

# Slingmakers

# AWRF

ASSOCIATED WIRE ROPE FABRICATORS  
2026 ISSUE 188





## 2026 AWRP PRESIDENT

Celena Moses



Royal Van Beest  
Houston, TX

### Advancing the Mission: AWRP's Momentum and Member Impact in 2026

The AWRP entered 2026 with strong momentum as its Board of Directors and Technical Board convened early in the year in Phoenix to set priorities and continue advancing initiatives launched in 2025. Central to these discussions was a consistent question: how can the organization continue to provide meaningful value to its growing membership while strengthening the lifting and rigging industry as a whole?

### Expanding Access Through Member-Focused Programming

Participation in AWRP programs continues to reach new heights, with recent P.I.E. and Technical Summits selling out as members seek education, networking, and technical insight. Recognizing this demand, **AWRP is introducing a new single-day registration option** for upcoming events in Houston, allowing attendees to experience either the P.I.E. or Technical Summit for one day at a reduced cost (\$300). This initiative reflects the organization's commitment to accessibility, enabling professionals who may face time or budget limitations to still benefit from technical sessions, peer collaboration, and industry engagement.

### Investing in the Industry's Future Leaders

AWRP's Emerging Leaders Committee continues to play a critical role in cultivating the next generation of professionals. Through expanding outreach to colleges and technical programs, the committee introduces students and young professionals to opportunities within the lifting and rigging field.

Building on successful outreach efforts in 2025, the committee has secured participation from eighteen students for the upcoming April conference, signaling strong interest in the industry and reinforcing the importance of continued mentorship and engagement. These initiatives not only support workforce development but also strengthen the long-term vitality of the organization and its member companies.

### The Technical Board: Driving Industry Standards

Often operating behind the scenes, AWRP's Technical Board remains essential to the organization's mission. Its committees are actively engaged in evaluating component performance, updating outdated technical information, developing new Recommended Practices & Guidelines (RP&Gs), and revising existing documents to reflect current standards and technologies.

In addition, technical leaders collaborate on summit programming, presentation development, and ongoing testing initiatives—all designed to provide members with practical, relevant, and up-to-date information. Members who attend Technical Board meetings frequently gain a deeper appreciation for the extensive volunteer effort required to maintain and advance industry standards. Participation also offers opportunities to contribute expertise and influence the future direction of technical guidance within the industry.

### Celebrating a Milestone Year

Anticipation continues to build for AWRP's 50th Anniversary Fall General Meeting, to be held in Hawaii. This milestone event is expected to draw strong attendance as members gather to celebrate five decades of industry collaboration and advancement. Planned activities include a commemorative lu'au, organized tours, family-friendly activities, and presentations from distinguished speakers. The event is designed not only to honor AWRP's history but also to strengthen relationships and look forward to the organization's future.

### Strengthening Connections Through Communication

As membership continues to grow, leadership recognizes the importance of maintaining strong communication with both long-standing and new members. Ongoing feedback and engagement help guide programming, technical initiatives, and member benefits to ensure the organization continues to serve evolving industry needs. Leaders encourage members to share perspectives, become involved in committees, and participate in meetings and events. Collaboration remains central to the organization's success.

### Looking Ahead

With expanding programs, technical advancements, and leadership development efforts underway, AWRP continues to position itself as a driving force within the lifting and rigging community. As members gather throughout the year, opportunities for collaboration, education, and professional growth remain stronger than ever.

In an industry built on teamwork and trust, AWRP's continued success underscores a simple truth: progress happens when members work together toward a shared goal.

## 50th Anniversary Challenge!

Find the hidden black crane hook featuring the 50th logo somewhere in this issue of Slingmakers for your chance to win a prize!

Take a picture of it and send it to [nicole@awrf.org](mailto:nicole@awrf.org). Every entry is automatically entered for a chance to win!



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2026

3

Slingmakers



## FUTURE MEETING DATES

**2027**  
**P.I.E. & TECHNICAL SUMMIT**  
 April 5-8  
 Marriott Marquis, Houston, TX  
**FALL GENERAL MEETING**  
 October 18-21  
 Omni Oklahoma City Hotel  
 Oklahoma City, OK



OZ Lifting Products

**Friedrich Höpfe**  
**JANUARY 26**

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## Associated Wire Rope Fabricators

P.O. Box 748 Walled Lake, MI 48390

Tel: 800.444.AWRF (2973)

[www.awrf.org](http://www.awrf.org)



AWRF AWRF\_IG AssocWireRopeFabricators

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The Rigging Box, Inc.

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Modulift UK Limited

## FUTURE MEETINGS

### 2026

April 20 – 23  
 Mon - Thurs  
 AWRF PIE and Technical Summit  
 Marriott Marquis  
 Houston, TX

October 18 – 21  
 Sun - Wed  
 AWRF General Meeting  
 Wailea Beach Resort,  
 Marriott Maui  
 Maui, HI



### 2028

April 2 – 5  
 Sun -Wed  
 AWRF PIE and Technical Summit  
 Omni Championsgate  
 Orlando, FL

### 2027

April 5 – 8  
 Mon - Thurs  
 AWRF PIE and Technical Summit  
 Marriott Marquis  
 Houston, TX

October 18 – 21  
 Mon - Thurs  
 AWRF General Meeting  
 Omni Oklahoma City,  
 Oklahoma City, OK

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**New**  
**BOB'S RIGGING & CRANE**  
**HANDBOOKS & REFERENCE CARDS**

**BOB'S RIGGING & CRANE HANDBOOK**  
 THE HOISTING TRIANGLE  
 MACHINE CONNECTION  
 COMMUNICATION  
 PELLOW ENGINEERING SERVICES, INC.

**BOB'S OVERHEAD CRANE & RIGGING HANDBOOK**  
 FOR INDUSTRIAL OPERATIONS  
 THIRD EDITION

**NEW 9<sup>TH</sup> EDITION**

- Training - Rigging & Cranes
- Rigging & Crane Safety Rules
- Rigging Training Program Example
- Horizontally Moving Loads
- Wire Rope Tables
- Working Load Limits - Slings & Hardware
- ASME Safety Standards
- OSHA Regulations

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 www.BobsIndustrialPublications.com

**DON PELLOW**  
 Engineering Consultant

## AWRF NEW MEMBERS

Congratulations and welcome to the following new AWRF Members:

**Industrias Murtra Cadenas (MURLINK)**  
 Jordi camp 94 08403 Granollers Catalonia, Spain  
 +34.938.402.400  
 Joaquin Vega  
 www.murlink.com



**Edwards Wire Rope & Rigging**  
 1709 S. Eastern Ave. Oklahoma City, OK 73129  
 Phone: 405.672.0531  
 Billy Sewell  
 www.edwardswire.com



**Axel Johnson International AB**  
 Sveavägen 151, 5th Floor Stockholm SE 113 46  
 Sweden  
 +46.706.11.10.40  
 Stefan Jagelid  
 www.liftingsolutionsgroup.com



**Cumberland Sales Company**  
 2804 Foster Avenue Nashville, TN 37210  
 615.957.5226  
 Wayne Jaco  
 www.cumberlandsalescompany.com



**CCF Legacy, Inc.**  
 102 Ridge St. Mabscott, WV 25871  
 304.252.1389  
 Chuck "Rooster" Farmer  
 www.machineropechain.com



**CertFID**  
 16542 Air Center Blvd, Houston, TX 77032  
 +1 (832) 821-5438  
 Natasha Martinez  
 www.liftgear.com



## EMERGING LEADERS UPDATE



**Matt Marks**  
 DCL Mooring & Rigging  
 Emerging Leaders Committee Co-Chair

AWRF Emerging Leaders hit the ground running in 2026, and we're already seeing real traction—starting with the launch of our new mentorship program. We kicked it off at the beginning of the year with a straightforward mission: connect Emerging Leaders with seasoned pros who've "been there" and can help fast-track growth through honest conversations, practical guidance, and real-world perspective. This isn't a checkbox program—it's an investment in people, relationships, and the future strength of our industry.

That energy carries straight into this year's Product Information Exhibition (P.I.E.), where we're bringing local high school and college students onto the floor for an up-close look at what this industry actually is—hands-on,

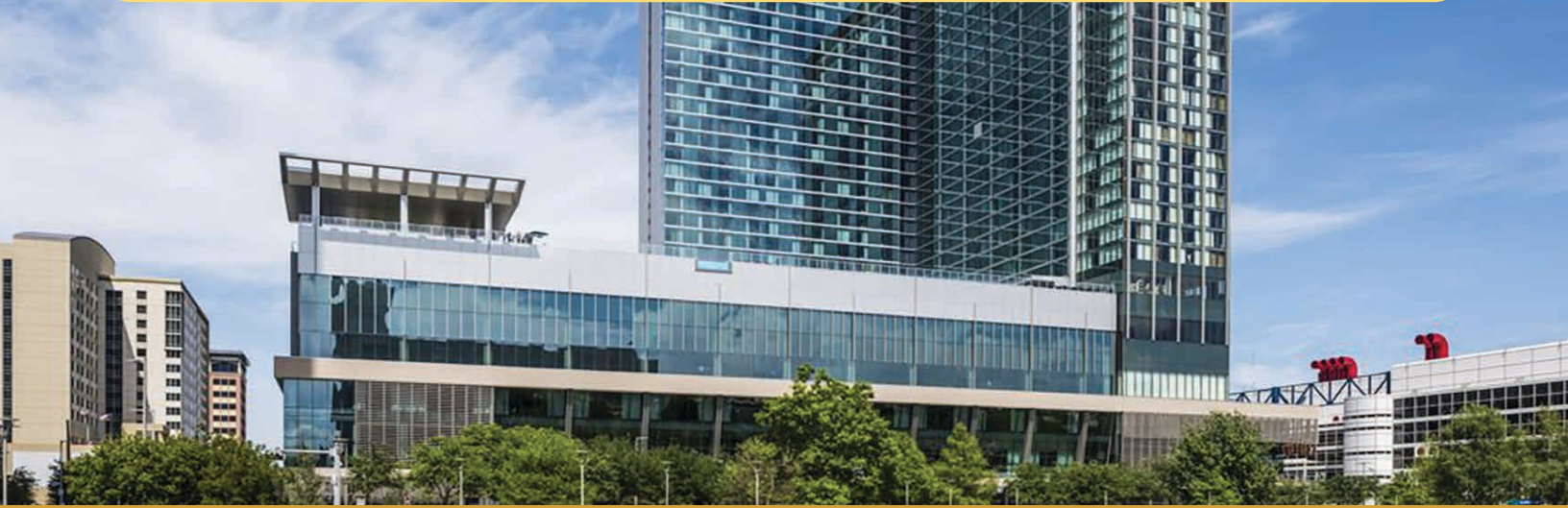
high-stakes, and full of opportunity. These students will be escorted in small groups by current Emerging Leaders participants, introducing them directly to exhibitors, walking them through what each company does, and showing them the career paths that exist in rigging, lifting, fabrication, inspection, engineering, sales, and operations.

And here's the exciting part for exhibitors: this is a built-in talent pipeline—students who are curious, motivated, and ready to see where they fit. If you're exhibiting at P.I.E., we encourage you to lean in—share your story, explain the roles you hire for, and be open to internships and entry-level placement conversations. Emerging Leaders is helping turn a booth visit into a connection that could become your next great hire.

# AWRF 2026 P.I.E & TECHNICAL SUMMIT

April 20 – 23

Houston, TX



## CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

### We're excited to announce \$300 Single-Day Tickets Available!

Join us for the PIE on Tuesday or the Technical Summit on Wednesday.

### Emerging Leader's Reception

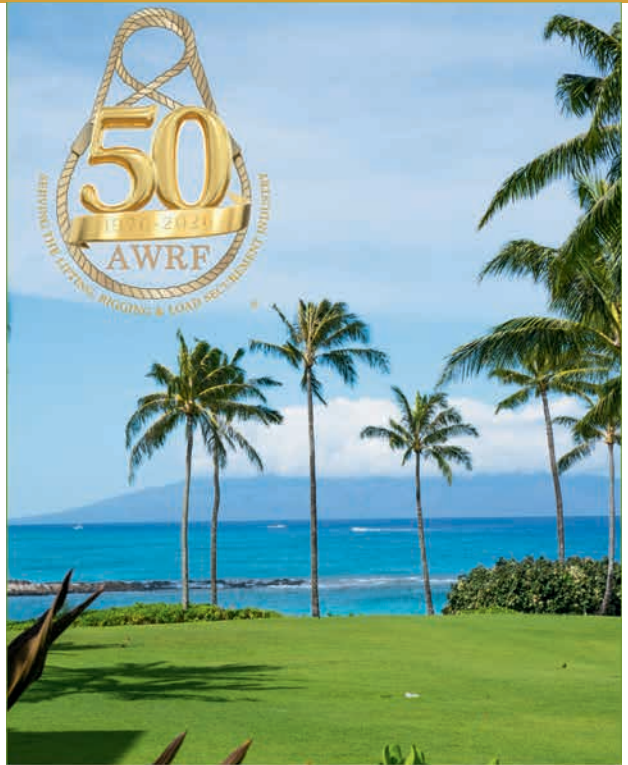
**Tuesday April 21st | 5:30 PM - 6:00 PM**

This is the perfect opportunity to connect with peers, share ideas, and gain insights from our industry's most dynamic voices in leadership. Come hang out and get inspired with fellow rising leaders!

### NASA Tour

**Thursday April 23rd – 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM**

Join your AWRF conference colleagues for an exclusive private tour aboard the NASA Tram Tour at Space Center Houston. This behind-the-scenes experience takes your group onto the NASA Johnson Space Center campus to explore historic Mission Control, astronaut training facilities, and Rocket Park. Led by expert guides, you'll gain insider insight into NASA's bold missions to the Moon, Mars, and beyond. After the tour, you will have time for self-exploration in the museum exhibits and gift shop before returning to campus – making this inspiring field trip both seamless and unforgettable.



