

# TOWING & RECOVERY FOOTNOTES®

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Pg 14

December 2008

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## TOWING SAFARIS

This African company covers nearly a million square miles



You want big? This Car Towing Service double-ender is carrying a dead weight of 100 tons plus the weight of the trailer.

By Bill Jackson

Before I introduce you to Car Towing Services (CTS), a quick lesson in geog-

raphy will help you know more about the huge size, wide range, and enormous diversity of this company.

Pause for a moment to consider the map of South Africa and note that the country covers 472,000 square miles. Now compare South Africa with Texas, which covers 261,000 square miles. So it's twice the size of Texas, and with a population of 45,000,000 to 22,000,000 Texans. Most of the potential wealth and raw materials in the continent of Africa are centered in South Africa as well.

Driving from top to bottom of the country will take you over 1200 miles of sometimes very lonely roads, and driving from east to west is 1,000 miles of some of the most awful countryside (i.e., deserts) you will ever find. South Africa shares borders with Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique, and Swaziland and has



the Cape of Good Hope down south, which is surrounded by the Indian Ocean.

Now if you add to this the other countries where Car Towing operates,

then you can double the area the company covers to an amazing 900,000 square miles. That's like combining Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, plus a bit of California, which is exactly how I saw the business potential in all this space and why I opened Holmes Wrecker Sales in Johannesburg, SA in the early 1970s. But I very soon found out that the whole idea of tackling almost a million square miles on my own to operate and market a sales business was just too daunting and politically unwise for me.

### Well Rounded

However, Henry Raubenheimer, the now-retired owner of CTS and a world-wide legend in this business, had obviously seen the enormous potential for a well-equipped towing and recovery business in the region and created Car Towing Service in 1972.

When I first met him, he managed a big used-parts business, breaking up the very popular Volkswagens and redistributing the parts to hundreds of owners who could not get permits to bring in new cars. He also owned CTS by then and had purchased some of my imported Holmes equipment. So he was not surprised when I asked him to buy me out completely, which he did promptly.

Car Towing Services has developed into a superbly well-rounded business, operated basically in three divisions: light-duty roadside repairs, light- to heavy-duty towing and recovery, and the very large transport division. Every division must be self supporting.

See TOWING SAFARIS, page 5

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# Brainstormin

with stormin' norman

## Out Of Thin Air

*Don't be a loser in  
our financial house of cards*

By Norman Horton

Obviously we've all been watching the interesting developments in our economy. It certainly makes for stimulating conversation around the dinner table. There are also a lot of conversations going on these days in the back rooms of government offices, ones you'd love to hear: conversations involving what we are going to tell our mortgage holders, the Asians and the Arabs.

We live in a society that works not only on cash but on credit. A few years ago you would never see a credit card machine in a tow truck. Now, while they are fairly common, you pretty much can't get along at all without one in the office if you're going to have any retail sales. People just don't pay in cash anymore, unless you require cash to release something from the impound yard.

I used the word "cash." Let's examine that. If you look at any greenback you will see the words "Federal Reserve Note." What does that mean? Well, suppose you get a loan at the bank and you sign a note. That note means you owe that bank money. Likewise, a federal reserve note is nothing more than an IOU from our own American central bank (which our Founding Fathers never wanted us to have) called the Federal Reserve, or "The Fed."

### Creating Money

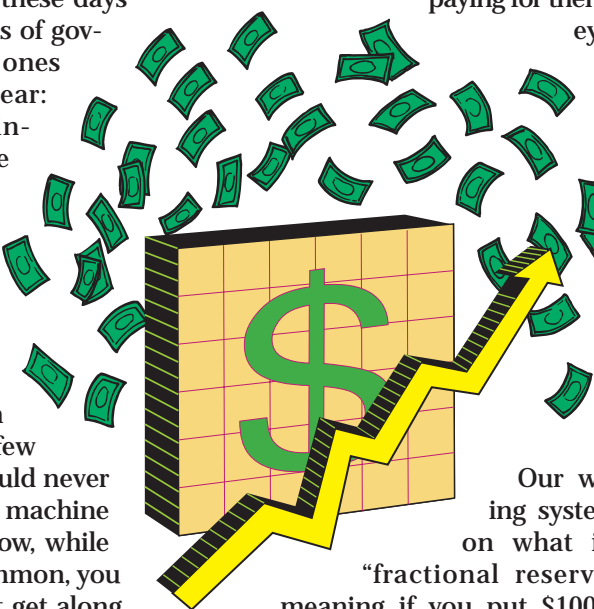
And what does the Fed do? It generates money. Their mission in life is to create money out of thin air. One of the ways the Fed does this is by buying treasury bills from the government and paying for them with money

they have created out of thin air. While we could call that "running the printing presses," banks call it "checkbook money."

Our whole banking system operates on what is called a "fractional reserve" system, meaning if you put \$100,000 in the bank, the bank can create \$900,000 of "checkbook money" (i.e. out of thin air) and loan you a million dollars.

Now if you or I write a check and we don't have the money to cover it, we go to jail. If we print money with nothing to back it up, it's called counterfeiting and we go to jail. But the Federal Reserve, which is really a cartel of privately owned banks (no, it is not a government agency), has the legal right to create money out of thin air. Your friendly neighborhood bank down on the street corner is also legally entitled to create money out of thin air.

Please understand that with a fractional reserve banking system, when you put your \$100,000 in the bank and



the next guy puts his \$100,000 in the bank, if you all went down there to withdraw the money at one time, it wouldn't be there. Because not only is it loaned out, it's loaned out up to 10 times over. It actually gets worse than that, but that's a story for another day.

### Running On Debt

I can understand that since ours is a credit or debt or liquidity-driven society (choose your poison; it's all different words for the same thing), most everything runs on debt, including our federal government. So when the government recently asked for 700 billion dollars, which, once again, was created out of thin air, and they bailed out AIG and back-stopped Bear Stearns, Fannie, and Freddie, where did this money come from?

They say it comes from the taxpayers . . . well, it does, sort of. It comes from writing checks out of thin air, which creates a hidden "tax" called inflation. With nothing more solid to back up our money than an IOU from the Federal Reserve, the only way to keep the music playing and the system going, like any upside-down pyramid, is to print more and more and more money.

If all this sounds rather shocking or confusing, then you may ask, what does all that have to do with us? First, get the book *The Creature From Jekyll Island* and read it. It's an incredible eye opener. As business people, we need to understand the underlying economic system (or lack of it) that we have and how it can apply to our businesses.

With a system like we have, everyone should understand that it is basically a house of cards and one that's not stacked to favor the little guys. You may have noticed that the ones that get bailed out are the ones that are "too big to fail" and this is more by design than by accident.

### Raising Prices

With all that said, how does it apply to us? First of all, for years I've preached that you've got to continue to raise your prices. This is the very reason why: You're on a treadmill like a ham-

See BRAINSTORMIN, page 8

## Towing & Recovery Footnotes®

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# TOW LINES

## Letters to the editor from our readers

T&R Footnotes invites and encourages readers to submit letters on any topic by email to the editor at [bcandler@traderonline.com](mailto:bcandler@traderonline.com) or by snail mail to Bill Candler, Towing & Recovery Footnotes, Dominion Enterprises, 150 Granby Street, Norfolk VA 23510. Publication and editing of letters will be in the editor's sole discretion.

### To the Editor:

With this tough-looking economy, banking uncertainty, and talks of recession or depression, I decided to do some research and look back at the Depression era to see what companies survived and why. It seems that through the tough times certain businesses have found opportunity for growth and survival. What I have found is that every unfortunate event had an equal or greater amount of opportunity available.

It goes back to Newton's law which says for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Here is an example: If someone wrecks a vehicle, the opportunities for income are body

shop repair, towing, storage, and rental car, just to name a few.

Another example of an unfortunate event for someone may be if they break a leg. If someone breaks a leg, the opportunities for income are to sell the person crutches, rent them a wheelchair, or sell the doctor the cast material or a new x-ray machine.

I believe that no matter how bleak this economy gets, there will a lot of opportunities for those who focus on finding them. Tom Landry once lost a football game to the Redskins that no one believed the Cowboys could lose. A reporter asked Mr. Landry why he felt they lost; he replied that It is very simple — we came here determined not to lose the game and the Redskins came here determined to win it!

Perhaps it is that simple. I want to encourage every one to go and win the game.

**Chuck Ceccarelli**  
In The Ditch Towing Products  
Mountain Home, Idaho

### To the Editor:

Regarding your recent articles on U.S. fuel prices and a declining economy there, your readers might be interested to know that while accidents are dropping dramatically in Europe, there are more jobs for local road service. Many towers over here are making more money from road service than with accident towing.

**Rob Dragt**  
Amsterdam, Holland

### To the Editor:

Just a note of thanks for running the articles on the women in towing (Nov. 2008 issue). I always like reading about women in this industry. It's very rare that we get some "exposure" out there in the media. Keep up the good work.

**Geri Roskopf**  
President, WTRAA

### To the Editor:

I read everything I can and enjoy all the thought processes, and this month (October), Footnotes on fuel is so right on. I just had an ISP official in my office telling me how our fuel surcharges were wrong to charge. I asked him did he know just how much a 25-vehicle operation drank a month in diesel? He could only tell me how the public should not have a fuel surcharge applied to their tows. Wow! I was flabbergasted to say the least. If your writers are working on any more articles about that issue, I would like to put in

my two cents worth.


**Kevin Farthing**  
Waffco Towing  
Lake Station, Indiana  
[www.waffco.net](http://www.waffco.net)

### To the Editor:

As a tower and hot rod nut, I read magazines about both. The features I like the most every month in some of my hot rod magazines are about vintage tin or old iron. Readers submit pictures of old worn-out cars and trucks in fields, barns, garages — any place where old vehicles have been retired and put to pasture and are just sitting around.

I would like to suggest that Footnotes readers be invited to send in photos of old tow trucks that are no longer in use, retired and just sitting around in disrepair. Respected veterans, if you will.

**Terry Hall**  
Retriever Towing  
Portland, Oregon

**Editor's note:** We like this idea and think it could even lead to saving some of the old vets. It also may inspire John Gunnell, our "Hauling History" columnist, to write about some of them. Readers are invited indeed to send in photos of these "retired" tow trucks. If possible, please include the truck's location, any descriptive details about the truck, and how the owner can be contacted. 



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## TOWING SAFARIS

continued from page 1

### Many Locations

Consider the nature of the market in South Africa: It is the world's largest producer of platinum, gold, and chromium, as well as a major exporter of coal, manganese, nickel, and natural gas. Just think of all the thousands of trucks and tankers carrying all these products running over (and off of) nearly a million square miles of roads!

### ***“CTS fields more than 200 tow trucks”***

It didn't take a genius to realize that the future in towing and recovery was unlimited, a fact that has long since proved Henry Raubenheimer to be correct in his initial gamble in starting CTS.

Without a comparable competitor in sight, CTS now operates from nine locations, including Johannesburg and Capetown in SA and in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Tanzania as

well. CTS fields more than 200 tow trucks and more than 40 low-beds, distributed around according to need. Now, after Henry's retirement, his two sons, Rickus and Gustav, control the entire fleet with their large staff of 280 operators and assistants, plus 95 office staff.

The first and most important step CTS took was to test and install some reliable means of communication. This they managed to do by installing first VHF and later satellite tracking on each and every truck to overcome the immense difficulties and expense of traveling great distances while needing to talk with one's office and other divisions.

### Many Factors

CTS started with two Peterbilts that they imported in the mid-Seventies. Now, with modern communications, they know exactly where every one of their trucks is at any given moment. It's one thing to go out to a call, say 50 miles away, and find it's a bad call-out, but it's another thing entirely if you have gone 300 to 400 miles!

Next, it was imperative for CTS to outfit all the big trucks with full sleeper accommodations — you just can't find a handy motel in that country!

Then there was the necessity of providing constant training for all the drivers. It is all done in-house and is extensive enough to allow heavy-duty drivers to manage incidents on their own without home office supervision. Company policy is to choose the best driv-



This illustrates the vital need to carry everything you might need to deal with 20,000 pounds of rolls of rubber hose scattered all over the forest in a remote area with a total overturn that needed a good deal more than a “pick it up and run” approach

ers for extensive in-house training, then to give the select few the chance to become a depot manager. The oldest-serving such CTS driver, Samson Makhomboti, has been there since 1974, for 34 years!

