



Our Family Tree

A Newsletter For The Employees and Friends Of Wright Tree Service

VOLUME 7
NUMBER 4
WINTER, 2001



When Irving Berlin wrote “God Bless America” for his first Christmas army show in 1918, he ultimately cut the song from the show, fearing that he would be accused of too much flag-waving and patriotism. An instant hit when he introduced it in 1938, Berlin assigned all royalties from the song to the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts of America. Today, if it was ever decided to change our national anthem, the winner would no doubt be “God Bless America.”

This is a different holiday season. It is difficult to know how to express the spirit of the season while still communicating the different feeling that prevails throughout America. It would seem that it has all been said and sung in countless ways. Patriotism and prayers and volunteerism and acts of help and kindness flood the media on a daily basis, and make the

rounds both locally and nationally. It makes us proud to be Americans!

But still the holiday quickly approaches. This year, I feel especially grateful for each of you, the employees of Wright Tree Service. Your job is not an easy one. You perform in all kinds of

*“God bless America, land that I love;
stand beside her and guide her
through the night with a light from above.”*

weather and under all types of circumstances. And the fact that you do come through for your company – and our customers – is certainly reflected in the tremendous number of letters, email and commendations we receive here at the home office.

For the nearly 70 years we have been

in business without interruption, Wright Tree Service has always had an industry-wide reputation for honesty, exceptional customer service and fair competition. And right here, right now, each of you contributes to our success. And for this, I thank you.

The events that have unfolded ever since the September 11 attack on our country have affected each of us in countless, different ways. But America’s spirit remains undaunted and goes on. Each home across America will in some way celebrate the holiday season of 2001. It is my hope that each of you, with your family, will have a happy, blessed holiday and a new year that will bring peace and renewed faith for America.

News from our Branches

CENTRAL

Pass-It-On Praise

A MidAmerican Energy customer in East Moline, IL wanted to make sure the utility passed along her praise to us regarding a trimming job on her property. The customer called in to tell MAE “what a great job Wright Tree Service had done” and asked that her comments be forwarded to the crew. It’s a pleasure to do so. The crew was made up of **Foreman Mike Wilkins** and **Trimmers Travis Leigh** and **Jim Martin**. Their **General Foreman** is **Robert Sanford**.

Just As LUCK-y Would Have It!

Division Supervisor Tony Gadola received an email from MidAmerican Energy’s Lucky Smith, complimenting one of our crews in Sioux City, IA for its speedy and professional work in replying to her request for some trimming work on her property. WTS showed up just three days after the customer had put in her request. **Foreman Sean Hegarty** and **Trimmer Adam Ellis** were the crew that evoked this compliment. Their **General Foreman** is **John Church**.

Just A Little Off The Side, Please!

Foreman Sean Hegarty and **Trimmer Jeremy Cason** were also cited by another MidAmerican Energy customer in Sioux City. This time the project was a maple tree growing into the customer’s lines. The customer had requested that we trim the tree or, if necessary, cut it down. The crew managed to save the tree with some professional trimming and the customer phoned the utility to say how satisfied he was. “The crew was very friendly and professional,” the customer attested. Keep up the good work, Sean and Jeremy! Their **General Foreman** is **John Church**.

Sparing The Pear Tree

A Kansas Power & Light (KPL) customer, concerned over the trimming of his Bradford Pear Tree, asked the crew how much damage would be done. The crew’s supervisor visited with the customer the next day, obviously making

an excellent impression. Here’s what the customer wrote: “Your supervisor understood my position and did not cut to the standard 12 feet clearance. He said the crew would cut only the necessary leaders that would keep the limbs out of the power lines. I want to commend both KPL and Wright Tree Service for their patience and understanding.” **Foreman Tyson Young** and **Trimmer David Stapleford** were responsible for this customer’s satisfaction. Thanks to them and to their **General Foreman, Tim Leiser**.

“Good Sports” Award?

Larry Torpy, the 2001 Tree Climbing Committee Chair for the Midwestern Chapter International Society of Arboriculture, wrote WTS **Senior Vice President Bob Myers** to thank us for our company sponsorship of one of the climbing events. In his letter Torpy especially noted how **Division Manager Steve Pietzyk** and his crew went “beyond the call of duty” when they helped out at a competitor’s sponsored event. “Without your help we could not have had such a successful event,” Torpy’s letter concluded. Thanks to Steve and all his co-workers for doing things the “Wright” way!