AWRF is celebrating 50 years of serving the lifting, rigging, and load securement industry—and we're taking the celebration to **Maui, Hawaii!**

Don't miss our Fall General Meeting  
**Sunday October 18 - Wednesday October 21**



**Book your room today!**

\*Hotel rooms are limited and expected to sell out



## 2026 Spring PIE Exhibitors

Actek Mfg & Eng Inc.	Loos & Co., Inc.
ADB – Hoist Rings Mfg.	Lug-All
Advantage Sales & Supply	Madras Hardtools Pvt, Ltd.
All Material Handling, Inc.	MAGNA Lifting Products, Inc.
Alps Wire Rope Corporation	Marine & Industrial Supply
Arabi Sling	Miller Lifting Products
Associated Wire Rope & Rigging	Muncy industries
Atlas Lifting & Rigging	Murdock Webbing Co., Inc.
Ben-Mor	Murlink
Bharat Wire Ropes	National Band & Tag Co.
Bridon-Bekaert	Oppermann Webbing
Campbell Chain	Orion Cordage Company
Carolina Webbing	OZ Lifting Products
Certags	pewag USA
CertFID	Proofcert, LLC.
Chant Engineering Co., Inc.- Dynamic	Reel Power Industrial
Load Monitoring & Friedrich Höppe	Royal Van Beest
Chicago Hardware & Fixture	Ropers Enterprises
Cleveland City Forge	Rugged Controls
CODIPRO	Samson Rope
Columbus Mckinnon Corporation	Sahm Splice USA, LLC.
Cortland International	Scope Computer Vision Technologies
Cromox US, Inc.	Seaco Industries
De Haan Special Equipment BV	Service Thread
Doleco USA, Inc.	Sheave Source
DSR International Corp.	Slingmax Group
Durabilt by Durbin	Strider Resource
Elephant/Tiger Lifting	Stamperia CARCANO SPA
Elite Sales, Inc.	Suncor Stainless
Erin Rope Corporation	Talurit, Inc.
Esmet	TESSAlink Software
Etiflex Corporation	Teufelberger Redaeli
ETCHED, LLC.	The Caldwell Group, Inc.
Ferretero India PVT LTD	The Lift Solutions
FibrXL Industrial Inc.	The Rubicon Group
First Sling Technology	TP Industrial Yarns
Fuzhou Enchain	Tuffy Lifting
General Work Products	TW Products
Handling Systems INTL	Ulven Companies/Skookum
Holland Nameplate	Uniropo Limited
Holloway Houston, Inc.	Usha Martin Americas
Industrial Magnetics	US Rigging / Pelican Rope
IPH Wire Rope	Washington Chain
Jergens, Inc.	Washington Wire Rope
Ken Forging	Wireco
Kerr Stainless	Wirerope Works, Inc.
Kito Crosby	Wirop Americas
KWS Chain	WSTDA
Laclede Chain	Yigal Cohen
Liftex Corporation	Yoke Industrial Corp.
Lifting Gear Hire (LGH)	

Exhibitors as of February 2026

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

### Monday April 20th

7:00 am – 10:00 am	Board of Directors Meeting
11:00 am – 5:00 pm	Networking Golf Tournament
10:00 am – 4:00 pm	Registration Texas Foyer
9:00 am – 3:00 pm	Exhibitor Set Up Texas Ballroom
5:30 – 6:00 pm	First Timer's Reception
6:00 – 7:00 pm	Opening Reception

### Tuesday April 21st

7:30 – 9:00 am	Breakfast Buffet
<b>8:00 – 3:00 pm</b>	<b>Product Information Exhibition</b>
11:30 – 1:00 pm	Luncheon Buffet
5:30 – 6:00 pm	Emerging Leader's Reception
6:00 – 7:00 pm	Reception

### Wednesday April 22nd

7:00 – 8:00 am	Technical Summit Breakfast
8:00 – 9:00 am	Technical Summit Keynote / Opening Session
9:00 - 12:00 pm	Breakouts
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Technical Summit Lunch
1:45 – 4:00 pm	Breakouts
5:00 – 6:00 pm	Reception

### Thursday April 23rd

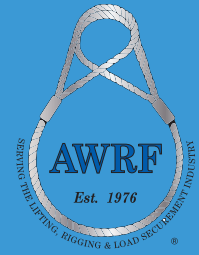
9:00 – 11:00 am	NASA Tour
12:00 – 3:00 pm	Pickleball Tournament

*\*Schedule is subject to change*



Scan to Register

# AWRF EMERGING LEADERS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



We're excited to announce the launch of the **AWRF Emerging Leaders Mentorship Program**: a new initiative designed to connect professionals across the rigging and lifting industry and help develop the next generation of leaders.

This program pairs young professionals with experienced industry veterans (40+) from different companies and departments. Together, mentors and mentees will share insight, grow their leadership skills, and strengthen connections across our community.

Are you a young professional looking to grow your career and learn from an industry expert?

As a **mentee**, you'll be paired with an experienced professional who can offer real-world guidance, perspective, and support to help you reach your goals.

### What to Expect As A Mentee:

- One mentor thoughtfully matched to your goals and experience
- One quarterly meeting (virtual or in person)
- Simple tools and support to help you get the most from your mentorship
- A chance to grow professionally, personally, and within the AWRF community

Are you an experienced professional (40+) who's passionate about developing future leaders?

As a **mentor**, you'll be matched with a young professional from a different company and department offering them insight, perspective, and guidance they can't get anywhere else.

### What to Expect As A Mentor:

- One mentee, matched based on complementary backgrounds
- One quarterly meeting (virtual or in person)
- Simple tools and support to guide the relationship
- A chance to give back, connect, and stay active in shaping the industry's future

This isn't just about advice. It's about connection. It's about growth for both mentor and mentee. Let's build something that lasts together!

Interested in joining the program? Please email [nicole@awrf.org](mailto:nicole@awrf.org) for more information.





## Redefining strength.


Big things are coming to the pewag lineup. Engineered for strength, precision, and total confidence on every lift, our upcoming products deliver elevated performance and are built to meet the toughest demands across industries.

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 [sales@pewagchain.com](mailto:sales@pewagchain.com)



*Raymond's passion: splicing wire rope – Townsville, Queensland (1962).*

## LIFTING INDUSTRY HONORS McLAREN'S INGENUITY AND LEGACY

“There’s a quiet brilliance in knots. Throughout the centuries, they’ve secured and built civilizations. From the ropes of ancient sailing ships to the intricate rigging of modern engineering, knots have silently shaped humanity’s progress—balancing simplicity with profound functionality,” says Raymond McLaren, founder of Andromeda Industries.

Andromeda is a proudly Australian-owned and operated company based on approximately 12 acres in Moonbi, NSW. Since 1972, it has been a cornerstone of the lifting and rigging industry in Australia and abroad.

Raymond’s pursuit of precision has shaped the company from the very beginning. Not only did McLaren design every machine the company uses, but he also built many of the parts by hand.

McLaren’s engineering journey began at Stewarts and Lloyds Tube Makers, where he earned a mechanical engineering certificate. Then he took a position with Evans Deacon Industries to design conveyor belt systems.

### Wire Rope Slings Capture Interest

Later, while managing a power station in Far North Queensland, the firm’s founder unexpectedly found himself operating cranes—an experience that sparked his interest in wire rope slings.

McLaren quickly recognized the importance of reliable equipment and the critical role of the sling. He understood that this component must be 100 percent reliable, especially when lifting delicate and expensive equipment in remote locations.

Determined to meet that need, McLaren began splicing his own slings. His craftsmanship soon attracted the



*Raymond posing with the Superflex product.*

# ANDROMEDA INDUSTRIES

attention of the Townsville Regional Electricity Board, Queensland, which placed his first major order.

Returning to New South Wales, he launched a mobile splicing business, travelling from site to site and hand-splicing wire rope from the back of his old Land Rover.

For seven years, he traversed the state, building strong client relationships and a loyal customer base. As demand grew, so too did the need for mechanization.

## Known for Innovation

In 1967, McLaren engineered a 250-ton press, revolutionizing Andromeda's sling production. A customer's request for a more flexible wire rope soon inspired his most significant innovation: the Superflex Cable.

From there, Andromeda Industries established itself as a leader in wire rope technology, specializing in the design and manufacture of plaited and woven steel cables, rigging gear, and terminal systems. The company's commitment to research and innovation has driven the creation of unique products and processes that have taken many years to develop.

Today, Andromeda produces everything from its original 10 mm (3/8") Superflex Cable to massive 96 mm (3.8") cables, alongside its renowned steel Flat Woven Slings—engineered for both cradle and choker lifts—and a wide range of specialized rigging solutions.

## Williams Builds on Firm's Growth

After decades of innovation, the Australian company continues to expand its impact within the lifting industry. Recently, ownership transitioned to Annette Williams, who has purchased the business.

Williams has been a vital part of the company for over 20 years and now carries McLaren's legacy forward. She is overseeing a new growth trajectory for Andromeda Industries.

## Industry Honors McLaren

This growth reflects a lifetime of ingenuity, dedication, and quiet brilliance by McLaren, 87. He was honored with the inaugural LEEA (Lifting Equipment Engineers Association) Lifting Legends award for Australia and New Zealand—a fitting tribute to his accomplishments in the industry.



Andromeda Industries



# AWRF 2026 P.I.E & TECHNICAL SUMMIT SPEAKERS



**Anton van der Zalm -  
Royal Van Beest Group**  
Vice President Corporate Research  
& Development

Working out of the head-quarter of the Group in the Netherlands. Started as a product manager back in 2003.

With more than 20 years of experience in the industry, now responsible for all technical challenges and product developments within the group. With a degree in teaching Physics and Chemistry sharing knowledge is a core competence. Contributing member to the technical committees in ISO TC 111, CEN TC 168 and ASME B30.26. My mission: Empower customers around the world to lift, move, secure, and build great things with safe, high-quality products, innovative solutions manufactured by the companies in the group.



**Christopher Dyson -  
ROCOL, a Division of ITW Limited**  
Tribology Lead

Chris Dyson first encountered tribology during his Mechanical Engineering studies at the University of Leeds, before doing a PhD in engine lubrication. Since 2013 Chris has worked for Rocol, a specialist lubricant manufacturer in Leeds, UK, keeping collaborative links with the Universities of Leeds and Bradford. Since 2024 Chris has been based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana leading a field-based team of consultative lubrication and metalworking specialists, supporting current reliability needs, and developing insight to address emerging and future challenges.



**Jay Schroeder - Caldwell, Inc.**  
Regional Sales Manager, RUD/  
Renfroe/Caldwell

- 20-year overhead lifting industry veteran
- I think the best part of our industry is that there is a new way to help someone every single day



**Wayne Wille - Kito Crosby**  
Business Development Manager

Wayne Wille joined Crosby Straightpoint in May of 2016 as a business development manager and has been in the scale and force measurement industry for over 29 years. Throughout the 29 years, Wayne has had many different roles, from technical support, product training, product development and developing and supporting distribution networks. Wayne's current role as business development manager involves working with distributors and end-users. His main focus is on promoting and implementing wireless technology using RF, Bluetooth and Software into the rigging industry. As we grow going into the future, electronics is all around us and our industry is ready for it.



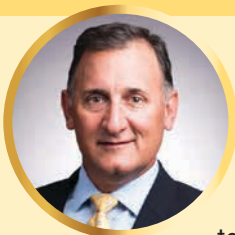
**Chase Vencl - Kito Crosby**  
Manager - Product Engineering

For the past twelve years, I have found great fulfillment in my professional career, where I collaborate to design and deliver lifting and rigging products and solutions for end users across the globe. I have developed into a subject matter expert, providing technical guidance on application use, product performance, product development, and design enhancements for lifting, rigging, and load securement hardware. I take pride in contributing to innovative, reliable solutions that improve safety, efficiency, and performance in demanding applications worldwide.



**Timothy W. Klein - WireCo**  
Director of Infrastructure

For the past 25 years Timothy W. Klein has worked in the Fabricated Products Division at WireCo. He is currently the Director of Infrastructure at WireCo. He is a licensed Professional Engineer in several US states as well as holding a Professional Engineering License in Canada. He earned his Bachelors and Masters of Science degrees in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Missouri Science and Technology. Tim has several published papers on the mechanics of wire rope and currently serves on the Main Committee of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers B30 and is the Chair of the B30.26 Subcommittee. He is also the Chairman of the Technical Committee for the Associated Wire Rope Fabricators and past Chairman of the Wire Rope Technical Board. Tim is a proud Veteran of the US Army and continues to stay active outside of work spending time with his family and volunteering with the community.



**Keith Shepherd -  
DCL Mooring & Rigging**  
President & CEO

With 36 years of experience in the rigging industry including ownership and managerial responsibilities I lead teams with emphasis on growth and innovation in new markets and applications. A safe working environment and continuous improvement are top priorities. The ability of DCL Mooring & Rigging to offer a complete rigging package including anchors, anchor chain, rigging hardware, lifting slings - both wire rope and high performance synthetic, all backed by our engineering department, allows us to meet your most critical applications.



**Patrick Clark - pewag**  
Manager of Industrial Sales -  
Channel Partners

Over the two decades in the lifting and rigging industry, functioned as a sales rep, manager, trainer and lift planning engineer.



### **Joost Eertman - Ropeblock B.V.**

#### **Technical Director**

Joost has been with the Dutch company for 29 years. He began his career studying the deceptively complex matters of spelter socket mechanics and worked as project manager and lead engineer for the company's larger projects. Through the years he has gained detailed insight into global offshore, marine and construction equipment requirements, and implementation through smart engineering in the manufacturing process. As the operations manager and technical expert, he later contributed to the company's innovative designs for craneblocks, sheaves, swivels and sockets and its lean manufacturing and assembly approach. Mr. Eertman has a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering and is active in Euro Norm technical committees for cranes and wire rope. He has published research projects, is the author of the company's engineering directives and technical standards and speaker at several industry conferences.



### **Dan Mongan - Caldwell, Inc.**

#### **Senior Sales Engineer**

Dan started working for Caldwell in 1990 and has led the design for a wide variety of projects, including a transport carrier for Intuitive Machine's Lunar Lander and a "dino flipper" for a live lab installation at North Carolina's Museum of Natural History.

He not only trains Caldwell's internal staff on product function but is an important part of Caldwell's distributor and end user outreach.



### **Justin McCoy - Scope**

#### **CEO**

As the CEO and driving force behind Scope, Justin leads all AI, engineering and product strategy. With over 15 years of experience building and leading product and technology organizations, Justin's AI experience ranges across electric utilities, power generation, oil & gas and government sectors. For the past decade, Justin has led teams in next-gen AI solutions for mission-critical industrial, commercial and military applications. His significant contributions to national defense and digital product innovation are actively utilized by the Department of Defense. Notably, he developed the groundbreaking WIDOW system, now the official mission planning tool of the U.S. Air Force. From subsurface industrial applications of computer vision, to deploying AI technology miles in the air, Justin has pioneered best in class AI for physical world applications.



### **Doug McElravy - pewag**

#### **Sales Operations Manager**

Doug is a 1998 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. He has a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry with an Engineering background in Nuclear Engineering. BEAT NAVY!