The fleet includes Volvo, DAF, Scania, Western Star 50/65SR by NRC, International Navistar, Peterbilts, and many cranes, and 40- to 120-ton trailers by Dyson, Traileze, Dohl, and Martin. CTS uses NRC products for their big-boom trucks because the Slider gear enables their trucks to pick up greater loads without bringing in more help — which could be many miles away!

### Varied Terrain

The ground conditions in South Africa range from farmland to swamps, deserts, and forests. Each CTS truck has to be prepared to work under the worst possible conditions without making a call for a back-up. Although the average workday is 12 hours, all bets are off when you go out to a tanker roll-over 250 miles distant.

I well remember the ridicule I met from SA government authorities when I showed them how to lift an overturned trailer with my Matjack

See TOWING SAFARIS, page 6

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**2001 Peterbilt 378**, white, 36" sleeper, n14 cummins, 13 sp trans, jb, tilt and telescopic, a/c, 255k miles, dual s/s vortex breathers, dual chrome exhaust, alum. wheels, air ride seats. Equipped with a Century 7035 Alum Wrecker Body, 35 ton, whelen strobe light bar, tailboard controls, wired and wireless remote.



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Towing Safaris  
continued from page 5

Big Orange air cushions, which I first tried to sell there in 1974. This just goes to show you how long it takes some products to become successful — the Raubenheimer brothers now find Matjacks to be invaluable in one-man long-distance recovery. They often enable the operator to get the first lift needed in order to start working with chains, straps, and other recovery gear.

On Trucks

According to Rickus Raubenheimer, a CTS truck should complete 1,100,000 miles before retirement. The company's latest trucks are a Western Star 65-ton, a Western Star with an 80-ton NRC, and two 40-ton Volvos from Sweden with NRC Slider gear. As towers know, with tow trucks it's not the maximum lift with boom closed that is important but the max-im lift with boom extended, as this is where you usually want the hook to drop. With the Slider, however, the base of the boom moves some 10 feet nearer to the load, increasing the lifting power by up to 50 percent. This is not necessarily important when you can call for a back-up truck, but if you are out there all alone and the job must be done, you have got to have the power to do it!

As in some places over here, it is cheaper there to unload an overturn than to try recovering it loaded, but this probably only applies to soft-sided trailers which invariably lose half their load when going over. If you have ever tried to upright a "soft side" on a cold, wet night with slippery, swampy conditions then you will know the misery of recovery in its purest form.



Rolling this tanker back and re-loading it by using the boom on the NRC in the rearmost position shows why the slider feature is so important. The operator is using four winch cables to ensure full load control.

And Bucks

How does all this stack up money-wise for CTS? The hourly rate for a big 65-tonner is around \$190 plus turnout charge, so it's not that different from here. However, any job taking over five hours is a minimum of \$1,000 US. In my view, that's a helluva deal for the locals.

Gas and diesel are about \$4.80 per gallon so those trucks with 550 hp power units need to carry two very hefty tanks.

I suggested earlier that CTS has little or no real competition. In truth, there is always someone trying to get a slice of the CTS pie, but the company's guiding principles of good training, top equipment, and constant and close supervision, all coupled with a plan to encourage employees to be at their best always and ready for a promotion have always led to market domination and company success.

I know that brothers Gustav and Rickus Raubenheimer continue to make Henry, their dad, very proud of them and the company he started many years ago.

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By Cyndi Knight

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**Second Miller Industries Motorcycle Ride.** The Second Annual Miller Industries Motorcycle Ride was held on Sunday, Sept. 21 in Chattanooga, TN. It followed the conclusion of the International Towing & Recovery Hall

### "Over 50 motorcycle riders departed from the Museum"

of Fame and Museum's weekend events that included the unveiling of names on The Wall of the Fallen and the Museum's Annual Hall of Fame Induction Banquet.

Over 50 motorcycle riders departed from the Museum and were led by two Hamilton County Sheriff's cars along with three deputy sheriffs on motorcycles. The group wound up the mountain roads to the top of Lookout Mountain and through the Tennessee countryside. The 90-mile ride concluded at Miller Industries' factory in Ooltewah, TN.

For more pictures of the ride or the other weekend events that included the 8th Miller Rotator School and plant tours, visit [www.millerind.com](http://www.millerind.com) and click on "Galleries."

**Hall of Fame Class of 2008.** Eight industry leaders have been inducted into the International Towing and Recovery Hall of Fame as the Class of 2008: **George D. Connolly** (Westminster, CO), **Richard Daley** (Hamilton, Ontario, Canada), **William G. Miller**



George D. Connolly, Richard S. Daley, William G. Miller, Clarissa Powell, J. Rodney Poynter, James Salentine, Stephen B. Shinnick, Thomas A. Tedford

(Chattanooga, TN), **Clarissa Powell** (Winter Park, FL), **J. Rodney Poynter** (Bellevue, KY), **James Salentine** (Greenfield, WI), **Stephen B. Shinnick** (Great Missenden, England), and **Thomas A. Tedford** (East Hartford, CT).

All were nominated by members of the International Towing & Recovery Hall of Fame and Museum for their contributions to the towing and recovery industry, their families and their communities. The newest Hall of Fame members were recognized at an induction ceremony held on Sept. 20 at the Chattanooga Choo Choo Hotel.

The International Towing & Recovery Museum is now accepting nominations for the Class of 2009 through Dec. 31, 2008. Please find the nomination form on the museum's website at [www.internationaltowingmuseum.org](http://www.internationaltowingmuseum.org).

**Don't Miss The Footnotes' TowBlog** at [www.trfootnotes.com](http://www.trfootnotes.com)! Make it a "Favorite" on your Internet page and check it often. Join the crowd – we're getting over 1500 hits a month and growing! Simply go to our web site and click on the "Tow-Blog" icon. Or go directly to the site at [www.trfootnotes.com](http://www.trfootnotes.com).



JerrDan's large business award

## Our Lost Men

**Joe Cabral**, 48, of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, died during an accident when his tow truck crashed into a hydro pole and a bus shelter on Sept. 17.

**Gregory Thornton**, 54, of Oceanside, CA died Sept. 19 when his tow truck went through a guardrail and rolled over.

**Stanley Schultz**, 55, was killed in Conroe, TX while working on the side of the road on Sept. 24. He was struck by a van whose driver crossed into an opposite driving lane in a no-pass zone. Schultz had named his company Second Chance Towing since he had survived organ transplants in the past.

[notesnews.blogspot.com](http://notesnews.blogspot.com). TowBlog features towing news, our "Lost Men," towing heroes, shows and other events you won't want to miss, announcements, opinion on issues, and other information of interest.

**JerrDan Gets Top Business Award.** JerrDan Corporation, an Oshkosh Corporation Company and a leading manufacturer of towing and recovery equipment, received the 2008 Franklin County Area Development Corporation (FCADC) Large Business Award. JerrDan was awarded by the FCADC Industry Appreciation Committee. The award criteria for large businesses are those that employ more than 100 full-time employees, have been in operation for at least five consecutive years, and contribute to the overall economic and civic well being of Franklin County.

In 2008, JerrDan invested \$4.5 million in improvements and expansion to their wrecker production facility located on Molly Pitcher Highway in Greencastle, PA. The development provides JerrDan with additional capacity to meet demand and streamline the wrecker product manufacturing processes.

**West & ECTTS Do Their Best — Again.** A round of applause to Robert West of West Service Center of

See **SHORT HAULS**, page 10

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The Miller motorcycle riders



# TRUCK TALK

## Towing The Line

Two towmen test a tough Dodge Ram 5500



Steve Heller of Howard Sommers Towing and Jeff Littman of Century Towing, both of the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles, put the Dodge Ram 5500 to the test

By Chris Brown

Dodge is back in the heavy-duty work truck segment in a big way. How does a 2008 Dodge Ram 5500 with a flatbed package stack up when two seasoned tow truck operators put it to the test?

Two years ago, Dodge elbowed its way back into the commercial market with the 2007 Dodge Ram 3500 Chassis Cab. Last year, the manufacturer expanded into Classes 4 and 5 with the introduction of the 2008 Dodge Ram 4500/5500 Chassis Cabs. The 2009 Ram 1500 is much anticipated but the 4500/5500 Series is essentially staying the same — 2008 was the landmark year.

So how do these new trucks perform? Instead of reading off the specs, Dodge let T&R Footnotes decide with a real-world workout. The manufacturer provided a 2008 Dodge Ram 5500 regular cab 4x4 equipped with a 19-foot Jerr-Dan Pioneer aluminum flatbed rollback and wheel lift.

We took it straight to a couple of experts in the field: Jeff Littman of Century Towing and Steve Heller of Howard Sommers Towing, both of the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles. We met them at Heller's workplace.

Littman and Heller's businesses are at opposite ends of the towing spectrum. Littman transports high-line vehicles for private clients such as actors, sports figures, and musicians. Working in an official police garage, the majority of Heller's tows are non-consensual.

Whereas Littman needs to treat each vehicle like fine china, Heller is involved with wrecks, repos, and police tows in which speed is of the essence. Both have towed vehicles hundreds of thousands of miles, so they had lots to say about the truck and how it might meet an owner's needs.

### Kicking The Tires

The 2008 Dodge Ram 4500 and 5500 models are powered by a 6.7-liter Cum-

mins Turbo Diesel (305 hp, 610 lb-ft of torque) with a six-speed automatic transmission, diesel exhaust brakes, and a standard 52-gallon rear fuel tank. Our tester came with an optional 22-gallon mid-ship fuel tank.

Littman found the step up into the cab to be "a doozy," especially without running boards. Brad Pugh, Dodge's product planner for the Ram Chassis Cab, said the manufacturer minimized the ride height compared to other trucks in its class. "We feel Dodge is pretty well positioned in terms of ride height and step-in height," Pugh said.

Our SLT-trimmed test vehicle came equipped with creature comforts and bells and whistles that impress automotive editors but make true truck users see "more stuff to fix."

Hence our tow testers said they could do without the optional GPS navigation system and premium cloth seat upgrade. However, Heller found the electric adjustable mirrors to be a great benefit when backing up.

Littman liked the easy-to-read instrument panel and found the controls easy to get to.

Heller said the floor-mounted control box that runs the PTO may be a nuisance when a third passenger needs to ride in the cab. He has a new Ram 5500 on order; he'll ask Jerr-Dan to mount the control box beneath the dash if possible.

Heller found that the capacity of the two armrest storage areas as well as the ample storage behind the seat had competitors beat.

### Up On Deck

Moving around back to the tow deck, our testers were impressed with the "maintenance-free" bed, owing to Jerr-Dan's new greaseless slide pads.

Littman pointed out how the wires and hydraulic lines are enclosed in the

See **TRUCK TALK**, page 19

## Ram At A Glance

Features of the 2008 Dodge Ram 4500/5500 Chassis Cab:

- GVWR 14,000 to 19,500 lbs.
- Regular or quad cab
- Four available cab-axle lengths (60, 84, 108 and 120 inches)
- Standard 6.7-liter Cummins High Output Turbo Diesel, 305 hp, 610 lb-ft of torque
- Six-speed automatic or manual transmission with Power Take Off (PTO) capability
- 52-gallon fuel tank
- Standard diesel exhaust brake system
- Commercial-grade frame (50,000-psi steel)
- Industry-standard 34-inch frame rail spacing facilitates aftermarket upfits or retrofits.
- Life-to-overhaul intervals of 350,000 miles



The 2008 Dodge Ram 5500 Chassis Cab has a maximum GVWR of 19,500 pounds. The Gross Combined Weight Rating (GCWR) for both 4500 and 5500 models is 26,000 pounds.

## BRAINSTORMIN

continued from page 3

ster running and running and never catching up because more and more funny money gets injected into the system, which creates inflation. And since inflation means prices are going up, yours should too.

One of the reasons oil prices ran up was because all that money created out of thin air had to go someplace into the market to beat inflation. The stock market is actually in the same place it was in 1997 so all the funny money got put into the only thing going up and that was commodities.