Establishing New Roots

General Foreman Mike Sanford, Central Division, and his wife Tammy hope they’ve seen the last of the moving van for a while. Mike and Tammy have purchased their first house together in Davenport, IA. Mike worked for the Southwest Division in Oklahoma, then moved to Sioux City, IA before he and his wife have hopefully settled down in the Quad Cities.

NORTHEAST

Bouquets For Baker!

An Indianapolis Power & Light (IPL) customer penned a note to the utility, expressing her delight about the work performed by WTS. “I called IPL to have some tree limbs removed from the wires in my back yard,” the customer wrote. “The crew came and removed the limbs and did a beautiful job. I was very

pleased.” And so are we! Thank you, **Foreman Charlie Baker** and your crew. Their **General Foreman** is **Paul Forkell**.

Double The Pleasure!

Work Planner Travis Hurst and his wife Heidi recently welcomed a second girl, Regan, into their family. Congratulations to Travis and Heidi – and to the proud grandfather, **Division Supervisor John Hurst**.

Advance Notice!

Foreman J. D. Ringley and his wife Kathy will celebrate their 30th anniversary on March 31, 2002. J. D. also tells us his wife will be 52 years old next January and he’ll turn 65 in May “but nowhere near retiring.” J. D. says, “We have three small dogs, a wonderful life and family and friends. We are truly blessed!” Thanks, J. D., for sharing your happiness with us.

SOUTHWEST

Hot Dog!

Foreman Diane Vasquez tells us “everyone had a wonderful time” at the family picnic held at Lake Letna for the Lawton, OK crews. “Everyone” included Diane’s husband, **General Foreman Anthony Vasquez**, and **Foremen Pete Bustamante, Mike Blain, Mike Halverson, Kevin Landers** and **Chad Rose**; plus **Trimmers Mark Baum, Steve Buitron, Ray Garcia, Pam Venokur** and **Chris Wells**. Spouses and children were also invited, of course.

Nothing Left Undone!

“They showed up at the appointed time, were polite, made proper cuts, attempted to comply with our requests and saved a few small trees. Overall, a fine job by all the crew; yard cleaned up before they left, too. We appreciated their good work.” After a letter like this, what more can we say – except to express our deepest thanks to the crew: **Foreman Rick Robles, Work Planner Lonnie Bynum** and **Trimmers Delores Archer, Robert Elmore** and **Nathaniel Walters**. Their **General Foreman** is **Ronnie Elmore**.

(continued on back page)

The Price They Paid For Liberty

Have you ever wondered what happened to the fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence?

Five signers were captured by the British as traitors and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons who were serving in the Revolutionary Army. Nine fought and died from their wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War.

What kind of men were they?

Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists, eleven were merchants, nine were farmers and large plantation owners – all men of means and well educated. But they signed the Declaration of Independence, knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured.

Carton Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts, and died in rags.

Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British, he was forced to move his family almost constantly.

He served in the Congress without pay and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him and poverty was his reward.

Vandals or soldiers looted the properties of Dilley, Hall, Clymer, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge and Middleton.

At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr. noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over his home for his headquarters. He quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed and Nelson died bankrupt.

Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife and she died within a few months.

John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she lay dying. Their thirteen children fled for their lives. His fields and gristmill were laid to waste. For more than a year, he lived in forest and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later he died from exhaustion and a broken heart. Norris and Livingston suffered similar fates.

Standing tall, straight and unwavering, they all pledged: "For the support of this declaration, with firm reliance on the protection of the divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor." They gave you and me a free and independent America. The history books never told you a lot about what happened in the Revolutionary War. We didn't fight just the British. We were British subjects at that time and fighting for our own government.

So take a few minutes while enjoying your holiday and thank these patriots. It's not much to ask for the price they paid. Remember, freedom is never free – and Christmas is more than just trees and presents.



Long May It Wave!

Hats off to Foreman Steve Richey, Central Division, and his crew, Trimmers Melvin Raygor and Mike Serpa, for this creative way of displaying the Stars and Stripes. In inset photo, Steve proudly savors the accomplishment. Mike Sanford is their General Foreman. Another Central Division crew duplicated this effort (see next page).