### **Jeff Ferchen - Caldwell, Inc.**

#### **Director of Business Development**

With more than 25 years of lifting industry experience, including roles at The Crosby Group and Rockford Rigging, Ferchen leads Caldwell's inside and outside sales teams

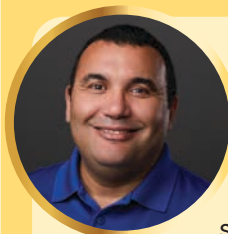
In addition, he was named to the AWRF board of directors in 2022 and will serve until 2028



### **Milad Gerges - YOKE Industrial Corp.**

#### **National Sales Director**

Results-oriented professional with over a decade of Business-to-Business (B2B) experience across the lifting equipment, telecommunications, medical, and mechanical sectors. Possesses 14 years of experience in lifting accessories, including wire ropes, slings, and chains, with deep expertise in leading brands such as Crosby, Casar, Carl Stahl, RUD Germany, and YOKE. Enhanced by 5 years of project manager experience in telecommunications, managing MTN projects and utilizing technologies from top vendors like Ericsson, Nokia Siemens, and Alcatel. Proven success in biotechnology and medical device sales with brands including Abliance, Biolabo, Convergent, and Capp, as well as expertise in mechanical seal sales with the EagleBurgmann German brand. Passionate about delivering exceptional results through innovative sales strategies and dynamic project management, and eager to contribute to a forward-thinking organization that values growth, client satisfaction, and operational excellence.



### **Wassil Bouali - RiConnect**

#### **Technical Sales Manager**

Wassil Bouali is a Technical Sales Manager at RiConnect, where he helps organizations operationalize safety compliance and traceability across safety-critical equipment and operations.

RiConnect combines rugged NFC/RFID identification (including stainless-steel tags designed for harsh environments) with Digital Asset Passports to centralize certificates, inspection history, maintenance records, and field documentation—improving audit readiness and reducing administrative overhead.

With a background spanning industrial digitalization and safety-focused SaaS, Wassil has led customer engagements and go-to-market initiatives across Oil & Gas, utilities, renewables, and heavy industry. His work emphasizes practical adoption: aligning stakeholders (HSE, Lifting Authority, operations, and procurement), defining priority safety use cases, and quantifying ROI through reduced compliance gaps, faster inspections, and stronger governance of certification records.

Wassil holds a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science and an MBA, and he completed a Berkeley Haas certification in AI & Strategy in Business.

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When you can't, reduce it.

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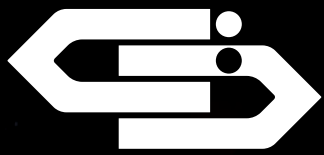
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# AWRF 2026 P.I.E & TECHNICAL SUMMIT SESSIONS

## **Anton van der Zalm - Royal Van Beest Group**

### **“Load Distribution in Multileg Slings with Unequal Lengths”**

The presentation of deformation of slings with sling length differences will cover simulations created by Finite Element Analysis. Chapters in the presentation that will be discussed:

Behavior of different types of slings in case of length differences

- Steel Wire Rope slings
- Chain Sling
- Synthetic slings

Behavior in case of length differences with

- 2 leg slings
- 3 leg slings
- 4 leg slings

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## **Chase Vencl - Kito Crosby**

### **“Finite Element Analysis of Rigging Hardware in Improper Loading Scenarios”**

Critical role of shackles, hooks, links etc in lifting. Risks of improper loading beyond manufacturer guidance.

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## **Christopher Dyson - ROCOL, a Division of ITW Limited**

### **“Lubrication-Related Best Practice for Wire Ropes in High Temperature Service”**

Wire ropes in high temperature service, such as heave compensation units, ladle cranes and coating lines, have different lubrication requirements than many other systems. Some of the of the key factors in these systems are described. Avoiding melting and controlling oil separation is important to effective lubrication. Thermal and oxidative degradation means a shorter lubricant service: Also, the thickening and drying of the lubricant can reduce lubrication effectiveness. At especially elevated temperatures, solid additives become more important in extending effective lubrication. At elevated temperature, corrosive mechanisms are significantly different to e.g. marine environments, so require different corrosion protection mechanisms.

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## **Dan Mongan - Caldwell, Inc.**

### **“Load Stability - Lifting Beam Applications & Pitfalls”**

Load stability is the cornerstone of safe rigging operations. When a product is palletized or on lifting frames, its center of gravity (CG) may be in question as to how the load is stacked or secured. If rigging connections are placed below the CG, the load becomes prone to tilting, swaying &/or rotation, requiring extra planning and securement. Limitations in rigging placement such as structural design, pallet construction, or available lifting points—can restrict options for maintaining balance. In addition, environmental and

operational constraints, including limited headroom, confined spaces, and the lifting path, must be factored into the rigging plan. Proper assessment of CG, rigging geometry, and lifting conditions ensures that the load remains stable during handling. Proactive planning and adherence to best practices mitigate risks, protect equipment, and safeguard personnel.

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## **Jay Schroeder - Caldwell, Inc.**

### **“Lifting Clamp Use/Care/Applications per (ASME B30.20)”**

Lifting clamps are essential for secure handling of plate, structural steel, and fabricated components. ASME B30.20 sets the governing safety standard, requiring manufacturers and users to ensure clamps are properly marked, inspected, and applied within rated capacity. Frequent inspections before each use should check for cracks, deformation, excessive wear, malfunctioning locking mechanisms, and legible identification. Periodic documented inspections shall be performed by qualified personnel. Clamps showing any rejection criteria—such as distortion, missing parts, or worn gripping surfaces—must be removed from service immediately for further inspection and rebuild/repair if possible. Safe operation requires clamps to be applied only to compatible loads, positioned correctly, and never exposed to side loading or shock. By following B30.20 guidelines and maintaining disciplined inspection practices, users help reduce risk of accidents and prolong clamp service life.

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## **Jeff Ferchen - Caldwell, Inc.**

### **“Fork Trucks Lifting Equipment, Safety Standards & Battery Lifting Beams”**

Lift trucks standards are different than typical rigging standards such as the ASME B30 series and don't really say much about attachments. However, they are essential for today's rigging, lifting, and material handling, offering versatility in moving heavy or awkward loads. When properly rated and paired with approved attachments, they improve efficiency while reducing manual handling risks or possible unsafe conditions due to obstructions. However, misuse such as exceeding capacity or incorrect rigging can lead to equipment damage, premature sling failure and even injury. Battery lifting beams serve a specialized role in forklift maintenance, enabling safe removal and installation of heavy industrial batteries used in manufacturing environments. They are compact in nature, ensure balanced lifting, minimize strain on operators, and reduce the likelihood of battery or truck damage. Key considerations include confirming beam capacity, inspecting for wear, and ensuring proper attachment to the lift truck. Common issues arise from worn components, inadequate operator training, or ignoring load balance requirements. Selecting the right equipment and adhering to safety practices enhances both productivity and workplace safety.

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**Joost Eertman - Ropeblock B.V.****“Delaying or preventing twist effects from rope-sheave interaction”**

In nearly all crane applications, fleet angles (the angle of attack of the wire rope on to the sheave groove) are the main reason for the introduction of twist in the wire rope while you are working the crane. The type of operation ran with the hoist is of great influence on the amount of twist generated in the system. When the accumulated twist in your system is released between the tip of the crane and the lower block, it may at one point result in block rotation. The overtime buildup of twist has then tipped the balance of a stable tackle to a tackle with cabling. Our presentation addresses earlier studies and presents further research to sheave and block design delaying these phenomena and a patent pending solution preventing it.

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**Justin McCoy - Scope****“Deep Learning & Wire Rope - Applied A.I. & How It Works”**

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**Milad Gerges - YOKE Industrial Corp.****“Closing the Gaps: How the Digital Product Passport Transforms Documentation and Traceability in the Lifting Industry”**

The lifting and rigging industry are facing a growing challenge as companies struggle with delayed, missing, or inconsistent manufacturer documents, creating costly inefficiencies and compliance risks. Documentation gaps and the use of multiple or duplicated traceability numbers, often result in operational delays, audit complications, and reduced confidence in product integrity. This presentation explores the development and deployment of Digital Product Passports (DPPs) in lifting and rigging hardware using embedded NFC enabled digital SupraNano chips. We will examine how these digital chip tags enable real-time access to certifications, inspection records, and maintenance logs directly from the product itself, with no paper trails or external databases required. We will look into how DPP systems are implemented within lifting products and what regulatory support this shift toward digital documentation in the lifting and rigging industry. We will also address cybersecurity considerations, user adoption in the field, and the potential for standardization.

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**Keith Shepherd - DCL Mooring & Rigging****“HMPE Life”**

A journey of steel wire to HMPE synthetic fiber conversions covering a multitude of applications over the past 35 years. From offshore seismic towing to inland marine towing to blue water towing to onshore & offshore heavy lift. Presentation to include technical information about HMPE fiber (do's and don'ts, pros & cons) and current market situation.

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**Patrick Clark & Doug McElravy - pewag****“Spreader Beams, Simply Right”**

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**Timothy W. Klein - WireCo****“Installation of Wire Rope on Cranes”**

Wire rope is an integral part of the mechanics that are necessary for crane operation and, like any other mechanical part, it performs best when installed correctly. This technical presentation will provide the audience with the basic procedures to ensure proper installation is achieved with the correct equipment and guidelines. Two factors are key to proper installation no matter what type of equipment, or which wire rope is being used: making sure the rope is free of twist and assuring that the rope is tightly spooled on the drum. In addition, the speaker will provide the maintenance requirements per the ASME standards that will keep wire rope systems operating at full capacity.

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**Wassil Bouali - RiConnect****“The Future of Lifting and Rigging: Driving Safety and Efficiency Through Digital Transformation”**

From the ropes and pulleys of ancient builders to the forged shackles and chains of the 19th century, lifting and rigging has always been a measure of human ambition. Today, in 2026, the industry still relies heavily on paper certificates, manual checks, and physical stamps—traditions that have carried authority for generations but now struggle to keep pace with modern demands. That legacy is meeting a turning point. By embedding digital chips in lifting gear, every hook, shackle, or sling carries its own story—certificates, inspections, and repairs—accessible with a simple scan. Assets can even be geotagged in real time, bridging the field with the office. The next era of lifting and rigging belongs to both smart steel and smart data: alloys that are lighter, stronger, and more durable, paired with systems that are traceable, transparent, and predictive. What strength once promised, information now secures—the certainty that safety can be proven, not just assumed.

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**Wayne Wille - Kito Crosby****“Using Loadcell Apps and Software in Lifting Industry”**

Join me to learn more about how software and smart device apps can help and be used in the lifting industry. There's more features out there than most are aware of. We will show you all the features and benefits of how a smart device application on your phone can be used to talk to wireless Bluetooth loadcells and the features that come with those applications. Also, we will dive into software that works with wireless loadcells; showing individual loads, total loads, alarms, data logging, Center of Gravity, load testing and more right from your computer. See how software or Bluetooth can benefit you and your application with data collection and logging.

# AWRF PIONEERS & LONG-STANDING MEMBERS

Editor's Note: To mark the 50th anniversary of AWRF, we are proud to introduce a new series celebrating the pioneers who helped build this association and shape our industry. These articles highlight the accomplishments of AWRF's long-standing members, as well as the family members and successors who stepped forward to lead the next chapter. Through their reflections, they share what they've learned, why they value AWRF, and how the organization has influenced their careers and the industry as a whole. While technology and practices have evolved over the years, AWRF's core mission has remained constant. Our commitment to safety and to the personal and professional growth of our members continues to define who we are, even as we remain open to growth and new developments that strengthen the industry. This series honors the individuals who built the foundation while looking ahead to the next 50 years and the opportunities still to come.



## Growing Up With AWRF: A Second-Generation Story

John Fireovid, President of Fulcrum Lifting, was introduced to AWRF as a child when his parents packed their fancy clothes and headed to the association's conferences across the country. Even then, he knew these events were special.

Decades later, he was working at Fulcrum Lifting, the firm owned by his father, Mel Fireovid.

In 2002, Fireovid attended his first AWRF conference with his parents in Montreal, Quebec. It was his first visit outside of the United States. At the opening cocktail hour, the room was packed, and he recalls that his parents seemed to know everyone.

"I followed my mom and dad around like a puppy," he says, both intimidated and fascinated as he watched them reconnect with people across the industry. He also remembers playing the coldest round of golf he's ever played.

That first conference, more than two decades ago, taught John Fireovid about the value of AWRF relationships. Attendees learn best practices at these conferences. But perhaps just as important is meeting industry professionals, building trust, and discovering who to call when you need help.

### Stepping Into Leadership

John Fireovid is proud to continue the legacy of running Fulcrum Lifting, founded by his father in 1981. He grew up around the business and spent summers in high school and college working in the shop before joining the company full-time in 2001 in inside sales.

Today, Cincinnati-based Fulcrum Lifting operates five branches in Ohio and Indiana, but its roots trace back to the company his father started more than four decades ago.

When Mel Fireovid became ill, John took over as president in 2010 at age 30. He says many long-term employees and AWRF colleagues were available to offer guidance as he grew in his role. In particular, he names Mike Parham, Mark Reeves, Frank Becker and Kathy Petrick as mentors.



Mel and John Fireovid, c. 2003

## Understanding the Industry's Importance

Fireovid says his appreciation of the industry has increased over the years. One early AWRF presentation permanently changed how John saw the industry.

Former AWRF leader and wire rope expert Don Sayenga once spoke about suspension bridges and the role wire rope plays in their design. One of his examples was the John A Roebling Suspension Bridge spanning Cincinnati, Ohio, and Covington, Kentucky.

Fireovid had driven past this landmark bridge located near his home countless times without a second thought. Now he often remembers that AWRF presentation as he drives over the bridge. (Sayenga, who died in 2019, was the AWRF Chief Executive Officer for 16 years.)

Members often comment that the industry's value becomes evident when you know what to look for. "There are so many things our industry touches," he says. "You might not see it, but you know it's needed to get the end result."

## Shared Knowledge in Action

That sense of industry support becomes most visible when the stakes are high. Fireovid turned to AWRF for help when his company faced an OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) citation involving a swaging machine.

While common in rigging shops, the machine is often misunderstood by regulators because it resembles other types of industrial presses. With AWRF's backing, Fulcrum Lifting responded with documented best practices and industry-supported guidance.

Association leaders provided technical materials and helped frame the company's response, demonstrating that the equipment was safely operated in accordance with recognized standards. The result was significant: the complaint was withdrawn.

