retro
- District Meetings
- Link to RTTO Manual
- Supplier Partners & Link
- Link to Dispatch Publication



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