One Good Idea Deserves Another

Not to be outdone by Foreman Steve Richey and his crew (see page 3), Foremen Ray Barlow, Nathan Smart and, not pictured, Terri Kremer, Central Division, prepare to hoist Old Glory on their boom, top picture. Right picture shows the “flag-raising ceremony.” Their General Foreman is Mike Sanford.



We Made Ronald Smile!

When the Ronald McDonald House in Topeka, KS needed some free tree trimming, Division Manager Steve Pietzyk, Central Division, said “no problem.” Photo shows Foreman Bruce Fuchs and Trimmer Kevin Rhoads (in bucket) preparing to go to work. One of the volunteers was very impressed with the efficiency of Bruce and Kevin and attested the folks at the Ronald McDonald House were most appreciative.



Is He Looking For Elm Street?

Take our word for it, it's not Jason – it's General Foreman Mike Sanford, Central Division, who got into the spirit of Halloween by wearing this gruesome mask.



Timing Is Everything!

Carmen Duarte, wife of Work Planner Miguel Duarte, Northeast Division, came up with the perfect gift for Father's Day last June when she presented Miguel with a new baby boy, Saul Arturo. Joe Pulera is Miguel's General Foreman.



The Wright Choice!

Foreman Richie Wright, left, and Trimmer Larry VanWinkle were recently presented with the prestigious Outstanding Crew Award from MidAmerican Energy. Richie and Larry work in the Quad Cities area for the Central Division. Their General Foreman is Mike Sanford.



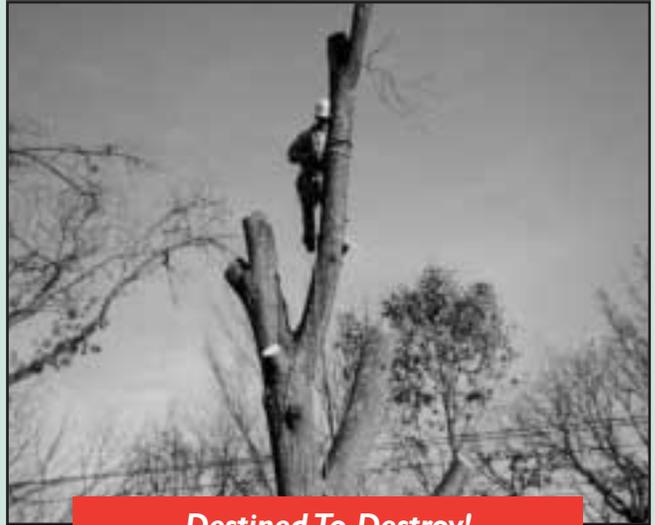
I Can – Can U?

After his wife Hope had sweet-talked Foreman Jose Palacio, Jr., Mountain States Division, into accompanying a friend to the airport, Jose discovered the luggage in the van was his! Hope immediately yelled, "Surprise, you're going to Cancun for your 40th birthday." Hope and her two sons, David and Tahjai, had arranged everything, even packing Jose's clothes and arranging for his time off.



HAMM-ing It Up!

Meet Elizabeth Faith Hamm, born in late October to Jayme Hamm and her husband, General Foreman Frankie Hamm, Southwest Division.



Destined To Destroy!

A giant oak, hanging precariously over a three phase and service wire plus telephone and cable lines, was dexterously removed by a WTS crew for XCEL Energy. The Minnkota Division crew that accomplished this assignment was Foreman Cory Kobernick and Trimmers Justin Kobernick and Randy Workman. Bob Lien is their General Foreman.

BENEFITS

Two Critical Enrollment Periods

Health & Dental Insurance Deadline: 12-31-01

The open-enrollment period for the health and dental insurance is December 2001. If you wish to add insurance coverage for yourself or a qualified dependent, you must return an enrollment form no later than 12/31/01. Forms should be mailed to the WTS Des Moines office. Upon timely receipt of the enrollment form, your coverage effective date will be January 1, 2002.

Your General Foreman will receive a supply of forms in the mail, so please contact them to receive a form. You may also request an enrollment form by calling the Des Moines office at 1-800-882-1216.

If you do not enroll during the open-enrollment period, you must incur a qualifying event to gain coverage during the year.