For Fireovid, the experience reinforced what AWRF represents at its best. It's a collective voice that helps individual companies navigate challenges no one should have to solve alone.

## Mentorship and the Role of Pioneers

AWRF's greatest strength isn't just technical knowledge, it's the people willing to share it, he says.

When Fireovid joined the AWRF board early in his career, experienced leaders helped him find his footing. Some offered direct advice. Others simply modeled how to listen, observe, and carry themselves in a room full of seasoned professionals. "They just kind of took me under their wing," he says. "They mentored me."

He believes that spirit of mentorship is one of the association's most important traditions. Pioneers, in his view, serve as stewards of institutional memory. Their role is to explain why things were built a certain way, share lessons learned, and then trust the next generation to lead the future. That balance of honoring experience while welcoming change is what keeps the organization evolving without losing its identity.



John Fireovid, c. 1983

John with synthetic rope slings he and his team fabricated.

Continued on page 77

# HOMEMADE PIE

(1992 - 1995)

Originally published for 30 Year - by Donald A. Sayenga, AWRF Historian

When President Stan Truitt convened the directors' meeting at Breckenridge, Colorado in the summer of 1992, AWRF dues-paying memberships had grown to 218 companies. Several highly significant issues were on the agenda for discussion. These included two draft texts. One of the texts was the new promotional information flier devised by Chris Black, and the other was Mike Hughes' script for a shop safety video intended to be filmed professionally. Both draft texts were critiqued and approved unanimously by the entire board.



Harry Stanford Truitt with his wife Kim

One minor confrontational issue was resolved after debate. A question had arisen about votes being cast by the AWRF delegate in the ASME B30 committee: was it necessary to gain endorsement of the directors before casting a vote? The large number of voice votes and mailed ballots prohibited any thought of attempting any review process. It was agreed the deliberations of B30 committee proceeded so slowly, with so many checks and balances, there would be ample time to reflect upon, or change, a vote. The AWRF Technical Committee was holding two formal meetings in March and August each year at which all B30 issues were discussed openly.

The most significant step taken by the directors was to endorse a plan for the association's first attempt at holding a trade show. It was to be scheduled as a one-half day event during the Fall meeting in Atlanta. Gary O'Rourke organized it to be a modest table-top style exhibition in one of the hotel's two ballrooms. Gary was emphatic it was to be a products and information exhibition, not a trade

show. It was not intended to become a moneymaker for the association. "Having listened to many lengthy debates over the legal liability associated with trade shows during my first year on the board" Gary said, "I asked to pitch the idea of a products and information exhibition versus a trade show. The board supported the idea."



Stan Truitt visits Otis Dufrene and Larry Postelwait at the Peach PIE

The P.I.E. (affectionately called The Peach Pie) was structured by an ad hoc committee consisting of Gary O'Rourke, Don Sayenga; and Larry Boeckel of Campbell Chain. Thirty booths were set up to serve as conversation centers, modeled after the approach used by the well-known and long-established Triple Mill Supply Conference Booth format. The booth rental fees were set at very low token levels to stimulate participants. Gary said: "Larry was quickly recruited by Don to represent manufacturers... he provided the committee with the balanced perspective and humor needed to be successful right from the beginning... The PIE was a fantastic experience!"

During the board meeting in Atlanta, several new philosophies were outlined. The rapidly growing membership list had reached 224 companies, providing adequate income to cover AWRF's operating costs, even though a cost over-run had been experienced with the safety video. The concept of adopting a fixed maximum for accumulated reserves, accompanied by a practice for immediate disbursement of excess funds into programs for the benefit of all members, became the normal procedure from this point onward. The maximum of reserves was to be equal to the annual association expenses.

The funds were invested in laddered securities issued by the U.S. Treasury.

Howard Will suggested the existing Long Range Planning Committee should not function as a standing committee, but instead should become an obligation of all 13 directors themselves, under leadership of the elected Vice President. Instead of a nebulous "long range" plan, the entire summer board meeting henceforth would be devoted to planning for activities in a specific time period 3 to 5 years into the future. Stan Truitt emphasized the practice of having the incoming president name his new committee chairmen after the end of the Fall meeting was a proper way to proceed, but it introduced certain disadvantages for the President. An incoming chairman had to recruit his committee and present a roster for board approval at the next meeting. The continuity of ongoing AWRF projects sometimes was lost in the shuffle during a 60-day period at year end. A new plan was adopted to have the outgoing chairmen make formal transfer of all committee business according to a specified timetable in order to sustain all projects in the 4th Quarter.



Stan Truitt passes the Kopcie Memorial Gavel to Jurgen Prohaska

At the conclusion of the general meeting, Jurgen Prohaska was presented with the Kopcie Memorial Gavel, becoming the 17th AWRF president. Everyone recognized that Jurgen personally had recruited more new members than anyone else and had faithfully attended every general meeting except when prevented by illness.

The winter board meeting of 1993 was moved to a new location in Cathedral City, California, hoping to continue the tradition

of meeting in the Palm Springs area without relying on the Shadow Mountain resort. Prohaska proudly announced the Peach PIE had been a complete success. He proposed to make it an annual event. Sayenga pointed out this kind of change might require a modification of the outline for choosing future hotel properties. Not all hotels are equipped with appropriate space and facilities for a P.I.E. exhibition. The AWRF operating budget for 1993 was balanced at \$189,000 income of which \$160,000 came from dues paid by the members.

A debate was raised by John Gibbons about whether AWRF supported Signal as an approved insurance provider versus any other insurance company. This discussion deteriorated into an impasse. Other problems reviewed concerned the way first time attendees were being welcomed at meetings, and the need to make special badges identifying manufacturers' reps at the meetings. Sayenga gave a status report on the ASME B30 and B30.9 activity. After explaining what he saw as flaws, he was urged to become more proactive on both committees. During this meeting, the board made the first moves toward energizing a second generation of leaders from the members.

A letter from John Morley was read, proposing creation of a new category of individual persons who had retired from an active role in the industry. Morley had worked for three different AWRF member companies prior to his retirement in 1989. He presented a very persuasive argument suggesting the association ought to provide a way for retirees to continue participating and contributing to the success of AWRF. The directors agreed, created a new category with minimal dues required. Pending payment of his dues, Morley was accepted as the first Retired Individual Member. As it turned out this was a great irony because when Morley was notified he had to decline the honor. He had just been hired as a consultant by a member company and would have to wait a few more years before he could participate as a retiree.

At the winter Technical Committee meeting in Tampa one of the most bizarre moments in AWRF history erupted very



Two of the first "retired" members John Morley and Nico Struijk

suddenly in the early evening. After Frank Becker had adjourned his afternoon session at the hotel, the attendees agreed to go to a restaurant directly across the street to have supper together. When the meal was concluded a sudden rainstorm began. As the group huddled together under the canopy in front of the restaurant a speeding car rushed up to where they were standing. The car halted and a gunman jumped out. He ordered the men to throw their wallets into the car. Those nearest complied but when Ken Sellers hesitated, the thief struck him down with his pistol. The group turned to aid Ken and the frustrated thug jumped back into the car and sped away. Apparently the police were already in pursuit. They caught him a little while later.

Becker was one of those whose wallet was taken. *"What a fiasco that turned out to be" he said afterward. "They caught the suspect and as I recall they scheduled a trial later in 1993 but had to reschedule it two or three times because of flight cancellations due to weather problems. I believe I made a total of four trips before they were able to get all of the witnesses together. In any event the trial was finally held in March or April of 1994. I received a notice from the Florida State Attorney on April 14, 1994 noting that the Jury found the defendant guilty, and the judge sentenced him to Florida Prison for a life term, pay Court Costs in the amount \$225.00 and pay me restitution. Don't know what he did with the money because he sure didn't give any of it back to me but that is just as well because I really didn't want to see him again anyway."*

Mike Hughes received a lot of praise for his first shop safety video and his distribution of MSDS stations. The directors agreed to give all Regular Members a copy of the video, and to present it before everyone at the next general meeting. The first video was shown to all members at the March 1993 meeting in San Diego. Mike then asked for funding to create a second shop safety video. Chris Black made the

announcement to the audience about the new Retired Individuals membership category. He also announced his committee would be publicizing AWRF by handing out literature at the big Conexpo show. Hardy Will made an announcement about the second PIE at the Fall meeting, explaining that a survey of exhibitors at the first PIE had shown the majority favored sticking with the simple table-top format.

A surprise item of new business was laid before the directors by Dennis St. Germain, who advised he was representing the Web Sling and Tiedown Association. He presented a formal proposal about merging AWRF with WSTDA. Hardy Will assisted Dennis with the presentation. John Gibbons asked Barry Epperson to explain the legal ramifications that would be arising from WSTDA's proposal. Barry explained there were only three reasonable options available to AWRF under Texas law, each with its own merits. They were:

- [a] Merger of the two associations into a single association**
- [b] Consolidation of the two associations into a new entity**
- [c] Dissolution of one association in favor of the other**

After listening to Epperson's review of the pros and cons of each option, it was agreed to have Prohaska designate an ad hoc committee to respond to the WSTDA's proposal. He selected Vice President Jimmy Mazzella, Dennis St Germain, Hardy Will, Frank Becker, Gary O'Rourke and Don Sayenga for that purpose with Mazzella to be in charge of the delegation. They were authorized to proceed with further talks. When Prohaska convened his summer board meeting in July at the grand old Chateau Frontenac in Quebec, the ad hoc task group announced they would be holding a meeting with their WSTDA counterparts on August 9 to work out a merger of the two associations. On a more somber note, at that same time the association learned of the death of Bob Moffett, the first AWRF executive.

Unfortunately, the merger talks got derailed almost immediately in August when an outspoken faction of WSTDA delegates, including their legal counsel,



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argued their way into a dealbreaker controversy over the importance of WSTDA's specification writing and publishing. The AWRF delegates had done considerable homework on all of the various aspects of the merger. It was expected the meeting would involve some negotiations or accommodations, but AWRF did not anticipate the talks would become hung up on one single point. No one had expected to encounter a major debate on the subject.

Many years earlier AWRF had adopted a firm policy precluding adoption of standards. Although the sale of documents was a major source of income for WSTDA, their adopted and recommended standard specifications were not really consensus standards. These documents never had been exposed to public review nor to ANSI endorsement in the same manner as other standards such as the ASTM's chain and chain sling standards originating within NACM. AWRF at the time was thriving without any income from sale of printed documents. The WSTDA delegates firmly insisted the sticking point was not negotiable and they refused to budge. As a result, the initial round of talks went nowhere. By the time of the second AWRF PIE in October 1993 at the Sawgrass Resort, Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, the AWRF Directors were evenly divided over the question of whether the matter should be pursued at all, in view of the stance taken by the WSTDA.



Jurgen Prohaska with John Whitehead at Sawgrass

The weather for the Florida meeting was perfect, and the obvious success of the Product & Information Exhibitions became the focus of attention for everyone. The second PIE ("the Key Lime PIE") attracted 49 exhibitors, filling most of the space available in a lower floor exhibit hall at the hotel. One feature of the PIE was a display of historical items from various sectors of the industry and from previous AWRF meetings.

Progress on product testing was reported. A committee had been

formed, headed by Howard Will. They had chosen Prof. Steve Tipton of Tulsa University to serve as outside consultant. A joint meeting with WSTDA's web sling committee had reached an accord on parameters of the first tests which would study web sling efficiencies.

When the general meeting in Florida ended, Jimmy Mazzella became the 18th President. He opened his winter board meeting with two items on the agenda arising from changes in IRS regulations. One was easy to resolve, and one was more difficult. The easy matter had to do with compensating Barry Epperson's expenses as AWRF's legal counsel. For many years Barry's wife Brenda had attended general meetings with her husband, acting as a volunteer to help with the registration process. IRS had tightened its rules regarding spouse attendance at non-profit business meetings. It was necessary to clarify procedures for paying Barry's expenses. The second matter was more difficult because it involved Barry's expenses when he functioned as Chairman of the Government Affairs Committee. The solution taken was to pay a proxy tax to avoid a laborious process of trying to decide how much lobbying expense was to be allocated to a portion of the members' dues payments, and to pay the new tax on lobbying which IRS had decided was *not* a proper non-profit activity.

Some of the other issues discussed included a program for buying space advertising in trade journals and clarifying the rules for acceptance of Retired Individual Members. Three retired individual members were inducted: Al Caiola, Seym Carson, and Lou Rolfes. Another applicant, Al Lucht, was not approved because it was agreed he had retired as a U S Steel engineer, but yet he was still active as a consultant to some of the member companies, the same as John Morley who had voluntarily declined the retired member status. Two other wire rope consultants, Gail Dull and Roland Verreet, had joined the association as member companies. Al Lucht was also quite active with a group called the Senior Wire Rope Engineers. The directors decided to approach the senior engineers to see if they would join as an association, thus, to bring Lucht and others into AWRF activities.

The April 1994 general meeting opened at Mauna Lani on the Big Island of Hawaii. Jimmy Mazzella notified the association the plan to merge with WSTDA had totally collapsed following an informal joint meeting in February. The costs of everything in Hawaii were very high



*Jimmy and Laura Mazzella* and difficult to estimate. A loss went on the books for expenses of this meeting although the weather was excellent, and all of the attendees enjoyed themselves. A few weeks later, David Christmas, one of the most popular members of the board of directors, took a new job outside the industry, forcing him to resign his seat. Larry Boeckel was recruited to take his place. In his resignation letter Christmas wrote: *"I believe you are what you are because AWRF is made up of people who truly care about their businesses, their employees, their industry and their association"*.

In contrast to the weather in Hawaii, the September meeting in Annapolis was marred by rain. The hotel chosen was too small to handle the unusually good turnout, requiring the use of back-up hotels. Fortunately, several nearby properties had available space. It was decided to be sure to have a study of back-ups available in the critique of all future destinations. One major change took place. The motto on the logo was altered, replacing the words *"tiedown industry"* with the words *"load securement industry"* to avoid any possible conflicts or confusion with WSTDA.

Gary O'Rourke, the first Canadian citizen to become AWRF President, opened the 1995 winter board meeting in Palm Desert with a hidden agenda: *"I was determined to change the location of the winter meeting from Palm Springs to Florida. As I opened the meeting*



Gary O'Rourke

*Past President and once-again-newly-elected director Duane Kaminski raised his hand to speak; he had heard I might consider moving the meeting. Anyone who has been around AWRF for any significant period of time knows every AWRF member is equal, but some members are more equal than others, especially those who have served the association as long and as well as Duane Kaminski.*

Continued on page 70

# Passing Over The Wire Rope Bridge

## Mr. Barry Epperson

General Counsel and Chairman of the  
Government Affairs Committee, 1980-2025

It is with heavy hearts and profound sadness that we share the passing of AWRF Legal Counsel, Mr. Barry Epperson.