*"You've got to continue to raise your prices"*

And that made inflation even worse.

Talk about a vicious circle — like the addict that has to have more and larger fixes to produce the same effect, the same happens in our economy. It takes exponentially more to produce the same effect until you get to the point it really has no effect at all. I think the Federal Reserve and the government are finding this out even as they've been trying to put more into the system to re-inflate our economy.

We don't know where the financial system is going to go and they don't know where it will go either. We do know it can't continue like it has been. Even if things smooth out for a while, basically a Band-Aid has been put on a torn artery.

### Some Ideas

So now that you're considering raising your prices, how else do you handle the situation? Here some suggestions:

- Keep some cash around the house
- Have a truck or two that's paid off completely
- Just my personal opinion, but I'd put some excess money in silver. I say silver as opposed to gold because if things really get crazy, gold could be treated like it was during the Great Depression. That's when FDR made it illegal for citizens to hold gold and it had to be turned in at the government price of around \$50. To this day that's still the official government price. Because silver is an industrial metal rather than just a precious metal, it is used by business and industry and still holds its value, especially since our currency is only worth what people think it's worth.
- Always negotiate. For example, you should negotiate the interest rates on your bank loan. That 8% they're charging you is

See **BRAINSTORMIN**, page 11





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**2006 FORD F450 6.0 DIESEL**, AUTO WITH VULCAN 810. CALL FOR DETAILS



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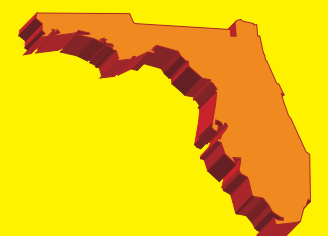


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SHORT HAULS  
continued from page 7

Chesapeake, VA (<http://www.westservicecenter.com/>) and East Coast Truck and Trailer Sales of Portsmouth, VA. (<http://www.ectts.com/>) for raising \$833 for the International Towing and Recovery Hall of Fame and Museum's Survivor Fund in just one day.

During East Coast's second annual Show and Shine on Sept. 13, West and his staff put the pedal to the metal and sold a ton of tickets for their 50/50 raffle during the five-hour event. The donation topped last year's amount raised during the first ECTTS Show and Shine by \$265.50!

**\$70,000 Raised for Injured Tow Truck Operator.** Mike Smith, the owner of Lakes Country Towing of Detroit Lakes, MN, was severely injured during a training accident on Sept. 9. On Oct. 4, a benefit in his honor raised \$71, 727. The amount included \$22,500 from a KRCQ radio-a-thon and a \$1,000 matching grant from Thrivent. Smith, 44, is still recuperating from his injuries.

**Bud's Towing Sweeps 2008 TRAO Contest.** During the 2008 Towing and Recovery Association of Ohio's Show at the end of September, Bud's Towing and Recovery of Cortland, OH brought home five trophies.

Owner Bud Rodgers' 2007 Ford F650 flatbed won "Best of Show," the first flatbed since 1977 to secure that title.



Bud Rodgers, Gaylon Johnston, Jake Lewis, Chris Grannelly

Bud's 2003 F650 took first in the medium-duty class; their 2001 F750 received first place in the "Show Only" division; and their 2007 Polaris Ranger placed second in the Custom Class. Rodgers began his business in 1979 at the age of 21.

**PA's Minuteman Towing Adds Seventh Location.** Brian Bolus, president of Minuteman Towing and Repairs, announced the opening of a seventh location in Harrisburg, PA. at the end of September. The new site offers service to Harrisburg, Carlisle, and York, PA. Contact Minuteman Towing at 800-905-7788 (toll free), 717-546-0030, 717-546-0029 (fax), [service@minutemantowing.com](mailto:service@minutemantowing.com), or [www.minutemantowing.com](http://www.minutemantowing.com).

**TRAA's New Employees.** Sam Brewer, president of the Towing and Recovery Association of America, announced the addition of staff members Natasha Patterson and Juanita Martin to the organization's head-

quarters in Alexandria, Va. in early October.

Patterson is the new full-time director of certification and will be in charge of all national certification activities. Martin is now TRAA's full-time office manager. She had been assisting TRAA part-time as the office manager. Visit TRAA at [www.towserv-er.net](http://www.towserv-er.net)



**Arrow's "Back On The Road" 2009 Campaign.** Arrow Truck Sales' second "Back On The Road" initiative is now underway. Arrow will solicit stories from truckers across the nation who lost their truck and their livelihood through unfortunate circumstances beyond their control. The trucker whose story is selected will receive a 2006 Volvo VNL 670, courtesy of Volvo Trucks North America, a one-year work agreement with Heartland Express, as well as other products and services.

Visit [www.backontheroad2009.com](http://www.backontheroad2009.com) to make a nomination and complete rules. Nominations will be accepted through Jan. 16, 2009 and the winner will be announced in March.

**E85 Now Offered In Seven Locations.** E85, a high-octane, clean-burning fuel with an octane rating of 100 or greater plus the highest oxygen content of any fuel available today, is now available in seven locations owned by

Mid-Atlantic Petroleum Properties.

The newest station to offer VE85, VeraSun Energy's branded blend of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline, opened at the end of September in Germantown, Md. The Town Center Chevron offered the fuel for \$1.85 for the first 185 minutes of sales. The opening of the station was made possible through a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Energy to the Maryland Energy Administration and implemented by the Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board.



**New Kenworth Brochure.** The new Kenworth Truck Models brochure is now available from Kenworth dealers in the United States and Canada. The brochure features Kenworth's Class 8 and medium-duty products, a detailed Kenworth history complete with historical photos, and information on Kenworth PremierCare(R), PACCAR Financial and PacLease programs.

The entire Kenworth Truck Models brochure folds out to a large poster nearly two feet wide by three feet tall. The poster includes a group shot of the T270, T660, T800, W900 and T2000 models, and highlights key cab and sleeper configuration options of Kenworth heavy duty, off-highway and medium duty models.

# Changing your address?

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### TOWING & RECOVERY FOOTNOTES

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# Legislative Update

**New Jersey.** In early October, a bill designed to provide a cap on vehicular storage fees for the first three days following an accident in which the owner is killed or seriously injured was approved by New Jersey's Senate Law, Public Safety, and Veteran's Affairs Committee. Bill S-564, sponsored by Senator Stephen Sweeney, passed the Assembly in February and would limit storage fees to \$100 for the first 72 hours. The Senate must now vote on the measure.

**North Carolina.** On Jan. 1, 2009, the North Carolina Highway Patrol's Wrecker Policy will go into effect. The policy will set a maximum allowable charge for towing vehicles from crash scenes. That price has not yet been determined. Storage fees will be capped at \$10 per day.

# The Wall of the Fallen

Al Gregg

Al Gregg

Al Gregg



**BRAINSTORMIN**  
continued from page 8

8% on top of dollars generated out of thin air. That's a pretty good profit margin. It explains all the fancy bank buildings. The downside to the leveraged banking system is that if they lose collateral or have loans go bad, then they start backing up real fast. For example, when they have to write off \$100,000 or have to foreclose on a house, then they lose the support to justify a million dollars of loans on the books. That's the main contributing factor to the collapse of many banks as well as Fannie and Freddie. It's basically pulling the cards out from the bottom of a house of cards. If you're having trouble paying any of your loans, rather than losing your truck or shop loan, talk to the lender and try to negotiate better terms. This will allow you to keep your collateral and the bank to keep your loan as an asset on their books.

To be in business you have to be aware of not only your own business, but also how the overall economy works so that your business is set up in a way to survive. You don't operate in a vacuum any more then your customers do so watch, listen, learn; then apply the lessons to your own business.

*The views expressed in this column each month are the opinion of the author alone and do not necessarily represent the editorial position of this publication.* ❖

## Headlines That Missed

- Police Begin Campaign To Run Down Jaywalkers
- Safety Experts Say School Bus Passengers Should Be Belted
- Drunk Gets Nine Months In Violin Case
- Juvenile Court To Try Shooting Defendant
- Killer Sentenced To Die For Second Time In 10 Years
- Drunken Drivers Paid \$1000 In 1984
- Stolen Painting Found By Tree
- Judge To Rule On Nude Beach
- Police Discover Crack In Australia
- Men Recommend More Clubs For Wives
- Two Convicts Evade Noose, Jury Hung
- Deaf Mute Gets New Hearing In Killing

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# THE GEAR MART

New & improved equipment from industry innovators



TowMate's wireless light system

Email [bcandler@traderonline.com](mailto:bcandler@traderonline.com) about your new or improved tow truck chassis and bodies, towing parts and equipment, and accessories with any available photos or art.

### Holiday Gift Truck

This 1/34-scale Mack B-61 Open Cab Pumper has a detailed undercarriage, chrome gauges, siren, emergency beacon, hand rail, bell, and tow hooks, and hand-painted parts including nozzles, ladders, hoses, Indian pump, axe, strainer, paddle latches and fire extinguisher.

This volunteer fire department pumper and scene comes to life with the addition of two fire fighters hard at work collecting Christmas gifts from the community for their annual Christmas gift drive — wrapped gifts and dalmatian included.

Idea: Give it as a gift to your local fire department colleagues! This “Tis the Season” set from First Gear is avail-



A gift for fireman friends

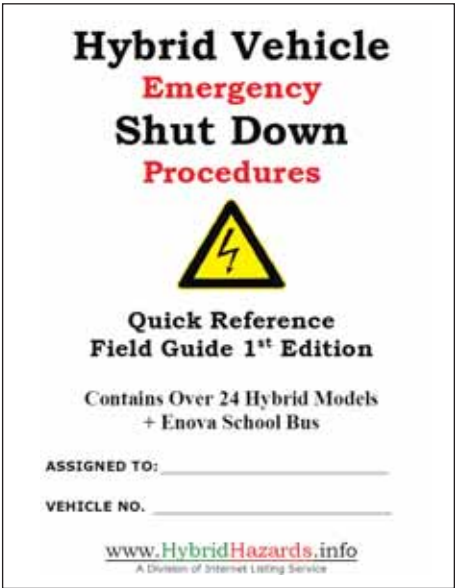
able at [www.firstgearreplicas.com](http://www.firstgearreplicas.com) or by calling 563-582-2071, ext. 211.

### Wireless Light System

Tow Mate offers the TM-2, a compact 15-inch wireless tow light system with side marker lights. Simply plug the transmitter into your vehicle's connector, turn it on, and it's ready to perform. The TM-2 attaches to your vehicle with powerful 90-pound magnets. It provides added visibility with the side marker lights. The system comes complete with light, transmitter, charge cord, protective foot covers, instructions, and lifetime warranty on your electronics. Get up to 20 hours of use before recharging. Call 800-680-4455 or visit [www.towmate.com](http://www.towmate.com)

### Hybrid Towing Guide

Two unique new guides are available for the first time for towing, recovery, and road service professionals as well as all other incident responders concerned about working with hybrid vehicles.



New hybrid step-by-step guide

- The “Hybrid Vehicle Jump Start & Towing Procedures” step-by-step guide covers over 20 hybrid vehicles on the road today plus some that are not yet even on the road but will be in 2009.
  - The first “Hybrid Vehicle High Voltage Quick Shut-Down Procedures” guide is also available in the step-by-step format.
- Both easy-to-follow guides are for all fire, rescue, police, and towing and recovery operators. See [www.HybridHazards.info](http://www.HybridHazards.info)

### New Lockout Kit

Next Generation Tool Company's newest lockout kit is the Reach-It Six

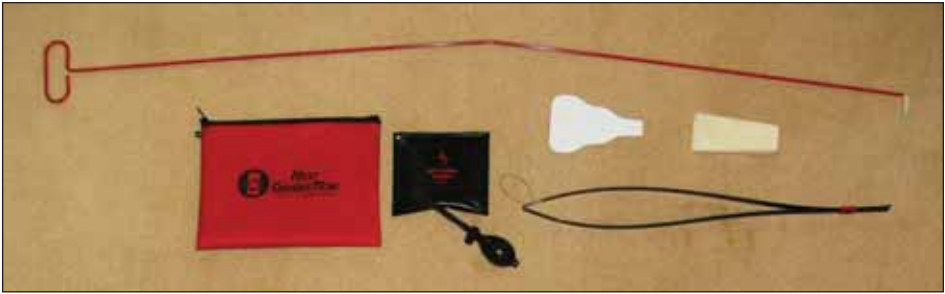
Pack. With this kit, a tower or lockout technician can open almost any vehicle. The Six-Pack includes the basic Reach-It, an inflatable wedge, a solid wedge, a sleeve wedge, the Strap-It GT, and a zippered canvas tool case that fits onto the handle of the Reach-It. This kit can open as many car doors as kits with 20-plus tools. Call 800-874-5625.