A qualifying event is summarized as marriage, divorce, the birth or adoption of a child, or the loss of coverage from another source. Should you incur a qualifying event, you have 30-days from the date of the event to apply for coverage. *If you should have any questions please contact Michelle at 1-800-882-1216.*

Flexible Spending Account Deadline: 12-19-01

A Flexible Spending Account (FSA) is a government-approved way for employees to set aside money in an



account and use it to pay for medical items. A second account is allowed for dependent care reimbursement, which allows employees to set aside money that can be used to pay for the care of children or elders. In either case, whatever amount is earmarked for an account is nontaxable.

For example, if you earn \$30,000 and contribute \$1,000 to such an account through payroll deductions, your gross taxable income is now \$29,000.

According to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, an employee who contributes \$1,500 yearly to an FSA can save \$610. That includes \$420 from avoiding federal income taxes at the 28 percent level, \$75 from avoiding the state income taxes of 5 percent, and \$115 because the entire contribution escapes the 7.65 percent levy from Social Security taxes.

It is now Open-Enrollment time for the Flexible Spending Account. The plan allows you to set aside money, through payroll deduction, to use for uninsured

health care and dependent care expenses, planned for the upcoming year. One of the biggest advantages is that it increases your take home pay since you pay expenses with tax-free dollars instead of after-tax dollars.

Any employee who has worked to the first of the month following 90 days of service may enroll. Employees who were enrolled for 2001 must re-enroll for 2002.

Please take some time to review your medical and dependent care expenses, and determine how the plan might benefit you, before making your decision. Anyone who needs a flex packet, or has questions about the plan, should contact Michelle in the Des Moines office. You do not have to be enrolled in the company health insurance program to participate in the Flexible Spending Account. The plan year begins on January 1, 2002, and is based on checks dated in 2002, regardless of when the hours are worked.

Please contact your immediate supervisor to receive an enrollment form. The form must be received in the Des Moines office by December 19, 2001.

If you incur expenses such as medical deductibles, office visit co-pays, eye exams, dental expenses including orthodontia, or any dependent care expenses so you can work or attend school, you should seriously consider enrolling in the Flexible Spending Account.



13 "Graduate" From General Foreman Candidate School!

A large class of 13 employees recently attended the General Foreman Candidate School during the week of November 12 at the home office. In left picture, front row, Miguel Duarte, Northeast; Brad Whisenhunt and Curt Cline, Southwest. Back row, Mike Knieff, Southwest; Brett McCully and Travis Hurst, Northeast. In right picture, front row, Al Garrow, Jr., Central; Chad Berlin and Jamie Watkins, Northeast. Back row, Gary Thorgeron, Northeast; Sean Hegarty, Central; Warren Hughes and Scott Ogen, Southwest.

Minnkota, Mountain States And Southwest Divisions Win Annual “Turkey Challenge”

Central And Northeast Divisions Eliminated By Disqualifying Accidents

A Central Division employee got out of his truck to get something out of the side bin. He struck his head on the bin door, causing a laceration and multiple stitches. Moral: Always wear your hard hat!

Another Central Division employee bent over to pick up some heavy logs and strained his back. Moral: Check the Foreman Manual and read how to lift properly!

A Northeast Division employee was driving down the road when one of his signs fell out of the truck. Before he could retrieve the sign, it was run over by a car, causing damage to the front bumper. Moral: Always make sure your load is secure!

Typical accidents like these kept the Central and Northeast Division employees from winning a free turkey in our “Turkey Challenge,” an annual event requiring each division to remain accident-free for a specific two-week time period in order for its employees to win a turkey. We have not yet achieved this goal company-wide, but continuing to work cautiously throughout the year will prepare you for next year’s challenge. And being conscious of small accidents like these might someday help you avoid a more life-threatening occurrence!



FROM THE
Kitchen

When you receive this issue of *Our Family Tree*, Christmas will be almost upon us. But we know many of you, with your growing families and busy lives, can always use some festive treats that are quick and easy. Here’s one that’s not only easy, but colorful, too.