For 46 years, Barry served AWRF with unwavering dedication, integrity, and wisdom. His counsel helped guide the Association through decades of growth and change, and his steady presence became a cornerstone of our organization. Barry's commitment extended far beyond his professional role; he was a trusted advisor, a respected leader, and a valued friend to so many within the AWRF community.

Last year, Barry had announced his plans to retire at the end of 2025, marking the closure of an extraordinary chapter of service. At the Charlotte Gala Dinner, members gathered to offer Barry a sincere and heartfelt tribute, expressing deep gratitude for his tireless work and steadfast commitment. The recognition was a true celebration of Barry and Brenda's enduring legacy within



AWRF—a legacy built on service, loyalty, and genuine care for the people and mission of this organization.

Barry's impact on AWRF will be felt for generations to come. His guidance helped shape not only our policies and direction, but also the spirit of professionalism and fellowship that defines our Association today.

We extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Brenda; his son, Jay; his daughter, Laura; their grandchildren; and all who had the privilege of knowing him. We ask that you keep them in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

Barry's legacy will forever remain a part of AWRF's story.

*In my first experiences attending AWRF Technical Committee meetings, Barry Epperson was one of the very first individuals I had the pleasure of meeting within the Association. From the outset, Barry was warm, welcoming, and genuinely easy to talk to. He had a way of making conversation feel natural and inclusive, treating everyone as a friend—whether you were a longtime member or someone brand new finding your footing. As a young person getting involved in the organization, his openness and kindness left a lasting impression on me. I will never forget his embrace, his encouragement, and the comfort he gave simply by being himself. Barry's impact on me, and on so many others, speaks volumes about the person he was and the legacy he leaves within AWRF.*

- Chase Vencl, Kito Crosby

*I've been on the board for around 6 years and Barry was always the consummate gentleman. You could always count on a friendly smile and handshake whenever we would get together for meetings. And he and his wife were always so much fun to sit with at dinners because of the varied conversations. He was a wealth of knowledge for the organization and he will be missed tremendously.*

-Curt Jabben, Associated Wire Rope & Rigging, Inc.

*I always appreciated Barry for his remarkable knowledge and expertise in our industry. His understanding was both rare and invaluable. His presence and perspective cannot be replaced. He will be sincerely missed.*

-Matt Mazzella, Mazzella



Barry had visited Van Beest in the Netherlands long before I joined the company, and whenever we met, we often spoke about his holidays in Europe and his time in France while serving in the U.S. Army. He always shared those stories with warmth and enthusiasm.

Beyond his work as legal counsel, Barry showed a genuine interest in the safety of our industry. I especially remember giving a presentation where he sat in the front row, listening attentively. Afterwards, he took the time to speak with me about safety in the lifting industry – a conversation that reflected both his professional dedication and his personal commitment to doing things the right way.

Barry was not only a respected legal advisor, but also a kind and engaged individual. He will be remembered with great respect and appreciation.

-Anton van der Zalm, Royal Van Beest

Barry was such a trusted and strong part of the AWRF organization that it was difficult to see him depart. Barry provided a sense of confidence in his knowledge of AWRF past and present dealings. I would usually seek out his guidance on procedural issues and always enjoyed spending time with him outside of the conferences and proceedings. His advice and support as a colleague, a father, and a friend will be remembered by me. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family.

-Tim Klein, WireCo

Barry was one of the most personable people I have ever met. And that is saying a lot coming from a salesman. I met Barry at my very first AWRF Technical Committee meeting and somehow, he remembered my name every single time we met from that day forward. Barry combined his seemingly endless legal knowledge with an absolutely engaging personality, and that, will be incredibly missed.

-Jeff Doerge, cromox

Barry was a friend and the long-term AWRF rock as the board transitioned through many different directors and leaders. In his early years he was the person who helped drive the professionalism that AWRF needed. His commitment to representing AWRF through our Government Affairs committee built our Industry's reputation bigger and stronger than we likely were. He was steady in his communication and never took his job of protecting AWRF for granted. He cared about every member and would take on the tough situations the board had over the years head on. Through the years, many of the Boards challenged his value (as they should have) and he always won the challenge with his hard work. If you knew Barry, you knew AWRF was his life's work well lived!

- Tony Mazzella

Barry was always such a devoted gentleman to the AWRF family, industry and to its members. He always gave very thoughtful reports at every BOD meeting and protected our industry by reminding us of the legal pitfalls of having competition together. He always fought hard for our industry on the hill and brought to light the issues that related to our safety and longevity. He never missed a meeting and I always enjoyed his kind gentle demeanor, he was a genuine and trustworthy man.

-Jeff Ferchen, The Caldwell Group

"Barry was such a great asset to the organization. I think I got to see Barry at his best when we were in Washington DC for the Small Business Association Event. Barry was able to work the room on our (AWRF's) behalf masterfully. It was my first time at the SBA and Barry made sure our needs were heard – he redirected a conversation back to association needs on more than one occasion! I think that his love of the AWRF and its members was so evident. Barry would "work" at the meetings – but he was in his element in DC."

- Kathy Petrick, AWRF Past President, Samsel Supply Company

"Barry Epperson served the AWRF well. The AWRF was well served by Barry Epperson. Everyone that met Barry immediately recognized that he was a gentleman, a consummate professional and a class act. Everyone that knew Barry understood that he was a modern renaissance man that had a passion for his family. He collected rare books and vintage hardware. He enjoyed fine cuisine and vintage wines. He was a character artist that loved political satire. He loved the game of tennis. Barry will be missed by many, including me."

- Gary O'Rourke

A gentle giant of a man. Always ready to listen and give his considered opinion and thoughtful advice. Barry's memory will be long lasting and forever appreciated.

-Robert S. Jasany, WSTDA

Barry Epperson was a humble soul who treated everyone equally and gave of himself without expectation. His dedication to AWRF and its members reflected the way he lived his life – with kindness, humility, and a genuine commitment to serving others.

-Celena Moses, Royal Van Beest

# THE AWRF ACCREDITATION PROGRAM



The AWRF Accreditation Program is an exciting, new, and completely voluntary opportunity for all member companies and their affiliated branches. Using the current revision of our AWRF RP&G “Recommended Practice for the Operation of Sling Shops” as a basis for evaluation, LEEA (our third-party auditing partner), will work with interested member companies to ensure adherence to the AWRF RP&G. Member companies interested in the AWRF Accreditation Program are encouraged to sign up below with QR code.

- Ensure safer sling shop operation
- Drive more business to AWRF member companies
- Marketing to end users with Program Credentials/Site Accreditation
- Permitted use of a co-branded AWRF/LEE A Logo
- Access to LEEA technical answer center for submitted questions
- Access to LEEA technical guidance documents and online training

For more information, please visit [www.awrf.org/accreditation-program/](http://www.awrf.org/accreditation-program/) or email [nicole@awrf.org](mailto:nicole@awrf.org)



# Ensuring Excellence in the Lifting Industry

The AWRF Accreditation Program is a comprehensive initiative designed to promote industry standards and encourage continuous improvement among rigging, lifting, and load securement. The program provides members with an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to safety, quality, and operational excellence, reinforcing their credibility within the industry.

Participation in the AWRF Accreditation Program is crucial for members who want to distinguish themselves in an increasingly competitive market. By adhering to the AWRF RP&G for Sling Shops, members ensure that their operations meet or exceed the highest standards, which not only increases trust with clients but also enhances the overall safety of operations.

One of the key benefits of earning AWRF Accreditation is improved business reputation. Companies that are accredited by AWRF are recognized as leaders in the field, setting themselves apart from others. The program also offers access to valuable resources, such as industry insights, access to LEEA's Technical Center, and Access to LEEA technical guidance documents and online training.

Moreover, the accreditation program helps businesses stay up to date with the latest safety regulations and technological advancements, ensuring they remain competitive in an evolving industry. For members, this means better risk management, greater client satisfaction, and the ability to attract new business opportunities.



## AWRF Accredited Members

- Uniropo Limited
- Fulcrum Lifting
- DCL Mooring & Rigging
- SWOS
- Nelson Wire Rope
- Global Rigging & Synthetics
- Holloway Houston
- US Cargo Control
- Wisconsin Lifting Specialists
- Sling-Choker Mfg. - Hamilton



## Get to Know Our Auditor, Robert Wilson

Although Scottish by birth, Robert is now located in the North of England. Married to Helen, with 2 grown up kids. Robert has been in the lifting industry since 1982, with a Wire Rope/Lifting Equipment background. Robert manages the Global Member Engagement Services team at LEEA and oversees all membership matters, including applications, audits and events. Robert has conducted LEEA audits within the North/South America region for the past 7 years.



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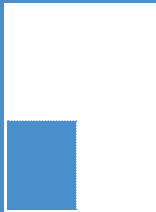
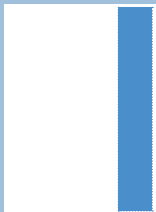
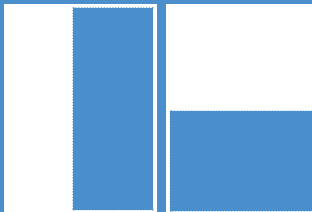
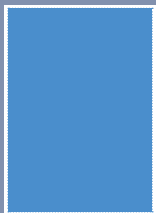
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# Associated Wire Rope Fabricators Slingmakers Rates

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 <p><b>1/4 Page</b> 3-13/16" x 5"</p>	<b>\$475</b>	<b>\$830</b>	<b>\$1420</b>	
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Issue:	Closing Date:	Street Date:
#188	February 13th	March
#189	May 15th	June
#190	August 7th	September
#191	November 6th	December

**NEXT ISSUE** (with arrow pointing to June)

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# TECHNICAL SUMMIT COMMITTEE



**Chase Venci**  
Kito Crosby  
AWRF Technical Summit Committee Chair



**Justin Brown**  
Unirop  
AWRF Technical Summit  
Committee Vice Chair

## Tech Summit Look Ahead

As we look ahead to April 2026, I'd like to personally invite you to attend the **AWRF Technical Summit**, taking place on **Wednesday, April 22, 2026 at Marriott Marquis in Houston, Texas.**

The Technical Summit is designed for those who want to go beyond high-level discussion and engage directly with the **technical realities of lifting and rigging**. This year's program focuses on practical challenges: equipment use, product performance, and ways new standards, materials, and digital tools can enhance safety and performance.

A highlight of the 2026 Technical Summit will be our keynote presentation, **From Hook to High-Tech: Mastering Below-the-Hook Lifting Devices**. This session will explore the full lifecycle of below-the-hook (BTH) devices—from concept and contract requirements through procurement, design, manufacturing, and real-world use in the field. Attendees will gain insight into the standards and technical literature that define BTH equipment, along with the specifications that matter most when procuring these devices. The presentation will also include practical examples and common manufacturing practices, covering both commodity products and highly customized, bespoke designs.

Beyond the keynote, planned presentations will dive deep into topics such as **rope behavior and interaction with sheaves**, including strategies for delaying or preventing twist effects that lead to premature wear and instability. Sessions on **installation of wire rope on cranes** and **lubrication best practices for high-temperature service** will focus on extending service life through correct handling and maintenance.

Attendees can also expect practical guidance on **lifting beam applications**, including load stability considerations, common pitfalls, and proper use of spreader beams. Several sessions will examine **load distribution in multileg slings with unequal lengths**, helping clarify how real-world geometry impacts forces and safety margins.

The Summit will address critical equipment categories as well, including **lifting clamps under ASME B30.20, fork truck lifting equipment and battery lifting beams**, and **HMPE life considerations** across demanding applications. These discussions are intended to reinforce proper use, care, and application—not just theory, but what works in the field.

Looking ahead, the program also explores where the industry is going. Presentations on **finite element analysis of rigging hardware under improper loading, use of load cell apps and software, and deep learning applications for wire rope inspection** will demonstrate how advanced tools are being applied today. Additional sessions will cover **digital product passports**, documentation and traceability, and the broader **digital transformation of lifting and rigging**—all with a focus on improving safety, efficiency, and accountability.

What sets the AWRF Technical Summit apart is the audience and the dialogue. These sessions are led by industry experts and Technical Committee members, and they are built for meaningful interaction—questions, discussion, and shared experience from professionals who work with this equipment every day.

I strongly encourage AWRF member-companies to send their team members involved in **engineering, operations, quality, safety, and technical sales**. If your role includes selecting equipment, developing procedures, supporting customers, or ensuring compliance, the Technical Summit offers direct, practical value.

I look forward to seeing you in Houston this April.

Best regards,  
Chase Venci

## Built to Last: AWRF's Continuing Mission in Changing Times

When Bernie Martin purchased Carpenter Rigging & Supply Company in 1972, the lifting and rigging industry was entering a period of expansion. Over the following decades, he grew the business through the acquisition of 10 additional rigging houses, building a network that mirrored the collaborative spirit shaping AWRF in its early years.

The association's founders believed the industry could only thrive if companies shared knowledge, aligned around best practices, and protected safety together. That philosophy wasn't abstract; it was being practiced daily inside businesses like Bernie's.

In 2008, longtime employee and General Manager Bruce Yoder purchased the company from Bernie, carrying forward both the operation and the mindset that built it. For Bruce, the transition represented more than ownership. It was an inheritance of responsibility — to employees, to customers, and to an industry grounded in technical trust and family.

Bruce, based in San Diego, California, now is CEO of The Carpenter Group. Joining him in the business are his son, Hugh Yoder, President of Carpenter; daughter, Hannah Yoder, Marketing Director; and wife, Susan Yoder, Human Resources Director.

The organization has six locations in California and one in Jacksonville, Florida.



### Continuity Across Generations

As AWRF celebrates its 50th anniversary, Bruce measures the association's history less in milestones and more in people. He sees it as a continuation of the pioneers' work. They believed cooperation strengthened everyone.

"You didn't just attend meetings," he notes. "You built friendships that lasted decades."

For Bruce, the earliest memories of AWRF are tied to relationships. Conferences were not just technical sessions. They were about seeing the same colleagues year after year, building trust

through conversation, and forming friendships that extended beyond business.

His family has shared holiday cards with AWRF friends for many years, and they've joined him for meals when they visit California. He also organizes a yearly golf event with some AWRF members.

Those personal connections shaped careers. Mentorship happened naturally. Younger members learned by standing alongside veterans willing to share what they knew.