### Powered Tool Box

Snap-on Tools introduces EPIQ, a powered tool storage unit designed for auto repair shops. EPIQ merges diagnostics and cordless tools, and features security and durability. Power-Bank is a lockable vertical drawer



A powered tool box



The Reach-It Six Pack



# THE GEAR MART

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New wheel-grid storage system

bank with built-in power access for recharging tools and batteries, plus plenty of space to organize cordless and air-powered tools. PowerTop is a stainless steel work surface with an integrated power source. PowerHouse is a lockable area designed for diagnostic platform and laptop use. Contact a Snap-on rep or visit [www.snapon.com/epiqpower](http://www.snapon.com/epiqpower)

## Wheel-Grid Storage

New from In The Ditch is this new wheel-grid storage system that allows owners of XP or SP Series Century heavy-duties the option of storing their wheel grids in front of the tool box. The Century Heavy-Duty Wrecker Wheel Grid Mount and NRC-Compatible Wheel Grid Mount permit the operator to free up tool box space by storing the wheel grids outside of the toolbox. Right and left mounts are required. Call 888-993-4824 or visit [www.intheditch.com](http://www.intheditch.com)

## Roll With It

Also from In The Ditch is this convenient Tool Caddy, great for rolling



Roll with your tools

under a vehicle. Keep all your drive-line removal tools close by. Made from aluminum for low maintenance. Call 888-993-4824 or visit [www.intheditch.com](http://www.intheditch.com)

## Kenworth Hybrid

Kenworth has introduced a new Kenworth T370 Class 7 diesel-electric hybrid tractor for local haul applications. The goal for the T370 hybrid tractor is to improve fuel economy by up to 25%. The tractor will be available in various wheelbases.

The T370 is powered by the PACCAR PX-6 engine and features a transmission-mounted motor/generator, a 340-volt battery pack, and a power management system. Advanced powertrain controls monitor driving conditions and automatically select the ideal power mode, switching among electric only, combined diesel and electric, and diesel-only power modes. See [www.kenworth.com](http://www.kenworth.com)



Kenworth's T370 hybrid

the-highway applications. See [www.toyo.com](http://www.toyo.com)

## Garage Gear Catalog

Automotive Service Equipment LLC has released a new 64-page free catalog of garage and repair equipment, which includes lifts, jacks, air compressors, tire changers, tool boxes, welders and virtually any piece of equipment an auto repair and maintenance facility

## Safe Shine

Cajun Shine All is a water-based all-purpose wax, polish, and protectant that has no harmful petroleum distillates, alcohols, or ammonia and is environmentally safe. The product contains micro-waxes, polymers, anti-static moisture and dirt repellents, and ultra-violet blockers.

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## Toyo Tires Tops

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Hydrogen generator for diesel engines



# ASSOCIATIONS I

## What's The Best Choice?

*There's more than one style of association leadership*

By James Frankenberry

George McRae has owned his towing service in Milton, VT, since the 1970s, and he was there in the early stages of the Vermont Towing Association in the late 1980s. The more McRae saw – and the more he was involved – the more he knew it was time to change how things were run.

McRae thought the VTA could do better than the “executive branch”-style leadership that had been around since the beginning. “The trouble is, under that form of government, most of the work fell on the president,” said McRae, who spent more than a decade as the VTA’s president. “We had a board of directors and an executive board, but for a small organization like Vermont it was too top-heavy. It ended up where the executive board was forced to make all the decisions and do all the work.”

***“It was time to change how things were run”***

So McRae got to work on a solution.

He didn’t have much experience in government aside from serving on his town’s planning commission. But McRae describes himself as someone who likes “to sit down and study things.” The result of his studies was Proposition 2006, which created new leadership for VTA.

Gone was the association’s executive-branch leadership, which included a president, vice president, and other officers. They were replaced by a board of directors, with a chairman and four vice-chairs, and a hired executive director.

Now, membership votes for the board of directors, “so that means the board of directors is directly answerable to the people who vote them in,” McRae said. “Then the board of directors chooses their own leadership.”

### Outside Man

Bob Broughton was hired as executive director. He came from outside the towing industry. “So he has no interest in a particular towing company,” McRae said. “We needed somebody that could manage a professional trade organization and somebody that was unbiased.”

Among other things, the executive director “organizes the meetings, does the newsletter, seeks advertisers,” McRae said. “That leaves the chairman to be able to run the meetings efficiently and take input.”

McRae served as the last president and was the first chairman during the transition. He’s now a director and said “so far it’s been very, very smooth.”

Under the new leadership “every vote is carefully looked at by a smaller group of people and those people represent their constituents, kind of like a congress,” McRae said. “The board is directly answerable to their members. The biggest reason why this works is it gives better accountability from the

officers and gives the regular membership more of a say.”

The move has been well-received. “I don’t think it’s changed it dramatically,” said Mike Kollman, now the Vermont association’s chairman of the board. “The idea behind it is to get the board members behind the decision-making and in that respect it’s helped.”

### Varying Styles

A sampling of towing associations across the country reveals that leadership styles vary. Some have been similar to Vermont’s model for decades while others have kept the executive-branch leadership style intact.

The Illinois towing association — the Professional Towing and Recovery Operators of Illinois — remains under the direction of a volunteer board, including a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. About 13 years ago, the state association removed the position of executive director and hired Melanie Matthews as a part-time administrative assistant.

Her duties are similar to that of the previous office, but as a one-person part-time position, there is no time for member recruitment — “vital to the success of the association,” she said.

“A strong presidential leadership is the backbone of this association,” Matthews added. “We do have an exceptional first vice president who has put forth a lot of effort in member recruitment for not having an executive director or full-time staff. It is difficult to get 15 business owners to agree on a lot of issues, and without



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Maryland’s Betty Cornwell (left) with Sue Brassell of Virginia’s association and Terry and Paul Johnson of Pennsylvania’s association at an I-95 Hogs meeting





Joann Messina of Southwest Tow Operators of Texas

our executive branch I fear we would move nowhere."

The Illinois association also has a past president on its executive committee. "You need all the working volunteers you can get," Matthews said.

### Maryland Version

The Towing and Recovery Professionals of Maryland association formed in 1979. According to current Executive Director Betty Cornwell, there was no executive director in that first year. "Everybody was trying to do everything and we were butting heads on some things," Cornwell remembered.

She and her husband, Harvey, owned a towing service until 1994, but Cornwell was hired as TRPM executive director in 1991. "I am driven by this; I have eaten and slept and lived the towing business for so long," Cornwell said. "I represent the association at the state level and county level and anything pertaining to legislation."

Things have smoothed since those early years.

The Maryland association features a board of directors, comprised of members from around the state. Under an executive branch-type of leadership, Cornwell said, "sometimes it might work well but the membership feels like they're not in touch with those people."

A board of directors gives "better representation," Cornwell said. "Everybody has a voice. These people (on the board of directors) talk to the people in their regions and they're elected by the people in their regions."

### Some Changes

Some of the country's associations have endured through the years with the same type of leadership. Others, like Vermont's, have changed.

The Towing and Recovery Association of Kentucky was formed in 1981. For its first two decades, the association featured a four-person board of directors that was elected by the membership, and administrative officers such as president, vice president and treasurer who were elected annually, according to current president Scott Burrows.

Then, in 2000-01, Kentucky's board was enlarged to seven members. There

See ASSOCIATIONS I, page 16

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# ASSOCIATIONS II

## Lone Star Leader

*The STO chose executive director-style governance*

By Bruce Ebert

The new, full-time executive director of the two-year-old Southwest Tow Operators towing association doesn't spend a lot of time talking about his management style.

Jess Horton, formerly STO's first vice president, is too consumed with getting the jobs done – particularly the job of strengthening the spirit of fraternity among towers, and getting critical legislation passed in Austin, in-



STO's Jess Horton & Dan Messina

cluding one bill towers view as a matter of business life or death.

"We're all on board with this," he said of his appointment, which took effect September 11. He anticipates being the initiator of some of the Dallas-based organization's efforts and following up on ideas board members have, too.

"Directions were already there when I took this position. My style is getting in there and rolling my sleeves up," he said. "I'll be visiting the regions, talking with the chapters and the towers. I like getting out there."

### Many Issues

They'll have plenty to talk about. Fuel prices are a huge wild card, but there are other matters that are in critical need of solving. Topping the list is what towers regard as the imperative to be included in the state's "move-over law." As most towers well know, the law requires drivers to shift to the lane opposite one occupied by an emergency vehicle (now defined as a police, fire, or medical vehicle) to better assure the safety of responders at a crash or breakdown.

The urgency of this legislation crystallized May 4th when 26-year-old tower William David Stone, hooking up a vehicle on the side of westbound Interstate 35 in Johnson County, Texas, was killed by a driver who had fallen asleep at the wheel (see sidebar).

Also on the STO legislative agenda is a call to reduce from 72 to 42 or 30

the number of days that a vehicle could be kept on a storage lot before being subject to sale or demolition. "You want to keep storage areas clean," Horton explained, "but keeping a car in one place for a long time allows the vehicle to wear down and contaminate the area, which presents a lot of problems. Most towers don't want to move the cars; they want owners to claim them, pay, and get them out so we can make room for others."

## Jess Horton: A Varied Career

An executive and part-owner of Assured Towing in Austin and San Antonio, Horton came into the industry by way of a job he had as a bill-enforcer and repo man. "I realized a lot of repo companies were coming to me to find people (behind in car payments)," he explained. He started his own repo company, bought his first tow truck, and at age 22 was in business.

In his varied career, he has been involved in repos, impoundments, police calls, light- to heavy-duty towing and recovery – all the jobs towers are called on to do...with some unusual experiences along the way:

"The strangest call I ever got was to pick up a Jeep in a cemetery one night in Austin," Horton recalled. "The owner of the Jeep was in it, drunk, and wouldn't come out because he claimed he had seen ghosts. Eventually, the police got him out of the car, gave him a ride home, and I towed the vehicle. He came to pick up his Jeep the next day but didn't say anything about what had happened. I think he was embarrassed."

### More To Do

Horton also cited three non-legislative priorities:

- **Improving the training program** that fulfills the new requirement for a tower to have four hours of towing-and storage-related continuing education every year to maintain his or her license. As of Sept. 1, all towers must be state-certified; so far about 80 percent have achieved certification and the other 20 percent are still being tested, Horton said. STO eventually plans to establish a central school for towers in Dallas "with the mindset 'If we build it, they will come,'" as he put it. Certification tests are currently given at 63 locations around the state.
- **Negotiating with insurance companies to lower premiums**, now that criminal background checks and drug testing, skill- and knowledge-testing and certification have been implemented. STO and its members believe these programs prove the industry in Texas is striving to present a professional image – and a professional reality -- and in return "you want to be rewarded for that emphasis. We're going to try to get lower insurance costs. Insurance is through the roof!" Horton estimated the average-size towing outfit receives a bill of between \$1,100 and \$2,500 per month from its insurance company.
- **The cost of fuel**, a continuing saga that affects virtually everyone.

***"This was the best plan of attack"***

### Fast Growth

Horton and STO's board have in-house priorities, as well. "People in the industry are starving for knowledge about what is going on in this industry," Horton said. "We're putting a communications program together. So many towers have no idea what goes on from one city to the next."

STO has a toll-free number: 866-320-9300, a newsletter sent by e-mail and regular mail, and a website: [www.swtowop.com](http://www.swtowop.com). Having a staff of three full-time employees now, said Horton, ensures that when a tower calls, "the phone will be answered."

"We want our members to use our organization as their megaphone," said STO board President Dan Messina.