SAINT NICHOLAS CANDY SQUARES

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 4 Tbs. Knox Gelatin | 4 cups sugar |
| 1 cup cold water & 1/2 cup boiling water | 1/2 tsp. flavoring |

Soak gelatin in cold water for 5 minutes. Add boiling water and stir until gelatin is completely dissolved. Add sugar and boil slowly for 15 minutes, stirring constantly. Divide mixture into 2 parts. When somewhat cool, add flavoring and coloring (peppermint for green; cherry for red). Turn into separate pans chilled with ice water and refrigerate overnight. Turn out next day, cut into squares and roll in granulated sugar. These are a soft, jelly-like candy and children especially love them.

This cake will keep for several weeks if stored in a tightly covered container but, after one taste, we predict it will be devoured immediately by your family and friends.

HOLIDAY POUND CAKE

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2 cups butter | 1 cup candied red cherries, chopped |
| 2 & 1/2 cups sugar | 1 cup candied green cherries, chopped |
| 1 Tb. vanilla | 1 cup pecans, chopped |
| 1 tsp. grated lemon rind | 4 & 1/2 cups flour |
| 9 large eggs | 1 & 1/2 tsp. salt |

Butter 10-inch tube or bundt pan and set aside. Cream butter until light and fluffy. Add sugar gradually; beat thoroughly for about 15 minutes. Blend in vanilla, lemon rind, and add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Toss cherries and nuts with one cup flour. Sift remaining flour and salt and fold into batter. Fold in cherries and nuts. Bake in 350 degree oven for 1 hour and 45 minutes. Cool on rack at least 10 minutes before removing from pan.

News from our Branches

(continued from page 2)

MT. STATES

“V” For VICTOR-y!

A Western Division XCEL Energy customer in Grand Junction, CO had an unusual request. The vacant lot next door to their home was owned by the utility and it had become trashy and overgrown with weeds. A representative from the utility, Danny Moore, enlisted the help of **Foreman Victor Pena** and they cleaned it up. “Victor worked very hard,” the customer wrote, “and did an excellent job. We appreciate your effort.” It wouldn’t be a newsletter without at least one commendation for Victor. Thank you, Victor, for representing the company so superbly!

FRANK-ly, You’re Good!

Shiloh Hatcher, the town arborist from Berthoud, CO, recently gave high-fives to **General Foreman Frank Cordova** and one of his crews. In his letter to Frank, Hatcher wrote: “I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your crew for the successful completion of the recent elevation project in Berthoud. I observed appropriate traffic control, good safety measures and outstanding pruning work. I am excited to work with your company again in the future and appreciate your willingness to provide this service to us. Please pass my thanks on to your crew for their performance. Again, your pruning work was excellent.” **Foreman Bobby Walker** and **Trimmer Sam Bryant** earned this well deserved praise.

The Results Are In!

390

EMPLOYEES QUALIFIED FOR
THE SAFETY INCENTIVE AWARD

During Fourth Quarter Of This
Fiscal Year (7/01 - 9/30)

Family Clippings

News From The Home Office



Just Clowning Around?

It looks like clowns were the preferred choice for Halloween costumes this year at the home office. Left to right, Belinda Harger, Joanne Nealon, Stacey Peters and Wendy Weber.



Welcome, Arnetta!

Arnetta Steptoe has joined the WTS home office staff in the Accounts Payable Department. Arnetta lives in Urbandale, IA, a suburb of Des Moines, with her husband Scott and their one-year-old son Ashton. The Steptoes moved here from Yardley, PA last May when Scott was transferred by the Dow Jones Co. to work on the Wall Street Journal.

A Day Of Caring!

WTS President **Scott Packard** and nine other home office employees spent a day weeding and trimming the property of a local charity, Children and Families of Iowa. The center’s coordinator expressed her appreciation in a letter to the home office, confessing surprise over the agency’s “nice bushes along the fence line” which the cleanup crew’s work had revealed. Joining Scott in the undertaking were **Terry McGonegle**, **Michelle Eggleston**, **Julie**

Chapman, **Judy Hiatt**, **Tammy Hollander**, **Kyra Mountsier**, **Joanne Nealon**, **Stacey Peters** and **Kelly Pettijohn**.

A Child Bride?

WTS Receptionist **Donna White** and her husband **Jim** recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. Congratulations to Donna and Jim! It’s our sincerest wish that they enjoy many more years of happiness.

If you have access to the Internet, you can visit us at: <http://www.wrighttree.com> or email us at spackard@wrighttree.com

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