## The Founders' Blueprint

Bruce credits AWRF's pioneers with establishing a structure to protect the industry's integrity.

"They had a great plan to get everybody together for best practices, while staying diligent and working with manufacturers, and not letting the manufacturers control them," he says.

From the beginning, the association served as neutral ground. Members could debate standards, exchange technical knowledge, and challenge assumptions without commercial pressure shaping the outcome. That independence helped AWRF unify companies that might otherwise operate in isolation.

"If something fails in our industry," Bruce notes, "it's usually a serious injury."

The founders understood the stakes. Technical excellence was never optional; it was a shared responsibility. He believes that principle still anchors the organization today. AWRF remains a forum where safety outweighs sales and expertise is pooled for the benefit of the industry.

## A Culture of Mentorship

One defining feature of AWRF's early years was its culture of mentorship. Senior members invested time in developing younger professionals, helping them grow into leadership roles within both their companies and the association.

Bruce experienced that guidance firsthand. Mentors encouraged his involvement, which eventually led to him serving on the board for nine years. He describes an environment where knowledge was passed forward rather than guarded—a cycle of learning and giving back that created continuity across generations.



Three generations of Carpenter Rigging: Hugh Yoder, Bernie Martin, and Bruce Yoder, left to right.

## New Generation, A New Opportunity

The Carpenter Group CEO speaks candidly about workforce pressures but frames them as an opportunity to evolve.

"It's not a sexy industry. People don't know much about it," Bruce says. However, the industry offers diverse career opportunities where workers can earn a good living.

Awareness of the industry often is cited as one of the biggest barriers to attracting new workers. Many young people simply never encounter lifting and rigging as a career option. Outreach to students, internships, and trade education represent modern pathways into a profession that offers stability and many career paths.

## An Industry That Keeps Moving

The business landscape surrounding AWRF has changed dramatically. "Nobody could have foreseen the consolidation that's happened in the last 10 years," he contends.

Corporate restructuring, new materials, and expanding technologies have reshaped the field. Yet Bruce emphasizes that change is part of long-term survival. The association has expanded alongside those shifts without abandoning its core mission.

He believes collaboration remains the industry's strongest tool. AWRF continues to provide space for candid discussion and shared technical responsibility — a direct extension of the founders' intent.

## Carrying the Pioneer Legacy Forward

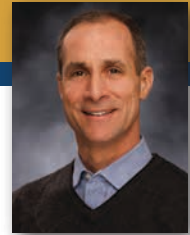
When asked what makes him proud of his career, Bruce points to impact. "We've been part of building the backbone of the country."

From bridges and highways to shipbuilding and emergency infrastructure, the lifting and rigging industry quietly supports everyday life. That contribution connects today's professionals directly to the pioneers who laid the groundwork five decades ago.

AWRF's landmark anniversary is more than a reflection on history. It is evidence of an organization that has learned how to evolve without losing its foundation. Its strength has always come from its members.

"As long as we keep sharing knowledge and raising standards, the association will keep moving forward," Bruce predicts.

After 50 years, AWRF is not standing still. It is evolving with intention—grounded in its history, strengthened by its community, and ready for the next chapter.



**Jeff Ferchen**  
The Caldwell Group  
Marketing &  
Communications Chair



## Celebrating 50 Years of Progress, Partnership, and Innovation in Rigging

In 2026, **Associated Wire Rope Fabricators (AWRF)** proudly marks its 50th anniversary—a milestone that speaks not only to longevity, but to the strength of a community built on collaboration, technical excellence, and shared purpose. From its humble beginnings in 1976, when a small group of rigging professionals first joined forces to secure industry insurance solutions, AWRF has evolved into a cornerstone organization for the material handling, rigging, and lifting sectors.

Over the decades, AWRF has grown into a trusted hub for technical information, professional education, and meaningful networking. This transformation would not have been possible without the dedication of past and present members whose leadership, volunteerism, and vision have kept the association relevant in a highly specialized industry. Your contributions laid the groundwork for the vibrant, forward-looking organization we celebrate today, and I would like to personally thank you for them.

### Record-Setting Growth and Engagement

AWRF's momentum has never been stronger. In 2025 alone, the association achieved unprecedented marketing success, expanding its digital reach by nearly 55,000 followers. Social platforms have played a major role in this growth, with Facebook engagement increasing by 170% and Instagram surging by 316% year over year. These gains effectively doubled total audience engagement, fueled in large part by highly successful viral resharing of rigging and manufacturing content.

This level of visibility reflects not just marketing strategy, but industry enthusiasm—members and partners alike are sharing knowledge, highlighting innovation, and amplifying the voice of the lifting and rigging profession worldwide. Let's keep it coming!

### Signature Events Driving Industry Education

One of the highlights of this anniversary year is the association's annual Product Information Exhibition (PIE), hosted at the **Houston Marriott Marquis**, which has already sold out of booths—clear evidence of strong industry demand for hands-on learning and supplier engagement. Immediately following the exhibition, AWRF will host its Second Annual Technical Summit, a full-day program designed to meet a request frequently voiced by members: more training and deeper technical education for both inside and outside sales teams.

The summit reflects a growing priority within the association—equipping emerging professionals with the knowledge they need to succeed. As new talent enters the lifting and rigging field from diverse backgrounds, structured education and industry-specific training have become essential not only for individual growth, but for maintaining high standards across the sector.



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## Inside the Technical Summit Agenda

Attendees can expect a dynamic and fast-paced schedule beginning with a keynote presentation on advanced below-the-hook lifting devices used in complex rigging scenarios. From there, the day will shift into dual-track sessions designed to maximize learning opportunities while allowing participants to tailor their experience.

### Morning Track 1:

- Fork truck equipment and standards
- Lifting clamp inspection and rebuild processes
- Finite Element Analysis (FEA) applications for rigging hardware

### Morning Track 2:

- Rope twist effects in sheaves
- Proper wire rope installation on cranes
- Best practices for wire rope lubrication

Following a networking lunch break, the afternoon sessions will continue the two-track format.

### Afternoon Track 1:

- Load stability in lifting beams
- Load distribution in multi-leg slings
- Spreader beam performance

### Afternoon Track 2:

- HMPE soft rope longevity
- Artificial intelligence in inspection processes
- Product traceability, load cell software, and the broader digital transformation shaping the future of rigging

Each session is structured for efficiency and interaction: 20–25 minutes of presentation, five minutes of Q&A, and a short transition period between topics. This format ensures participants gain concentrated technical insight while maintaining the flexibility to explore multiple subject areas.

## Recognizing the Experts Behind the Knowledge

AWRF's Technical Committee deserves special recognition for reviewing and validating each session to ensure technical accuracy and real-world relevance. Their work guarantees that attendees receive reliable, practical information they can apply immediately within their organizations.

Equally important are the presenters—industry professionals who volunteer their expertise to educate peers and elevate the entire field. Their willingness to share knowledge exemplifies the collaborative spirit that has defined AWRF for half a century.

## Looking Ahead

As AWRF celebrates its 50th year, the association stands not only as a testament to past achievement, but as a platform for future innovation. Continued member involvement—whether through presenting, mentoring, or contributing technical insight—will ensure the next generation of rigging and lifting professionals is equipped to lead.

The story of AWRF is ultimately one of people: individuals and companies working together to strengthen standards, expand knowledge, and move the industry forward. With the same spirit that inspired its founding in 1976, AWRF enters its next chapter ready to build on its legacy and shape the future of material handling, rigging, and lifting.



2025 Summit, Denver, CO



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# TECHNICAL COMMITTEE UPDATE



**Timothy W. Klein, P.E.**  
WireCo | Corporate Headquarters  
Principal Engineer  
Structures and Fabrication  
AWRF Technical Committee Chairman



**Melissa Searle**  
Laclede Chain  
AWRF Technical Communications Chair

Hello AWRF Members! The AWRF Technical Committee recently met in Phoenix, Arizona to continue advancing the technical initiatives that support our membership. This meeting focused on alignment, long-term planning, and strengthening the infrastructure behind our technical programming.

The committee reviewed 2025 budget performance and discussed planning considerations for the 2026 Technical Committee budget. We also reviewed subcommittee rosters, ASME B30 updates, and the ongoing review of Technical Binders to ensure all materials remain current and relevant.

A significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to sustaining and improving the Technical Summit experience. Following the success of recent summits, the committee discussed how to maintain strong presenter engagement and continue delivering valuable technical content to the membership.

The different subcommittees are continuing their efforts in providing new RP&Gs to the membership. In addition, we are reviewing all existing RP&Gs to ensure required updates are completed and content remains current.

## Technical Summit – New Engagement Initiative

To support this effort, the Technical Summit Subcommittee will pilot a new engagement booth at the upcoming PIE. The booth will be staffed throughout the event by members of the Technical Summit Subcommittee, with rotating coverage to ensure a consistent presence.

### The purpose of the booth is twofold:

- To gather direct feedback from members about the technical information they need most and what gaps they believe exist.
- To encourage members to submit presentations and white papers for next April's Technical Summit.

### This will be an opportunity for open conversation.

#### We want to hear:

- What technical topics would help your business?
- Where do you see confusion or inconsistency in the field?
- What guidance would make your operations stronger or safer?

An iPad will be available at the booth for idea submission, topic suggestions, and presenter sign-ups.

This initiative is being launched as a pilot. If it proves valuable, it may become a permanent feature of future events. Our goal is to make technical programming more interactive, more responsive, and more aligned with member needs.

The Technical Committee will continue building on this momentum as we prepare for upcoming meetings and events.

The next Technical Committee meeting will be held July 22–23 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, at The Read House.

As always, we encourage member participation. If you are interested in joining a subcommittee or contributing to technical initiatives, please contact Emily Wagner or Tim Klein.

We look forward to continuing the work and, more importantly, hearing directly from you. We also look forward to seeing you at the upcoming AWRF PIE and Technical Summit in April.



2026

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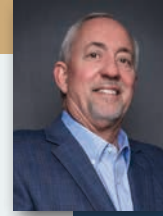


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# AWRF SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE



**Scott Postelwait**  
Industrial Splicing & Sling Vice President  
Scholarship Committee Chair



**Mike Peters**  
Horizon Cable Service, Inc.  
Scholarship Committee Vice Chair

The AWRF Scholarship Committee goal is to promote, administer and enhance the sponsored Scholarship Award Program. Along with Mike Peters from Horizon Cable, we are pleased to announce that, at our January BOD (Board of Directors) meeting several updates were approved to the Scholarship Award Program. Last year's committee members Kelly Jones and Paul Foret proposed changes in response to the evolving industry landscape and the consolidation of many locations. Effective this year, the program will allow one scholarship per company location or branch each year. In addition, eligibility has expanded to include spouses of employees. Finally, recipients are now limited to a single lifetime scholarship award per applicant.

Scholarship packets will be going out in mid-March, so please share and post this information with all member employees.

Information on scholarships and how to apply can be found on the AWRF website. Additional questions on eligibility can be directed to Nicole Sauvé at [nicole@awrf.org](mailto:nicole@awrf.org) or to Scott Postelwait at [spostelwait@industrialsplicing.com](mailto:spostelwait@industrialsplicing.com).

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# Why the operating environment determines the right lifting chain

In the lifting industry, chains and components are often specified based on load ratings and dimensions alone. In practice, however, the operating environment increasingly determines whether a lifting solution performs safely and economically over its full-service life. Corrosion, hygiene requirements, demanding media, and continuous-duty conditions place growing demands on lifting equipment, especially in industrial sectors where safety is highly important, and contamination is not an option.

As a result, stainless steel is no longer viewed as a premium alternative reserved for niche applications. In many critical industries, it has become a technical necessity. This shift has led rigging professionals and slingmakers to re-evaluate how lifting chains and lifting points are selected, specified, and integrated into complete lifting systems.

## **cromox® stainless steel lifting chains and lifting points for demanding environments**

Within this environment-driven approach, manufacturers that focus specifically on corrosion-free equipment play a key role. cromox® offers lifting solutions designed for demanding conditions, with particular emphasis on stainless steel lifting chains and lifting points developed for professional use in aggressive and hygiene-critical environments.

Unlike coated carbon steel solutions, cromox® chains are manufactured entirely from stainless steel, ensuring corrosion resistance throughout the full cross-section of the material. This eliminates the risk of hidden corrosion caused by surface damage, wear, or aggressive cleaning processes. For rigging professionals, this results in predictable performance, longer inspection intervals, and improved operational safety in environments where moisture and chemicals are part of everyday operations.

Stainless steel lifting points are an essential complement to lifting chains in such environments. Swivel and fixed lifting points are designed to accommodate changing load directions while



*Chain slings with load hooks*

maintaining mechanical strength and corrosion resistance. In applications where loads must align under tension, lifting points reduce manual handling effort and contribute to safer rigging practices, particularly in confined or controlled areas.

## **Critical industries where material choice defines safety and performance**

The value of stainless steel lifting chains and components (such as lifting points) becomes most apparent in highly regulated and technically demanding industries. In pharmaceutical manufacturing and cleanroom environments, hygiene and material integrity are critical. Equipment is regularly exposed to disinfectants, cleaning agents, and wash-down processes. cromox® equipment offers smooth surfaces, resistance to chemical attack, and a reduced risk of contamination, making it suitable for lifting reactors, mixers, and cleanroom systems without compromising compliance.

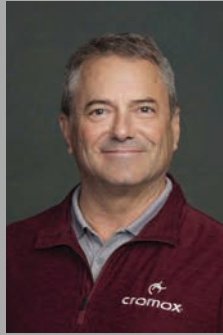
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**Jeff Doerge**  
Managing Director and North  
America Sales Manager



generation can interfere with sensitive production processes. Stainless steel lifting chains and lifting points are used to handle precision equipment where cleanliness, reliability, and traceability are essential requirements.

Defense and military-related applications place additional demands on lifting equipment. Components must perform reliably under harsh environmental conditions while meeting strict documentation and safety standards. cromox<sup>®</sup> products are valued for their durability, corrosion resistance, and consistent mechanical properties, supporting lifting operations throughout manufacturing, maintenance, and logistical processes.

Other critical sectors, including water treatment, chemical processing, and coastal infrastructure, face continuous exposure to moisture, salt, and aggressive media. In these environments, stainless steel lifting equipment helps reduce unplanned downtime, extend service life, and improve overall system reliability.

### Why stainless steel is no longer a luxury material

Across all of these applications, material selection is driven by operating conditions rather than initial purchase price. While stainless steel lifting chains and lifting points may involve higher upfront costs, they often deliver lower total cost of ownership through longer service intervals, reduced maintenance requirements, and improved safety.