STO was formed in August 2006. It is one of two towing associations in Texas, the other being the older Texas Towing and Storage Association. "We

### ASSOCIATIONS I

continued from page 15

are no paid officers on the board and there is no executive director.

That isn't always best, admitted Burrows. "For an association to prosper there needs to be someone that is actively pursuing the interests of the towing association every day instead of on a part-time basis, which is what we are doing here."

Some associations, meanwhile, are just dipping their toes in the water.

The Southwest Tow Operators association in Dallas, with towers from Texas and surrounding states, was formed in 2006. "We have operated with a board of directors since inception," co-founder Joann Messina said when initially interviewed. "We just hired an office manager and are thinking about adding an executive director. Right now, the board makes all decisions, with the office manager running the day-to-day office." Later, the STO hired Jess Horton to serve as Executive Director (see story on this page).

The Oklahoma Wrecker Owners Association changed, too.

About 10 years ago, the association had two executive directors. Now, Chris Puckett serves as president.

"The officers and directors decided to use a percentage of our dues to hire consultants, or lobbyists, to represent us at the Capitol," Puckett said. "It has worked well for the most part to help us in Oklahoma. We have monthly meetings and if something needs attention, we will have a director's meeting to vote on the item needing attention." Puckett added that the association's by-laws were not changed, so membership could return to being led by an executive director at some point.

### Whatever Works

Members of most association leaderships agree that there are pros and cons to these different leadership styles.

Finances are a big concern for most, and some organizations must decide if they can afford to hire an official such as an executive director. For those that can't or don't, the challenge can be finding enough volunteers to work in leadership, or finding officers with enough time to handle the workload of keeping an association running effectively.

"Often people have the desire to be part of it, but they don't have any idea how much time it takes to do it," said Cornwell of the Maryland association. "They run for the office and accept the position and all of a sudden they don't have time to do what they said they would do."

Still, most towing association officials agreed that it's not how an association's leadership is structured, but whether that leadership works for the best of the membership.

"Every association is unique and in a different stage of development," said Messina of Southwest Tow Operators. "The organization should be structured so that the association's



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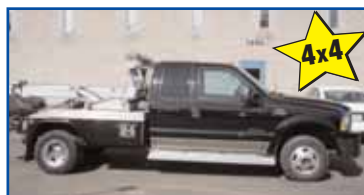
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## ASSOCIATIONS I

continued from page 16

goals and objectives are met, whatever they may be. Associations should constantly review their organizational structure so that they are able to adjust to what their members need and be able to act and make decisions in a timely manner.”



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## ASSOCIATIONS II

continued from page 16

started with 35 companies and grew real quickly,” Messina said. And there is the continuing quest to grow. The STO board and Horton have set a goal to double their membership by April 2009.

April or May is when STO's first scholarship is scheduled to be awarded to a college-bound dependent of an organization member. Along with “fallen towers’ benefits” to families of towers killed in the line of duty, it is one of two benefits the group offers in the spirit of “taking care of our own.”

### Power In Numbers

A tower and towing company executive for more than 17 years, Horton became more politically active within the profession about 10 years ago. “I was seeing changes that were not for the better,” he recalled. “There were towers and towing vehicles that were on the road and didn't belong there. I started with the local association in Austin and saw the power of getting together. We fostered better relations there among the towers, the municipalities, and the police departments, and it paid off. We got the renegade towers off the road.”

That whetted his appetite for more. He joined those who he felt were trying to make a difference at the state level. “Then Dan started this organization and I thought this was the best plan of attack,” he said.

## Survivors Helped



April Gittings (left), widow of towman William David Stone, and Stone's mother, Laura Smith, receive checks from Dan Messina, president of the Southwest Tow Operators. Stone was killed in the line of duty in May.

In September, survivors of William David Stone, the tow truck operator killed in the line of duty in Johnson County, TX, received two \$500 checks from the Southwest Tow Operators Benevolent Fund. Laura Smith, Stone's mother, and April Giddings, Stone's common-law wife and mother of his five children, received the allotments in a ceremony.

Stone, hitching a disabled car to his flatbed truck, was struck and killed at

10:18 p.m. in May when a driver who later admitted he fell asleep at the wheel crashed into a car Stone was preparing to tow and then hit Stone. The crash took place on the shoulder of westbound Interstate 35 at Burleson.

The STO has set up the Benevolent Fund to assist survivors of such tragedies, and is campaigning for towers to be included in the Texas “Move Over” law.

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## TRUCK TALK

continued from page 8

one-piece C-channel rear-frame rail, a big improvement over the sock container that would get twisted and shredded with the constant up-and-down motion of the bed.

Both towers thought the fuel cap stem located under the bed could have been positioned better for easier access.

This deck was made of aluminum. Heller prefers a steel deck for durability and to handle his nasty jobs, such as pulling mangled wrecks across it.



Dodge told the towers that testing shows that the truck can safely accommodate a mid-size SUV on the deck and a large sedan on the wheel lift. The Jerr-Dan aluminum Pioneer five-ton carrier is rated at 10,000 pounds and is available in lengths of 19, 20 and 21 feet.

But he noted that the lighter aluminum deck allowed the weight savings to be donated to the Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR). This deck could be protected with skates, or the tire tread area could be reinforced with steel plates, he added.

### Loading Up

Our towmen decided to load a Jeep Wrangler on the flatbed and hook a Honda Civic onto the wheel lift. Heller liked the locking wheel lift, referencing the fact that wheel-lift bars have a tendency to "walk away." The trucks loaded cleanly.

Both towers thought the truck was pushing its maximum weight allowed with both the Civic and the Jeep loaded and a 19,500 GVWR. However, Dodge's Brad Pugh said that after extensive testing, Dodge maintains that the bed can safely handle simultaneously a midsize SUV such as a Dodge Durango, while the wheel lift can manage a large sedan such as a Chrysler 300C.

Pugh said user feedback with the rollback application revealed some spring sag, which made the vehicle appear to be loaded heavier than it was. To address this, Dodge is now giving away a free rear-suspension lift kit.

### Riding Around

Littman revved up the truck with only the Jeep Wrangler loaded on the flatbed to take it for a spin around the San Fernando Valley. The truck really shone on the road. "The off-the-line

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**1996 INTERNATIONAL 4700.**  
7.3L, 5 spd, 19" Jerr-Dan bed, needs a little work.  
\$12,500.



## BREAKING IN

# Love At First Truck

*A casual summer job leads to a career in towing*

By Susan Smigielski Acker

*The publisher of Footnotes dropped by the editor's desk one day and reported that he experienced car trouble over the weekend on the I-95 and had to be towed. He said a very helpful, interesting towman showed up and expertly took care of him and the situation. Impressed, the boss gave me the towman's card and suggested that we call him and see if he had a story to tell. We did, he did, and here it is:*

Scott Sears is maintaining a reputation. Not just his own, but that of his former boss, mentor and friend – the late Bob Alley. Sears, 25, is the operations manager for Bob Alley Towing in King and Queen County, VA. He began operating the business following Alley's sudden death in 2006. "It is in my blood. It is like a calling to me," he said.

The company has three rollbacks and five tow trucks, including a medi-

um-duty truck and a heavy-duty. When a new truck was purchased recently, Sears was unable to sleep the night before it was received. Like most towers, he loves the trucks. "If I see another (tow) truck, especially a new one, I am always checking it out," he said

In addition to his duties as operations manager, Sears is one of three drivers who often work an eight-hour day followed by an evening call shift. He rotates evenings with Mike Adams and John Stone. They average about 150 to 200 calls per month, Sears said.



Bob Alley with his heavy duty



Scott Sears of Bob Alley Towing

Between operating the business and on call towing, Sears said his average work week is about 75 hours. "Even though I work a lot and I get tired, it has become a part of my life that when the phone rings, I wake up and go to work," he said. "There have been times where I worked for two days with no sleep."

### Breaking In

Sears began his towing career five years ago at age 20. He was a student at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, VA, when his interest in pursuing a career began to slip.

***"I worked for two days with no sleep"***

Concerned, Sears' mother, who knew the late Bob Alley, owner of the towing business, contacted him and asked him to give her son a summer job with his company. Alley did and it was love from the beginning for Sears.

Jacqueline Alley, Bob's widow, said Sears became like a son to her late husband. "He has two sons, but they were not interested in the business. Scott was," she said. "Scott always respected my husband and was willing to learn from him. He would work holidays and weekends while learning," she said.

Sears went on to earn a degree in business administration and began working for Sears full time. The plan was for Bob to eventually retire and Scott to buy the business, but Bob died in 2006 at 70 years old of a heart attack while working at the profession he loved. "He would have been buried in a tow truck," his widow said.

### Good Sense & Ethics

Bob Alley's towing business began as a service station in 1973. It grew to three stations in the area. "He began his business with nothing but com-

mon sense and a good work ethic," Mrs. Alley said.

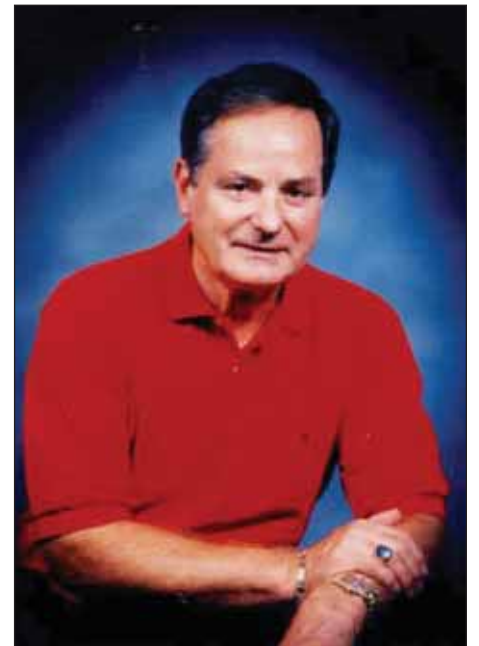
In addition to selling gas, he repaired cars. Back then, when a car needed a tow, another company would handle it for him but then a customer suggested he purchase a tow truck to help his customers. He bought a Ford Standard with a tow sling, she said.

Soon, the company's proximity to Interstate 95 began to create more towing business than service station business, so much that the gas stations were sold and Alley focused only on towing.

As it had been with his service stations, Bob Alley's reputation as a towman was spotless, Mrs. Alley said. Keeping the company's reputation is a priority for her now, even with the rising cost of fuel. "We have had to increase our rates a little but there is only so much we will pass along to the customer," she said.

Bob Alley Towing has contracts with the state police and the Virginia communities of New Kent County, King and Queen County, and King William County. The company has received 35 awards from AAA, Sears noted.

Sears is dedicated to keeping the company's reputation intact, and he still has plans to buy the business. "I knew when I was a kid I wanted to own my own business," he said. "This is the business I love. It will happen eventually. I know this work can be dangerous, but if I did not do this business, then I would not know how to act." ❖



Bob Alley

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# What's A Meta For?

English teachers from across the country submit their collections of amusing descriptive terms and phrases used as metaphors (it's the same as) and similes (it's similar to) in high school essays. These excerpts are published each year. Here are some winners:

- Her face was a perfect oval, like a circle that had its two sides gently compressed by a Thigh Master.
- His thoughts tumbled in his head, making and breaking alliances like underpants in a dryer without Cling Free.
- He spoke with the wisdom that can only come from experience, like a guy who went blind because he looked at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it and now goes around the country speaking at high schools about the dangers of looking at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it.
- She grew on him like she was a colony of *e.coli* and he was room-temperature Canadian beef.
- She had a deep, throaty, genuine laugh, like that sound a dog makes just before it throws up.
- The revelation that his marriage of 30 years had disintegrated because of his wife's infidelity came as a rude shock, like a surcharge at a formerly surcharge-free ATM machine.
- The little boat gently drifted across the pond exactly the way a bowling ball wouldn't.
- McBride fell 12 stories, hitting the pavement like a Hefty bag filled with vegetable soup.
- From the attic came an unearthly howl. The whole scene had an eerie, surreal quality, like when you're on vacation in another city and Jeopardy comes on at 7:00 p.m. instead of 7:30.
- The hailstones leaped from the pavement, just like maggots when you fry them in hot grease.
- Long separated by cruel fate, the star-crossed lovers raced across the grassy field toward each other like two freight trains, one having left Cleveland at 6:36 p.m. traveling at 55 mph, the other from Topeka at 4:19 p.m. at a speed of 35 mph.
- They lived in a typical suburban neighborhood with picket fences that resembled Nancy Kerrigan's teeth.
- He fell for her like his heart was a mob informant, and she was the East River.
- Even in his last years, granddad had a mind like a steel trap, only one that had been left out so long, it had rusted shut.
- Shots rang out, as shots are known to do.
- The plan was simple, like my brother-in-law Phil. But unlike Phil, this plan just might work.
- The young fighter had a hungry look, the kind you get from not eating for awhile.
- He was as lame as a duck, not the metaphorical lame duck, either, but a real duck that was actually lame, maybe from stepping on a land mine or something.