In modern rigging, stainless steel is no longer a luxury material. In many lifting environments, it is the technically appropriate and often necessary choice.

### Meet us at AWRF 2026

Ketten Wälde GmbH (the German manufacturer of the cromox<sup>®</sup> product range) will be present at AWRF 2026, taking place April 20–23, 2026, presenting the cromox<sup>®</sup> products at Booth 907.

For more information, contact Jeff Doerge, cromox US, at 314-578-7035 or jeff@cromox-us.com, or meet the team in person at the AWRF.

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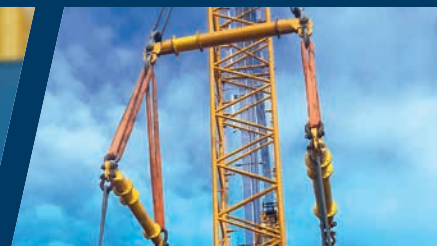


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## Passing Over The Wire Rope Bridge

It is with great sorrow we inform you, AWRP Past President Kathy Petrick's dad, **Frank Samsel** (Samsel Supply), passed away at the age of 95. The services have already taken place, please keep the Samsel and Petrick families in your thoughts and prayers. May Frank's memory be a blessing to all who knew him.



Frank was born in Cleveland, while in grade school his family moved back to his mother's family home in Olmsted Township, Ohio after his father was injured working as a Cleveland police officer. Frank grew up quickly, as a young teenager he worked at Baldwin Wallace, setting up chairs and tending the boilers. It was there he was asked to help pace a young hurdler (Harrison Dillard.) In High School he was an original member of the Olmsted Township Fire Department. As WWII ended, he was graduating high school and worked on the docks, eventually sailing for two seasons as a deckhand. He worked briefly for American Shipbuilding in Lorain, before being drafted for the Korean War. He served his country in Germany and returned home.

Upson Walton Company hired him as a travelling salesman covering Southern Ohio, WV, KY, and western PA. While living in Pittsburgh he met his wife Lois (deceased) and they were married for 45 years. In April 1958, he started his business Samsel Rope in the Flats of Cleveland and eventually purchased the Marine Division of Upson Walton three years later. He initially supplied wire rope and rigging to customers, following the Upson purchase he branched into the



marine supply company. Samsel Rope & Marine began serving the marine industry throughout the Great Lakes.

In the late 1960's, the Cuyahoga River was covered with oil and debris. Several fires occurred, Frank decided to build a vessel that could clear debris and oil from the river. Using a boat builder in Erie, he built the Putzfrau, (German for Cleaning Lady,) which had a vactor system for removing oil and a crane for removing debris. He formed an environmental service company, originally Pollution Recovery Systems, which became Samsel Services.

Frank built his own ultralight experimental airplane and learned aerobatics in a biplane. Following his retirement, he remained involved with environmental education through the Great Lakes Historical Society, renamed National Museum of the Great Lakes (NMGL), and Metroparks. Frank continued to volunteer at the NMGL and participated in the moving of the museum to Toledo. Frank spent time actively working and supporting his faith community. He was also member of the Associated Wire Rope Fabricators and Experimental Aircraft Association.





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## Pelican Rope Works & U.S. Rigging Supply Open New 24,000 sq. ft. Distribution Center in Louisiana

Pelican Rope Works and U.S. Rigging Supply today announced the opening of a new 24,000-square-foot distribution center at 12047 Old Baton Rouge Hwy, Hammond, Louisiana, just north of New Orleans. The facility marks a major expansion for the companies, increasing national stocking capacity and improving delivery speed and costs for customers across the United States.

The new Gulf Coast location complements the company's Santa Ana, Calif., headquarters, which continues to operate as the primary manufacturing and West Coast shipping center. With two hubs positioned on opposite coasts, the companies will offer faster and more efficient fulfillment—particularly for customers east of the Mississippi.

The Hammond facility will provide Will-Call pickup, on-site demos, project consultation and planning, and a full inventory of rope and rigging gear. Its location strengthens service to marine operators along the Gulf Coast; arborists working throughout the heavily forested Eastern and Southern U.S.; and utility and construction teams serving some of the fastest-growing major markets in the country, including Texas, Florida, and the Carolinas.

"This new facility positions us closer to the customers who rely on our products every day," said Jacob P. Williams, Executive Vice President of U.S. Rigging Supply and Pelican Rope. "By expanding our footprint into the Greater New Orleans region, we're able to deliver faster, support more industries, and provide the kind of responsiveness that today's contractors, climbers, and other professionals expect. It's an exciting step forward for our entire organization."



*Aerial photo of new location (12047 Old Baton Rouge Hwy, Hammond, Louisiana)*

The company also highlighted the broader significance of the expansion following its recent 50-year milestone. "As we enter our next chapter, our focus remains exactly where it started—Making Difficult & Dangerous Work Easier & Safer," said Terry Walker, CEO of U.S. Rigging Supply and Pelican Rope. "This new distribution center strengthens our ability to support the people who build, climb, lift, and protect. It expands our reach, deepens our commitment, and reinforces the promise we've carried for decades: to deliver gear that workers can trust, day in and day out."

The Louisiana site includes office space for regional staff, further expanding the companies' presence across the Gulf and Southeast, where teams are already established in both Louisiana and Florida.

## Liz Shelton Brings a People-First Approach to Rigging Safety



Liz Shelton

Liz Shelton, office manager at Etched in Kansas City, Missouri, likes nothing better than helping customers get the tags they need for their chain slings and wire rope slings.

“I definitely get my energy from being around people, getting to know them, and helping customers figure out issues,” she says.

In 2022, Shelton joined Etched, where she’s taken on a variety of responsibilities, including quoting, job creation, tag design, HR support, and sales. She previously worked in foster care and at an LED lighting firm. Now she brings her people-first approach to customer support and problem-solving at Etched, where her brothers, Justin and Josh Shelton, are two of the owners.

### Tags Focus on Safety

Etched was founded in 2017 and now has a team of 15. It creates custom nameplates and tags used across industries, including valve manufacturers and other OEMs. Shelton says she appreciates the rigging industry because she often deals directly with decision-makers, and questions can be answered immediately, something that may not always happen with other manufacturing customers.

“Tags are often the last thing people think about,” says Shelton, “but shipments can’t go out without them.” If needed, Etched can provide same-day service.

In the rigging world, a tag isn’t just a label; it’s a safety document. Without it, the sling comes out of service. The company’s patented tube tag is designed to reduce the risk of tags coming off in the field.

### Values AWRF Conferences

Shelton, who has attended AWRF conferences, describes members as very down-to-earth. She enjoys forging bonds with attendees and connecting face-to-face with customers, letting them know they’re appreciated.

She also enjoys manning the Etched booth at AWRF Product Information Exhibitions (PIE), where she showcases the company’s products and provides information to attendees.

“Attending AWRF events is invaluable for our company because they provide direct access to industry insights, supplier innovations, and meaningful peer connections that we simply can’t gain elsewhere,” Shelton says.

She emphasizes that AWRF events give the firm’s attendees the opportunity to stay current on evolving standards, emerging products, and best practices that impact their customers and operations.

“The knowledge and connections gained at AWRF conferences consistently translate into smarter decisions, improved processes, and long-term growth for our company,” Shelton notes.

Shelton advocates for broader recognition that many women attending the conferences can be working professionals, not necessarily spouses or significant others. She believes in flipping the narrative away from the current frequent assumption that they are attending as a spouse/significant other.

### Increasing Students' Industry Awareness

One of the priorities of the rigging and wire rope industry is recruiting new employees. Shelton notes that many people may not realize the variety of manufacturing jobs available. Roles include operations, purchasing, customer service, sales, and production.

As a member of AWRP's Emerging Leaders group, she supports providing outreach to high school students and recent graduates at the Houston PIE event.

"We can explain what rigging is and what careers exist," she says.

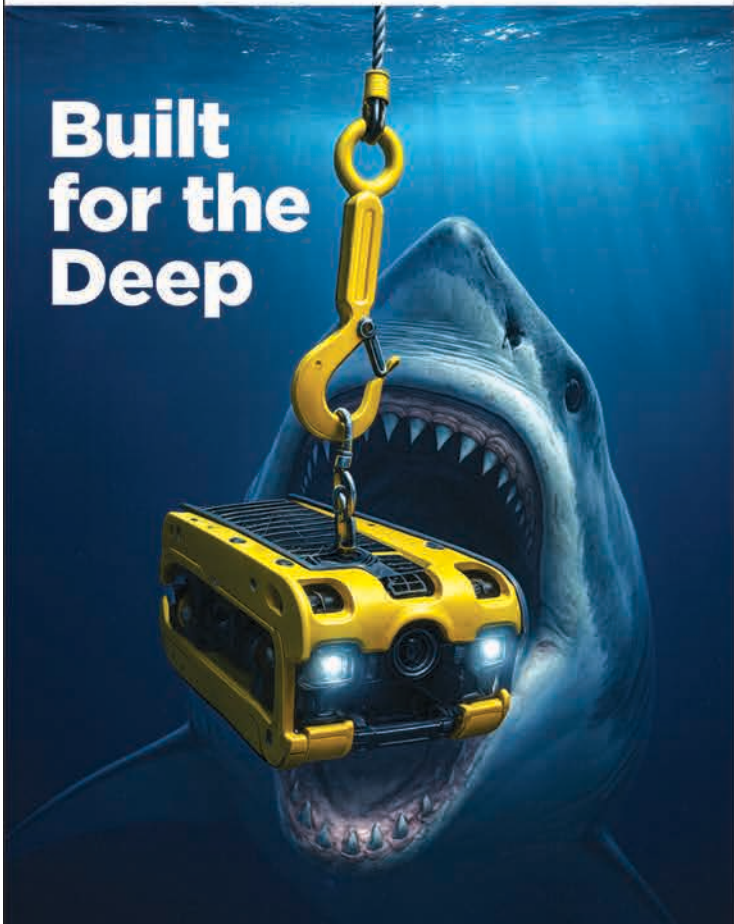
Shelton also plans to sign up as a mentee to learn from more experienced industry professionals.

### A Team That Feels Like Family

Shelton admires the leadership of her brothers and the other owners for building a company culture where people feel supported and valued. The result is an environment that feels close-knit, where collaboration and trust are part of everyday work.

"We all lean on each other and trust each other," she says.

Shelton handles many responsibilities at the company and enjoys sales. In the future, she hopes to spend more time growing that side of the business. For her, the rigging industry isn't just about products—it's about people. Helping customers, supporting her team, and welcoming the next generation into the field keep her energized every day.



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## pewag UK Group Launches Innovation Campaign

pewag UK Group is placing a spotlight on practical innovation across its specialist lifting brands – pewag UK, Modulift, Load Monitoring Systems (LMS) and Aberdeen Web (AWL). Through its *Innovating Together* initiative, the group is showcasing proven lifting and load monitoring solutions from its complete below-the-hook portfolio, helping end users improve safety, extend equipment longevity and reduce the risk of lifting-related accidents.

### Lifting Complex and Heavy Loads

*pewag levo Load Balancer*

The hydraulically powered pewag levo **Load Balancer** enables controlled, multidirectional movement of staircases, walls, modular buildings, turbine blades and more, with remote operation to keep personnel safe and reduce manual handling.



### Increasing Working Load Limits Safely

*pewag Load Distributor*

Increasing load capacity without upsizing chain slings allows for heavier lifts without compromising on safety. The pewag **Load Distributor** increases Working Load Limit (WLL) of chain slings: for example, a 3leg Grade 12 chain sling at 0–45° has a WLL of 10.6t without a Load Distributor. With the component fitted, the WLL increases to 14t – a 32 % rise in capacity.



### Extending Service Life Through Wear Reduction

*Modulift Clevis Drop Link & Delta Plate*

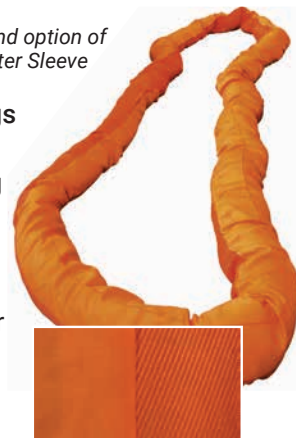
The Modulift **Clevis Drop Link and Delta Plate**, used with a **MOD** spreader beam, eliminates sling bunching



and crowding in fourpoint lifts with angled slings, reducing damage to both slings and shackles.

*Aberdeen Web Round Sling and option of Tough Outer Sleeve*

Aberdeen Web round slings can be specified with a **Tough Outer Sleeve**, offering significantly increased abrasion resistance compared to standard sleeves. The enhanced outer layer protects loadbearing fibres, extending service life in heavy lifting applications.



### Supporting Safe Load Distribution and Sling Assessment

*pewag Oversized Master Link*

The pewag **Oversized Master Link**, designed for use with 2- and 4-leg slings features an upper curve for improved contact with the crane hook. Its design provides a clear visual reference of sling leg angles, aiding quick assessment on site. 0–45°, sling legs naturally position themselves in the centre of the ring, while at 45–60°, they move towards the outer corners, giving operators a clear, visual indication that angles are approaching their upper limits.



### Reducing the Risk of Accidents

*pewag Oversized Self-Locking Hook*

The **Oversized Self-Locking Hook** reduces the risk of accidental opening and hook damage. The trigger sits flush with the hook rather than protruding, and the recessed trigger design makes it easier to operate. Integrated wear and deformation indicators provide a clear visual reference of the hook's condition, helping prevent unsafe use.



## Assessing Centre of Gravity

LMS CoG feature in Load Cell Data Logging Software

Accurate load data supports safer lifts and better rigging decisions. LMS-LOG100 Load Cell Data Logging Software includes a Centre of Gravity (CoG) feature that calculates and displays the load's CoG in real time, enabling riggers to optimise sling angles and improve load distribution.



## Verifying Pad Eye Integrity After Installation

LMS Pad Eye Tester

Once a pad eye is fitted, the LMS Digital Pad Eye Tester ensures it is safe for use. Commonly used in offshore applications, the tester verifies that the anchor point will not stretch, bend, or fail under load. By checking pad eyes after installation, it helps reduce risk, improve on-site safety, and support reliable, efficient lifting operations.



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Together, these products underline pewag UK Group's commitment to practical innovation, providing solutions that address real-world lifting and load monitoring challenges across global industries.

Justin Whelan, Managing Director, pewag UK commented "Innovating Together isn't just about lifting solutions – it's about helping end users make smart, safe, long-term choices. By investing in high-quality equipment, from Load Distributors that safely increase lifting capacity to LMS systems that provide real-time CoG data and verify pad eye integrity, our solutions improve safety, extend equipment life, and give teams confidence when handling complex loads."