## TRUCK TALK

continued from page 19

power from a red light is remarkable," he said.

Littman gave it a few hard stops and was impressed with the braking, aided by the exhaust brake and tow-haul function. The 4500/5500 models have standard four-wheel disc brakes with anti-lock braking system (ABS) and the largest brake rotors in their classes. "With the exhaust brake and over-drive combination the stopping feels really good," he said.

Heller anticipates his new Dodge will extend brake life by 10,000 miles. He is also expecting better fuel economy in the new truck.

Littman took the truck into a parking lot to test the turning radius. Pugh said Dodge pushed the axle out six inches and maximized the wheel cut to about 45 degrees. Littman's conclusion: "Really tight. That's really nice for a flatbed. It drives very similarly to a one-ton pickup."


### The Answer Is?

Our test operators saw this chassis cab/tow package configuration as ideal for a specific niche such as city tows or moving cars in an airport. Heller is ordering his Ram 5500 with just the wheel lift and not the flatbed.

Pugh said the Dodge Ram 5500 with the rollback wrecker presents a good value proposition for in-town jobs. "It's

**"2008 was the landmark year for the 5500"**

a good truck for a savvy owner that's trying to minimize costs," he said. "If they don't need the 650, the 5500 is a pretty good substitute."

When it comes to the Ram itself, Littman said "the truck rocks," referencing the truck's power, stopping ability, and turning radius. "I haven't messed with a Dodge truck in years, but this one's great," he said. 

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## SUCCESS STORY

# The Mayor Is A Towman

*Frank Scotto runs many businesses, including a city*

By James Frankenberry

Eighteen-hour days were typical for Frank Scotto when he opened his first California gas station in 1974. Why such long hours?

He was the only employee. "It was literally seven days a week," Scotto recalled. "Those were tough times but very enjoyable times. When you work by yourself you know the product is the best it's going to be."

Scotto still is working 18-hour days, although now he's doing it as the owner of a 60-truck towing company, a tow truck manufacturer, and two gas stations. And since 2006, Scott has been the mayor of Torrance, California, a city of 147,000 in Los Angeles County.

Taking it easy is clearly not in Scotto's nature. "It may seem very burdensome, but if you're organized you can do this," Scotto, 59, said. "I pride myself on being organized and using my time wisely. You have to prioritize what you need to do in the course of the day."

### Career Path

Scotto has taken an intriguing journey from gas station employee to prominent tower and mayor of the 12th-largest city in California.

A California native who has lived in Torrance for more than 50 years, Scotto graduated from El Camino College and attended Long Beach



Frank Scotto with his family

State University hoping to become an automotive engineer. Scotto left Long Beach State when he was drafted to serve in the Vietnam War.

On his return from service, he worked for Chevron Oil for seven years before opening his first service station. Scotto learned to do everything as the station's only employee, and a year after his station opened, he started towing.

"I started having a lot of cars towed into my station and it seemed like a natural thing to get a tow truck," said Scotto. "I went out and bought a tow truck on a Sunday."

Scotto was the station's only tow truck driver for two years. Then he got a contract from AAA of Southern California and his towing business began to grow. Scotto's stable of tow trucks jumped from five trucks to seven, then 18. "And here we are at 60," he said.

### Beyond Towing

But Scotto's journey didn't stop at towing only. Since 1998, Scotto has built and sold tow trucks and towing equipment through his company California Western Towing Equipment. Another of his companies, Full Circle Fuel, operates two Chevron gas stations, one in Torrance and another in Carson, California. Scotto's companies have more than 100 employees between them.

"It's not luck," said Scotto, the father of two and a grandfather of five. "It's hard work that gets you to that point. Anybody can do it. The question is, Do they want to work hard? It happens over time and it's investing back in your company. That's how you build a successful business."

Scotto's reputation has grown along with his companies. "Basically, he gets around," said Jerry Trautman, a customer of Scotto's towing company and general manager of Kenny's Towing in Bellflower, CA. "He's not afraid to get his hands dirty and jump in and help, or pick up the phone and call you and ask you what do you think."

### Getting Involved

So how did a towman become mayor of a city?

Scotto established his political foundation both as a successful businessman and through his community service, serving in everything from towing associations to the PTA to coaching youth soccer and baseball. For more than a decade he was involved in the American Youth Soccer Association as a coach, referee, board member, and

regional commissioner.

A member of the California Tow Truck Association, Scotto has served as the Los Angeles chapter's president and as state president of the CTTA. "The towing world requires you to be very active in the political arenas," Scotto said. "I'm much more active than the normal citizen, and I had been to many, many council meetings, which gave me a leg up on how to treat people with respect at city council."

Still, he added, "I don't see myself as a politician in any stretch of the word. I see myself as a citizen that wants to do well for his city."

Scotto served as a member of Torrance's Civil Service Commission from 1996 to 1999, and in 2000 he ran for city council. He was one of 12 candidates for three council seats and garnered the most votes.

In 2006, Scotto ran for mayor against the incumbent Dan Walker. Scotto "thought it out like he does a lot of things," said Trautman, who was so confident in Scotto that he took to calling his friend "Mr. Mayor" even before the election. "When he sets his mind to it, he goes after it and gets it."

### By A Landslide

Scotto's name already was well-known in Torrance, thanks to the many tow trucks that bear his name. Scotto said he was "a long shot" to win against Walker. But his "Take Back Torrance" campaign won over voters.

"The more you got toward the election the more you could see it was going to be a landslide for Frank," said Tom Brewer, a city council member who has known Scotto for nearly 10 years. "He's got a low-key style; he doesn't yell and scream. He speaks softly and carries a big stick. But people know he's got the knowledge to back up what he says so people respect him."

The election ended in a landslide. The final tally: Scotto 62.5 percent, Walker 37.5 percent. For Scotto, "being mayor is truly a lot of fun," he said. "It's running a 250-million-dollar business on a daily basis. That's what our budget is."

The best thing about being mayor is simple, he said. "It seems kind of corny, but it's all the quality of life issues you vote on. You vote on something that you see benefits the community. You get to see the results of your actions immediately. And when you go to the grocery store you're going to hear about your actions."

For now, Scotto isn't looking beyond serving as Torrance's mayor. "I have two more years in this term, possibly another term," he said, "and then I'll look back at this as a great experience in my lifetime."

### Few Changes

Scotto's job as mayor added to his already hectic schedule, but he has



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## CITY TOWING

# The Truth Hurts

*Illinois legislation has upset the towing community*

By Andrea Evans

In the October issue of Footnotes, we ran part one of two City Towing stories about Chicago ("The Chicago Chasers," pg. 6). Here is part two:

Illinois' Truth in Towing bill became law July 1st and enforcement started immediately. "This has the potential to destroy the entire towing industry in Illinois if it's enforced to the full degree of the law," said Bill Howard, president of the Professional Towing and Recovery Operators of Illinois (PTROI). "It's a dark time in Illinois since the state commerce commission dropped the heavy hammer of enforcement down on honest towers."

Since July 1st, the PTROI office has been barraged with emails and phone calls. In the first three days of the law, Howard estimated 30 to 35 towers were issued \$750 fines due to simple mistakes that resulted from unfamiliarity with the law, such as failure to complete forms correctly. "These are the

innocent guys, mind you — not the Chicago wreck chasers," he said. "It's absolutely ridiculous!" For example, he added, one enforcement agent sat in the parking lot of one of Chicago's Southside major car dealers and issued tickets to every tow truck operator that towed a vehicle into that dealership.

According to Howard, tickets issued by the Illinois Commerce Commission allow 30 days for payment but do not provide for a judicial court date. The only way to contest the fine is for the tower to petition for an administrative hearing under the jurisdiction of the Commerce Commission.

"Burdening honest tow operators with bad legislation because of the acts of a few unscrupulous towers that should have been dealt with by Chicago Police Department in the first place, that's just absolutely wrong," said Howard. "This legislation doesn't do anything to correct the original problem. Instead it puts the burden of additional fees, administrative

costs, and liability on the honest, legitimate guys that had nothing to do with the original problem."

## The Wreck Chasers

Wreck chasing began more than five years ago in Chicago with a few dishonest towers charging fees as high as \$1000 to motorists following minor accidents on Chicago's city streets. Cur-

rently these rogue towers' fees range from \$3000 to \$7000 per single auto. This is confirmed by Bill Howard, Phil Kadner, a journalist for a Chicago metropolitan area newspaper, and Lonnie (J.R.) Bramlett Jr., three-time past president of PTROI.

The three agreed that the Chicago Police Department could do more to

See CITY TOWING, page 26



Bill Howard, president, Professional Towing and Recovery Operators of Illinois

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## MANAGING MATTERS

# On Route Three

*Driving home the importance of good business practices*

By Allan T. Duffin

Towing company owners wrestle with a myriad of paperwork — bills, receipts, insurance statements, legal issues, taxes, to name a few. Between shuffling documents and dispatching trucks, maintaining an effective business plan is critical to ensuring a healthy future for the company. How can a towing firm save money on its taxes? What types of health insurance plans can employees choose from? What other ways can a towing business manage its finances more effectively?

Armed with impressive business credentials as well as towing expertise, Ralph Weber consults with towers on how to manage risk and reduce expenses and taxes. “In order to maximize your profit and the value of your business,” he said, “you need to understand cash flow and the tax code.” With careful accounting, you can “let your business be your retirement plan,” he added.

Weber offers his clients insight into different types of business entities including corporations, LLCs, partnerships, and sole proprietorships. He also shows managers how to calculate variable and fixed costs. He advises clients on how to read financial statements, business plan development, saving money and reducing taxes, protecting assets from creditors, retirement planning, and more.

For today’s difficult economic climate, he offered some basic advice: “Economize where you can. For example, talk to your drivers about idling trucks. Take steps to reduce driver turnover, which minimizes damage claims.”

Weber also stressed that towers need to become tax efficient in order to keep as much of their profit as possible to reinvest in their companies. “And above all,” he added, “know your cost per call and per mile.”

### Out & About

In 1995, Weber opened Route Three Life Health Disability, Inc., a Paso Robles, California-based firm that provides insurance and financial services to the towing industry. Today Route Three has five staff employees and 25 brokers — seven in Canada and 18 in the United States. All have interesting backgrounds — for example, Peter Crittenden, who operates in North Carolina, is a 25-year Army veteran and former Green Beret.

Thanks to modern technology, companies like Route Three are able to cover a lot of ground and base their staff members in different locations. Tess St. Clair, the vice president

of administration, handles issues regarding claims from the home office, while billing and administrative functions are located in Niagara Falls, Canada. The company accountant works out of San Francisco. Depending on the client’s location, Weber and his staff offer consultations over the phone, via email, and in person.

Since launching Route Three, Weber has worked with a variety of towers to offer group benefits and planning services. According to Weber, Route Three is the largest provider of health insurance for towers in North America.

### Health Help

Among Weber’s clients are Gary and Donna Coe, co-owners (with Donna’s son, Jim Walsh) of Fleet Sales West in Sherwood, Ore., Golden West Towing Equipment in Anaheim, Calif.; Competition Wheel Lift in Los Angeles; and Chevron West in Sacramento.

A few years ago the Coes came to him for help in providing health care to their employees. The Coes needed to keep careful track of the laws in both of the states where they have tow truck distributorships. “It can be daunting to stay on top of the regulations,” noted Donna Coe. In addition, she said, “There is a significant need for clear explanation and patience with the process of ensuring that our employees have a grasp of their coverage and its limitations.”

After some discussion, the Coes engaged Route Three to coordinate health care plans for their dealership employees. “In order to provide health care benefits to our employees, it is critical that the plans be affordable and that we have strong support from our agency,” said Coe.

### More Money

One of Weber’s main goals is to save towers money. “If you own a company, you need to know how to get more money out of it,” he said. He noted that by assisting tow companies with business planning and helping them with their taxes, he saves the average towing company between \$1,500 and \$2,500 per employee each year. “So a 10-employee company should save about \$20,000 a year,” he explained.

Perhaps \$20,000 sounds too good to be true. “I talk to towers every day,” Weber said, “and sometimes — I kid you not — when I show them how they can save \$20,000, they tell me no thanks, because they do not want to lose the tax deduction.”

Weber urged towers to take a close look at how such a windfall can parlay



Route Three’s Ralph Weber

itself into greater savings. “Some business owners have as a primary objective to cut taxable income to as close as possible to zero,” he said, “but don’t sacrifice efficiency to attain that target.” If towers see an opportunity to save \$20,000, he explained, they should investigate it and then find a tax-effective way to invest that money back into their business. Maximizing profit over the long run is key, he said. “Towers can make good money, and

those who spend the time learning how to plan properly realize this profit. Those who don’t learn will continue to struggle financially.”

### Making Mistakes

During his many years supporting the towing industry, Weber has seen a number of business mistakes: “Not

See MANAGING MATTERS, page 27

## Smooth Operator



Hunter Cygan, son of Carrie Rash and her husband Cory Cygan, a new driver for Fast Tow in Houston, is ready to roll at the Lone Star Wrecker Roundup in Arlington. He posed for his grandfather, Charles “Paw Paw” Rash, a noted photographer and veteran Texas towman. Grandma, Fast Tow’s Jeanette Rash, said Hunter’s dad, Cory, a former diesel mechanic, is already an “awesome driver,” rescuing folks left and right on Houston highways. Hunter, nine months old here, looks sure to follow in his family’s footsteps!



## SUCCESS STORY

continued from page 22

changed very little in terms of how his businesses are managed. His wife of more than 35 years, Cindy, works in the accounts payable/receivable end of the business and handles payroll at the towing service. Their son Tony handles "90 percent" of the work at his service stations.

***"You see  
the results of  
your actions  
immediately"***

Meanwhile, Scotto's days begin around six a.m. when he arrives at Scotto Towing for a few hours of dispatching. "That's the towing world," Scotto said. "You need to be here to get people on the road and take care of their issues and problems, so I've always done that."

The rest of the time, his days are crammed full from Monday through Friday with tasks at his businesses and as mayor. He typically spends afternoons at city hall and his evenings often include social functions such as meetings or ribbon-cuttings.



The mayor with farmer's market shoppers

"I'm amazed that he has time for all the stuff he's involved in," Brewer, the city council member, said. "I'm sure he has a city event every day and he has to be able to do all that."

Scotto has done virtually every task — small and large — at his businesses through the years, and he doesn't hesitate to do any of them now. That's what keeps him busy and motivates him to keep going.

"Crucial to success of the businesses is that everything I've asked my employees to do, I've done it already," Scotto said. "You have to earn the respect of your employees, show that you've done it. That's important in any business. That means anything — cleaning the bathrooms or dealing with a customer."

"That," he added, "is a critical part of my success."

See <http://www.frankscottoformayor.com/> for more information on Mayor Frank Scotto of Torrance, CA

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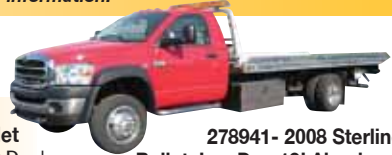


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## CITY TOWING

continued from page 23

deter wreck chasers, but many city officers ignore the city's "no towing solicitation" ordinance, which encourages the chasers.

Four years ago, the PTROI and the insurance industry, led by State Farm, attempted to resolve wreck chasing by working with Chicago's city government. PTROI's collaborative alliance urged the city to pass a new ordinance, one similar to that of other cities with city-controlled rotation lists and some regulated rates. "As we went along we found out how much resistance was offered by the city," said Howard. "We found it wasn't going to work, primarily because the system they use is antiquated."

### Bad Climate

There are many steps in Chicago's incident response process. Each step must occur in a specific sequence. The city receives the accident call and dispatches an officer. Once at the scene, the officer calls for the number and types of tow trucks necessary. Someone in the precinct then creates a written tow order that the wrecker operator must pick up before proceeding to the accident scene.

"That has created a climate where wreck chasers can thrive," said Howard. "They listen to scanners, show up on scene, have whatever conversation with the officer on scene and disappear with the car. The officer is happy because his intersection is cleared. He has no accident report to write because this is not a contract tower. He doesn't care if he ever sees the tower again. Everything is fine with the City of Chicago."

Bramlett agreed, saying, "The law we need is already on the books. All they need to do is enforce it. The problem is only in Chicago. If the police chief wants to solve the problem, he could solve it at the next shift change. All he has to do is tell the officers there will be no more wreck chasing."

"The city's got a contract company called E&R," he added. "They do a good job. It's a good, reputable company and they are nationwide. They've got something like 100 trucks, but the way it is they don't get there before the chasers."

### A Chicago Problem

Phil Kadner, a journalist for the *Southtown Star*, has written more than a dozen articles about Chicago's wreck chasers. Every citizen complaint that Kadner has received concerning wreck chasers involved an incident occurring within Chicago's city limits. He's received a substantial number of complaints from towers who know about hundreds of people caught in scams, many of whom paid as much as or even more than \$4000 for the return of their damaged vehicles.

After months of combined advocacy efforts by PTROI and insurance industry leaders, their efforts to combat wreck chasing failed. "Unfortunately for us, our efforts were just kind

of ignored," said Howard. "The City of Chicago closed the door on us. Yet somewhere along the line somebody decided the towing industry as a whole needed some regulation in the State of Illinois, even though the problem is only in the City of Chicago."

Illinois state lawmakers took up the charge. They researched and debated a number of proposals for towing industry regulation before settling on

## "It's all about the state getting money"

a tier-structured licensing fee for tow trucks. This fee ranges from \$800 for one tow truck up to \$3200 for nine or more trucks. Lawmakers determined that \$2.4 million was necessary for the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) to implement and enforce the law annually.

### A Bad Deal

The Illinois towing legislation that became law last July is called "Truth in Towing" but many Illinois towers feel this new law is anything but the truth for them. "It's a pretty bad deal," said Bramlett. "We already have a law against soliciting tows (in the city of Chicago). They could enforce it any day of the week. For this new law, a city of 500,000 does not have to enforce it. They can use home rule, in which case the new law doesn't apply in Chicago, so it's all a waste."

"Think about that for a minute," he added. "It's all about the state getting money. After all that, the law they made isn't worth the damn paper it's written on. It's from one extreme to the other, just penalizing the legitimate towers more."

Bill Howard agreed: "In the opinion of the association, it's an ill-written law. It doesn't consider any of the things association members hold near and dear. When building a towing ordinance, you need to ensure motorists get safe quality service. The only thing in the bill that has anything to do with that gives the insurance industry an out under certain circumstances." The legislation makes it the tower's responsibility for any additional vehicle damage that may occur at an accident scene.

The Truth in Towing law requires additional measures before towers begin to clear a scene. "The law says towers are supposed to stand there with the vehicle owner and disclose exactly what fees are going to be before they ever start work. That's not going to happen. There are things like that in the legislation that do not work in the real world. And that's what you wind up with when people who



don't understand our industry are in the position to put rules in place that we are supposed to live by."

Why Members Matter

The PTROI has had little political clout with state legislators. According to Howard, while there are approximately 4,500 towing companies in Illinois, the association has only about 275 members.

The first question state legislators ask lobbying organizations is how many members the organization represents? "275 members — that's pitiful," said Howard. "That's why we can't get anything done. That's why we were run over like a mouse in front of a steamroller when these bills came along. 275 members doesn't cut it."

In July's "The Beacon," the PTROI's association publication, Howard wrote, "I dare say that if every tow operator in Illinois belonged to the PTROI, we would not be facing this obstacle now. There is no longer any legitimate reason for you not to belong to the PTROI. A big steamroller is about to run over our industry and your business. We can only fight this together."

However, Howard feels the association is on the right track regarding the controversial legislation. Association membership is steadily increasing. In fact, the June general membership meeting was the most well-attended, enthusiastic, and responsive meeting Howard could remember since he became a member in 1982.

"Half the room were already members and the other half were people interested in what's going on with the new legislation," he said. "Now they realize that becoming a member is going to be a good thing for them. Let's face it: a little controversy goes a long way during a membership drive." Eight to ten towers joined PTROI that night, and there were more than 100 others for the association to follow-up with to encourage membership.

Working Together

While the PTROI has had both a lobbyist and an attorney working to have Illinois' Truth in Towing legislation amended to a more palatable version, their efforts were blocked in the final legislative process before the bill was signed into law.

"Now the only alternative as a responsible professional towing association is through the federal court system," said Howard "It's truly sad that Illinois is so embroiled in the legal and personal battles going on between the governor, the speaker of the house, and the president of the senate. Unfortunately for the rest of Illinois — not just the towing industry — we are stuck in the middle of this political nightmare."

The PTROI president concluded, "There are two bright spots on the horizon: the towing industry [in Illinois] is realizing the importance of more unity in membership. And in Illinois we are at a historical moment in the political arena where small business owners and individuals are saying 'We aren't going to take it anymore.'"

MANAGING MATTERS

continued from page 24

understanding the difference between cash flow and deductible expenses, and not understanding cost per call," he said. "Due to this, towers sometimes make rash decisions in purchasing and often overpay for some services."

In addition, he cautioned tow company management to avoid delegating financial responsibilities to employees who do not have the same vested interest as the owner.

Saving on accountant's expenses can also keep the books in the black. "An ounce of planning is worth a pound of accounting," said Weber. "Remember, the average CPA has 2,000 clients. If they work eight hours a day, 50 weeks a year, they have only one hour per client." It is not a CPA's job to help business owners plan for their businesses, he cautioned.

A Start In Towing

Why did Weber choose to work with the towing industry instead of another field of business? "I was a recovery technician in the Army for eight years," he explained. After he left active duty, Weber spent five years at the Canadian Automobile Association supervising emergency road service. So naturally, "When I started my insurance agency, I decided to specialize in the towing industry," he said.

Recognizing that proper training is as important to financial consultants as towers, Weber obtained his Registered Employee Benefit Consultant (REBC) designation in 1999. That certification, awarded through The American College in Bryn Mawr, PA, gave Weber the background to work with pensions and retirement plan funding, installation and administration, group medical plans, long-term care, executive compensation, and personnel management.

Armed with an REBC, he continued his professional education. Five years later, he received his Certified Financial Planner (CFP) license. "I'm one of only 1,250 people in the U.S. and 76 in Canada with similar credentials," he said, adding that REBC is the highest designation available in the employee benefits field.

Towers might be surprised to learn that Weber's consulting toolkit includes three years of accounting training and seven years of management training with the McDonald's Corporation. Weber is a graduate of Hamburger University, the McDonald's Corporation's facility for operations training and leadership development in Oak Brook, IL.

Returning to the basics, he again emphasized how important it is for tow company owners to find ways to reduce taxes and increase efficiency, watch for employee theft — an unfortunate occurrence, especially during hard economic times — and know their cost per call. "As they say, knowledge is power," Weber noted.

So what does he think about the future of the towing industry? "It will be very bright for towers who keep pace with technology," he said. "Towers are by nature innovative and entrepreneurial, and the leaders will always do well. Those who understand the benefit of investing in their businesses will grow and prosper."

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2004 KW 900L 550 HP cat, 18 speed, mileage 371,000 approx., rear ratio 355, 11x24.5 tires, all aluminum wheels, Dual stacks and breathers, 60" flat top sleeper w/rear window, 2008 25 ton Jerr-Dan, 8 function wireless remote, Bus bars w/ storage racks, 5th wheel with ball and Pental hitch attachments. Plantary winches, extra long Wheel lift, 330" WB.

**08 Jerr-Dan 25 Ton**



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2003 PETERBILT 379L New 2008 25 ton Jerrdan, 475 cat, jake, 13 speed, air ride, 355 rear ratio, 22.5 tires, all aluminum wheels, 571,000 mileage approx. 322" WB, factory built, 5th wheel, ball and pental hook up, Bus bars, extra long wheel lift w/storage brackets, wireless remote,

**Good Fuel Mileage Truck**



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1987 T-800 KENWORTH 300 CUMMINS, 10 speed, new tires, simulators, maroon color, dual 75 gallon tanks. 1987 Holmes 1601 22 ton, 22,000lb winches, hyd spades, 12,000lb zack 2 stage underlift, 154 CA, large tunnel box, all factory hyd.

**35 Ton Challenger**



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**AC Cold**

1980 KW C50 CONSTRUCTOR 1988 35 ton Challenger, 350 cummins, 10 speed, jake brake, AC color, 256" WB, heavy suspension, 24" big tires, Aluminum wheels, 3 stage boom, 3 stage underreach with forks Engine Overhauled 100,000 Miles Back!!



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2008 DODGE 4500 CUMMINS AUTOMATIC, loaded, simulators, 2008 Vulcan Intruder self loader, Whelan strobe, estimated Fuel mileage 12-13 miles per gallon diesel.

**660 Landoll**



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**290,000 Miles**

96 LANDOLL WITH 85 KENWORTH W-900, 3406 cat, 400 HP, 9 speed Fuller transmission, air ride, aluminum wheels, 3 - 150 gallon aluminum tanks, wet line kit, LED lighting, 1996 48 ft. landoll 660 trailer, 35 ton, 20,000 lb winch, steel deck, virgin tires 90% approx. Can be sold separately or together

**Century 602 10 ton**



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**4x4 Automatic**

2008 F450 USED 4X4 2005 CENTURY 602 10 TON - 4 door auto diesel, 6000 miles approx, simulators, black color, XLT, 6500-9000 wheel lift, 1 tunnel box, whelan strobe, 84 CA

**Century 602 10 Ton**



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2005 F-450 XL, automatic diesel, gray vinyl, white exterior, new paint, mileage 77527 approx. super clean Cold air, new tires, running boards, new simulators, Century 602 10 ton, 84 CA, tunnel box, new whelan strobe Car sling,



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2004 F550 XL 4 door, automatic diesel, new recondition, new white paint on bed, mileage 114,380 approx., New tires, new simulators, Century EB-4 12 ton express w/extendable boom, 2 - 12,000 lb winches, dual rear controls, And hand remote, new whelan strobe and work lights, self loader.

**45 ton Challenger**



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1989 Freightliner FLD-120, 550 HP, cat, 9 speed, mileage 918,750 approx. 42" sleeper, 45 ton Challenger, 3 stage boom, 3 stage under reach.

**Runs and Works Great!**

**12 Ton Chevron**



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**Air Brakes**

2006 4300 IHC, DT - 230 HP, 6 speed, extended cab, red color, air brakes, 47,000 miles approx. Aluminum wheels 22.5, 2 - 55 gallon tanks, new tires, 2 tunnel boxes, air driver seat, 12 ton Chevron 12,000 lb winches, 6500 - 9000 wheel lift, truck tow bar,

**35 Ton Challenger**



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1987 FREIGHTLINER, 1981 35 Ton Challenger, 3 stage boom, Zac 30 102" reach, 425 HP cat, jake brake, 13 speed Transmission, 60" sleeper, AC cold, tires 22.5, doubled framed, air ride, WB 288", new white paint, wheel lift 2 stage, 30,000 lb lift



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HOLMES 750, 25 ton wrecker only, squared extendable booms, winches and body in good condition, southern truck.

**New 25 Ton Jerr-Dan**



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2003 KW-T600 MID ROOF, 12.7 Detroit, 430-470 HP, 10 speed, 545,000 miles approx, jake brake, 160 CA, 355 rear ratio, air ride, power windows, aluminum wheels 22.5 2 - 110 tanks, new 25 ton Jerrdan wireless remote, 8 functions, bus bars, forks, chain hook ups, spring hangers, 5th wheel and ball pental hook ups, extra long under reach, dual controls, trailer light bar and cord.

**50 Ton Dewart**



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1995 VOLVO, Volvo GMC, 3406 cat, 425 HP, 13 speed, air ride, mileage 285,000 approx., cab white, jake brake, AC cold, double framed, aluminum wheels, 11R - 22.5 tires, 75% good, setback front axle, 1995 50 ton Dewart, 2 stage boom, under reach 108", 2 stage plantary 50,000 lbs winches, 5/8" cable, bus bars hyd spades, 3 sets of forks, 5th wheel and pintle attachments, color blue.

**25 Ton Jerr-Dan**



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1999 KENWORTH W-900, 3406 cat, 475 HP, 10 speed, new yellow paint, tires 90% approx., 52,000 GVW, mileage 708,000 approx. DOT inspected, 25 ton Jerrdan, HDL-500-280 model, radio remote, totally equipped including tool box, 45,000 miles approx. on new bed.



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2000 6500 CHEVROLET, 149,000 miles approx., 3126 Cat 210 HP, 6 speed, new white paint, front tires new, rear 60% approx., Holmes 552 10 ton, 6500 - 9000 underreach lift, recent new cables, wheel lift cylinders rebuilt, truck tow bar, all new LED lights and simulators, AC cold, Microlock brake, push bumper, super clean inside and out.

**Holmes 750 25 ton**



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1977 FREIGHTLINER HOLMES 750 25 TON, 350 cummins, 13 speed w/4 speed brownie second transmission, 340000 miles approx. Hendrickson suspension with timbre rubber locks, super cold AC, power steering, dual exhaust, double framed, All aluminum wheels, 11R-24.5 tires approx 50%, Holmes 750 25 ton extendable booms, Zac 20 97" reach, remote control, Bus bars, 4 sets of forks, spring hangers, 3 snatch blocks, jumper cables,

**25 ton AATAC**



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1991 PETE, series 60 Detroit engine, 9 speed, air ride, aluminum wheels, AC cold, mileage 412,002 approx. 221" wheel base, 148" CA, double framed 25 ton AATAC, hyd spades, 2 stage wheel lift, dual exhaust, super clean

**30 Ton**



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**Recent Engine Overhaul**

1989 FLD FREIGHTLINER 94 CENTURY 5030 T, 400 cummins, 15 speed, all aluminum wheels, white with gray, blue, and maroon stripes, 42 inch sleeper, 690,000 miles approx. 1994 Cetry 5030 T, 8 sets of forks, spring hangers, spade foot bads, chain hookups and Buss Bars

**21 ft Chevron**



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2005 F650 EC XLT, cummins auto, 156,000 miles approx., hyd brakes, spring suspension, white color, aluminum wheels, 19.5 tires, 21 ft Chevron steel, w/aluminum blade side rails removeable, 2 - 66" tool boxes, scoops on wheel lift,

**PRICE REDUCED**



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1995 PETE 379, BLACK COLOR, 60" SLEEPER, 3406 CAT, 425 HP, 15 SPEED, AIR RIDE, MILEAGE 966,050, NEW ENGINELAST 277,000. NEW FRONT TIRES, REARS 70%, 275" WB, CORNER STROBES, ZAC 30, 2 STAGE HD TRUCK AND BUS LIFTWITH HYD WINCH, REAR FENDERS, UNIT PERMANENT MOUNTED TO CHASSIS.

**PRICE REDUCED**



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2008 335 WHITE PETE, 330 HP Cummins, 8.3 10 speed, 2 - 50 gallon fuel tanks, aluminum wheels, 22.5 low pro, air ride, Peterbilt switch panel in dash, 145 CA, 212 WB, 60,000 miles NRC 15 ton 3 stage wheel lift

**Century 1624 16 ton**



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**PRICE REDUCED**

2003 PETE 330 - 300 HP, 3126 Cat, 9 speed, air ride, air brakes, alum. Body, alum wheels, 216,000 mileage approx, Dual exhaust, 2003 Century 1624, 16 ton, w/1 16,000 lb winch, all air hookups, tail boards control, Whelan strobe, Medium duty L arms, 4 sets of forks, chain receivers

**Century 16 Ton**



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**PRICE REDUCED**

1984 LTL 9000 FORD 1993 CENTURY 16 TON #3224, 400 Cummins engine w/jake, 13 speed, 560,000 miles approx, 2 air seats, 2 chrome stacks, Simulators, 33,000 GVW, 1992 - 2 16,000 lb winches 120 CA, 2 stage lift, 91" long, 12,000 extended, 24000 retracted, wire remote, 4 sets of forks, 6,000 lb grids, chain receivers and chains, steel body, mechanical Tilt, rotator light bar



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1998 TRU HITCH all hyd, electric power pack w/battery, or straight hyd. 80,000 lb tow rating, Hyd winch, 2 beacons,

**New 2007 75 Ton Century Rotaor**



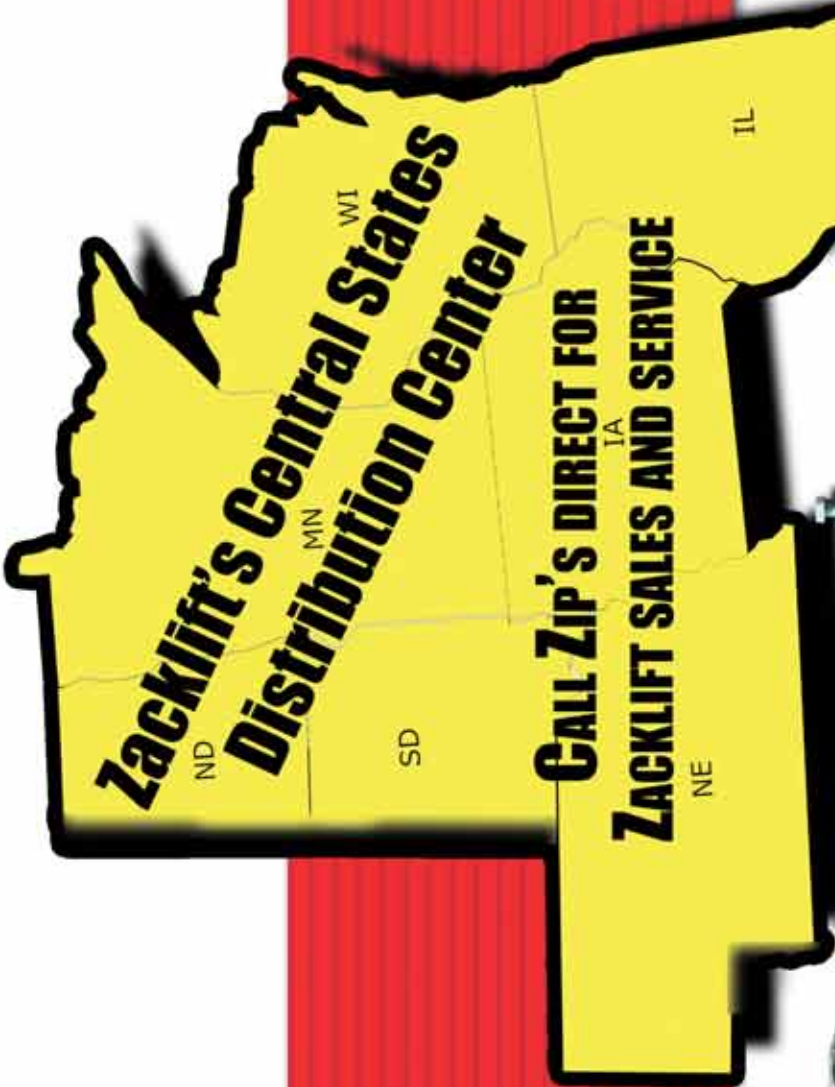
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**NEW 2007 379 EXTENDED HOOD PETERBILT 75 TON CENTURY ROTATOR,** 625 HP cat, 18 speed, factory spec truck, dual frame, triaxle, 372" wheelbase, 211" CA, 62" flat top sleeper, 11R 24.5 tires, 26,000 mileage approx., lite blue color, new century 75 ton rotator, 3 stage boom, 3 stage under reach 55,000 lb SDU - 2 under reach, 135" reach, 3 - 50,000lb winches, 20" tunnel box.

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