For more information visit the Innovating Together page or read the feature article: Innovation Spotlight: Turning Every Day Lifting Challenges into Practical Solutions

Watch the video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_SoJLSIWek](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_SoJLSIWek)

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## Talurit GmbH Managing Director Uli Kaltenbrunner to Leave Talurit Group After 32 Years of Service

After more than three decades of devotion, Uli Kaltenbrunner, Managing Director of Talurit GmbH, will leave the company.

Uli joined the German company (then Gerro GmbH) in the early 1990s and officially stepped into the role of Managing Director in 1997. He has been a central figure in the development of Talurit Group's business in Europe. Uli always led with professionalism, precision, and a strong commitment to both people and quality. Under his leadership, Talurit GmbH has grown into a modern and efficient facility, serving as a key hub for the Group's European operations.

Throughout his tenure, Uli has been known for his close connection to the market and his deep understanding of customers' operations. His expert knowledge of regulations, standards, and best practices has helped ensure that Talurit's solutions meet demanding safety and quality requirements, further strengthening the company's reputation as a trusted partner in mechanical splicing and wire rope handling.

Uli Kaltenbrunner comments, "After more than 32 years, this marks a significant and emotional transition. While it is a difficult end to a long journey, I am grateful and proud for having had the opportunity contributing and being an acknowledged part of Talurit Group."

"Uli has been instrumental in building Talurit Group's strong position in Europe, a cornerstone of our success" says Victor Lindh, CEO of Talurit Group. "He has combined deep technical expertise with genuine care for people – employees, partners, and customers alike. His leadership has always been grounded in long-term



relationships, trust, integrity and a clear sense of responsibility. On behalf of the entire Group, I want to extend my warmest thanks to Uli for his many years of commitment and outstanding contribution."

One of many highlights during Uli's leadership was the expansion of the German facilities in 2015, increasing the factory space to approximately 3 400 m<sup>2</sup>. As part of this development, Talurit GmbH invested in solar panels on the factory roof – an initiative that has proven successful both economically and from a sustainability perspective. This investment reflects Uli's strong advocacy for environmentally friendly and energy-efficient solutions, and his belief that operational excellence and sustainability should go hand in hand.

"Working with Uli has been a privilege. His thoughtful approach and steady leadership created a strong foundation for collaboration across borders. He's not only a great leader but a great person. We will miss him dearly and wish him all the best in his next chapter." says Neil Cooke, Managing Director at Talurit UK. "He has consistently shown honesty and a genuine interest in others. Many of us in the UK and across Europe have built close, long-standing relationships with him. His integrity, reliability, and humour will be missed – but his influence will remain part of how we work and do business."

An orderly handover process is underway, and Talurit Group will communicate the new management structure for Talurit GmbH at a later stage. During the transition period, operations in Germany will continue as normal, with the team committed to providing the same high level of service and support to customers and partners.

As Talurit GmbH prepares for the next step in its expansion, Talurit Group extends their heartfelt thanks to Uli for his outstanding contributions, tireless service, and the enduring impact he has made within their global team. Wishing him joy, health, and adventure in the years ahead.



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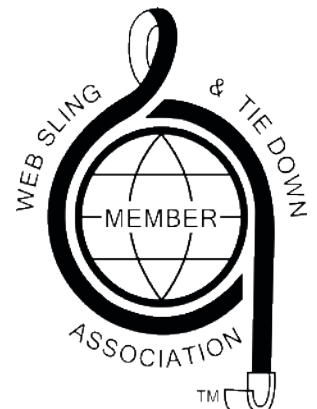
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## Royal Lankhorst Euronete Group (WireCo) announces José Luís Gramaxo retirement

### Long-serving President will transition duties throughout 2025, capping a 47-year career

Sneek, NL (Dec. 9, 2025) – WireCo®, the world's leading manufacturer of mission-critical wire rope, synthetic rope and netting, and electromechanical cable, announced today that José Gramaxo, President of its Global Synthetics Division, will retire at the end of 2025, capping a remarkable career spent entirely in the roping world.



"After 47 years, I felt the time was right to retire, although I'll admit I've second-guessed the decision more than once," said Gramaxo. "I'm looking forward to spending more time with my family, pursuing personal interests, and taking a moment to reflect after dedicating much of my life to building a leading rope and netting business."

"It's an emotional milestone, as I've had the privilege of working with exceptional colleagues, customers and partners throughout the years. Nonetheless, I'm confident this is the right moment for me to step back."

José will continue in his current role as President, Global Synthetics, until Dec. 31, ensuring there is little disruption to the business.

"You simply don't replace someone like José, a true icon in this industry," said Keith White, CEO of WireCo. "He has spent his entire life in this business and his influence can be felt wherever ropes and netting are made, used, or discussed.

It has been an honor for WireCo to have him as part of the team, and he will be greatly missed by employees, customers, partners, and industry colleagues alike."

"That said, we have been preparing for this transition over the past three years, and we've built a robust succession plan and organizational structure to ensure continuity and minimize any impact on day-to-day business operations."

José has served in many capacities throughout his career, but he will be remembered fondly for walking the factory floor whenever he could and greeting everyone by their first name, which engendered tremendous loyalty to the company.

While José is retiring from day-to-day duties, he will remain with WireCo as an advisor to the CEO, ensuring he is never far from what he enjoys most – working with ropes and netting.

"We are honored to have José continue on as an advisor; this will only enhance the continuity and structure we have put into place," White said. "And it certainly helps to have a 47-year veteran dispensing advice."

For more information about WireCo and its product lines, visit [wireco.com](http://wireco.com), or follow WireCo on social media: LinkedIn and Twitter.

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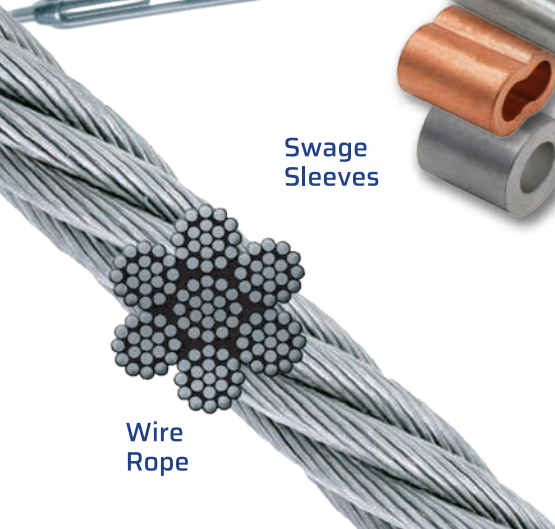
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## M&G Industries Announces Distribution Partnership with Randers Reb in North America

Bristol, RI (January 14, 2026) M&G Industries, a leading North American distributor of wire rope and associated lifting and rigging components, is pleased to announce a new distribution partnership with Randers Reb, the Denmark-based rope manufacturer with 186 years of ropemaking experience.

Through this partnership, M&G Industries will supply Randers Reb Cablelaid Ropes to customers across the United States. Randers Reb Cablelaid rope products will be stocked and distributed in the U.S. through M&G Industries.

Founded in Denmark in 1840, Randers Reb combines traditional craftsmanship with modern manufacturing techniques, resulting in rope products known globally for their strength, durability, and precision. Their Cablelaid rope is

widely specified for applications requiring superior performance and longevity.

“This partnership aligns naturally with M&G’s focus on quality-critical products and long-term customer relationships,” said Brian York, President of M&G Industries. “Randers Reb’s deep technical knowledge and heritage in ropemaking complement our commitment to supplying dependable, high-performance solutions.”

The addition of Randers Reb Cablelaid rope further strengthens M&G Industries’ product portfolio, providing customers with access to a premium European-manufactured solution supported by M&G’s North American inventory, technical expertise, and service capabilities. To explore products, visit: [mgwirerope.com/randers-reb](http://mgwirerope.com/randers-reb).



**AARON CRAWFORD**  
Newest Co-Owner



### SWOS is pleased to announce that Aaron Crawford has joined Jake Poroo, Conrad Reynolds, and Whitney Seeberger as a Co-Owner of SWOS, effective January 1, 2026

Aaron brings more than 22 years of experience in the synthetic rope and rigging industry, with the majority of his career spent right here at SWOS. He began his career at the age of 18 in fabrication and steadily advanced through a wide range of roles, including shipping and receiving, inside sales, field technician, and outside sales. This broad, hands-on experience led him to his current role as General Manager.

Throughout his career, Aaron has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to professional growth and leadership development. While his advancement did not follow a traditional college path, he has continually invested in himself through industry certifications, technical training, leadership programs, and continuing education initiatives.

His dedication to learning has played a critical role in his progression and has strengthened his ability to lead teams, serve customers, and drive operational excellence. Aaron’s depth of industry knowledge, practical expertise, and continued development of leadership skills have consistently strengthened relationships with customers, suppliers, and the entire SWOS team.

With Aaron’s proven commitment to innovation, operational efficiency, and relationship development, we are confident he will continue to thrive in his role as General Manager and now also as a Co-Owner of SWOS.

# EMERGING LEADERS SPOTLIGHT

*Editor's Note: AWRP's dynamic Emerging Leaders group consists of members under 40. In this new series, Levi Jabben is the first emerging leader to offer his views about an industry that's hidden in plain sight but remains essential to keeping the world moving safely.*

*By Leslie Blaize, CPSM | blaizecommunications@gmail.com.*

## Emerging Leader Jabben Helps Bridge Tradition and Innovation



Unlike many young professionals, Levi Jabben, manager of technical support at Mazzella Companies, grew up learning about cranes and rigging. His father, Curt Jabben, has worked in the industry for 38 years in a variety of roles.

"I didn't necessarily envision myself working in the rigging industry," Jabben says, "but as I got older, the connections I made and the opportunities I saw started emerging naturally—and it kind of pulled me in."

### Growing Up in the Industry

Jabben, 32, earned an economics degree during college and worked in the shop at The Crosby Group at the same time. Next, he interned at Industrial Training International in Washington State and then joined Mazzella Companies when they were opening a shop in Oklahoma City, OK.

"These experiences gave me an unexpected, helpful sequence. I saw how the products are made, then how they should be used, and finally how they're actually used in the field," he says.

Now based in Oklahoma City, Jabben leads a newly formed team at Mazzella that supports 24 rigging branches and the sales staff. He assists with technical challenges, critical applications, specialty products, and unique lifting solutions.

Mazzella Companies employs around 1,200 people and has grown rapidly through acquisitions since Jabben joined in 2017.

### Benefits of AWRP

Although Jabben knew about AWRP through his father's experiences, he had never attended a meeting until the 2025 Fall General Meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina. He described that session as "energizing and practical."

After eight years in the lifting industry, he had already worked with many members who are vendors. At the conference, Jabben met many contacts for the first time.

He values these relationships because he now has a better understanding of who to call, how to get answers quickly, and how to bring solutions to customers when safety and timelines matter.

"It was extremely helpful to finally meet people in person," he says.

As an AWRP member, Jabben is participating in the association's mentoring program organized by the Emerging Leaders group. He is looking forward to learning from his new mentor, Al Tanzil, vice president of YOKE, Inc., Bellingham, Washington.

In Jabben's view, bridging gaps—between field practice and manufacturer intent, and between generations of experience—is where emerging leaders can strengthen the industry.

## Standardization Challenges

In his role, Jabben's goal is to serve as a central resource to help get everyone throughout Mazzella Companies on the same page and to provide a better customer experience. One of the first challenges is creating standardized language across a large, growing organization.

"Pictures work wonders," he notes. They help clarify what's needed the quickest, especially when teams across the country are using different terminology.

It didn't take long to discover that teams were building the same things in multiple locations but calling them different names. This process hindered the operational efficiencies and economies of scale from taking hold across the organization's 24 branches.

For example, he said he'll never forget when someone asked for a "Pork Chop" and was referencing a Haven Klein grip (wire-pulling grip).

His team helps unify terminology and practices, ensuring that technical standards are consistent across the organization so that safety and quality remain uniform, regardless of the location.

## Looking Forward

Looking ahead, Jabben is focused on scaling his impact within the industry. Having helped build the foundation for the Technical Support team at Mazzella, he is eager to take on broader leadership challenges that bridge the gap between high-level business strategy and the technical realities of the local rigging shops.

"The industry is full of opportunities with all of its technological advances," he says.

Young professionals may think the rigging industry is old school or traditional because the current workforce tends to be older. "But there's a ton of innovation and opportunity happening beneath the surface," Jabben contends.

When Jabben brought younger professionals into the Oklahoma City office, they realized that applications are used in multiple environments worldwide. He emphasizes that the industry becomes very interesting once you start learning about it and noticing it everywhere you go.

One benefit of the rigging and wire rope industry is its need for diverse personnel in many areas including fabrication, distribution, design, and sales. And it has an ongoing and transferable career path built in. Once you know the industry, you can take your skills to a different part of the U.S. or even the world if you want, Jabben explains.

## Value of Emerging Leaders

Jabben notes that emerging leaders are the next wave at AWRP. There's a strong core of veterans. Younger members have the opportunity "to learn from them as quickly and efficiently as possible and carry that knowledge forward."

The rigging industry, he says, relies heavily on "tribal knowledge," the hands-on, experience-driven wisdom that isn't always found in a textbook.

Jabben sees his role as capturing that knowledge from veterans and translating it into a structured support system for the next generation.

As a result, Jabben says, "I've learned to be humble and listen and learn from people who've been doing this longer than I have."

Jabben takes his work seriously and notes that almost everything the company does could have life-and-death consequences.

The rigging and wire rope industry is essential, he contends. "We support the infrastructure that keeps the world moving. Even as technology changes, the goal doesn't really change; our job isn't finished until every worker, everywhere, every day, goes home the same way they arrived at the job site. That is the mission."

Another advantage of the industry is that young people don't necessarily have to go to college to have a successful career. "I've met plenty of young people who went straight into working and have had a great path laid out for them from simple on-the-job training," Jabben says.

When young adults consider careers, given the wide range of options available to them, they want to understand clear development paths. If they see what's possible for their future, they'll be more likely to stay in the field rather than viewing it as a temporary stop in their career journey, he adds.

Jabben believes that while a 40-hour work week is the standard, true advancement comes from what you do beyond those hours. He encourages young professionals to own their growth by putting in the extra time to master the craft, noting that those who retain information and apply it in context become indispensable.

## The Next Generation

At AWRP, Jabben sees how long-term members value their friendships with other members. "A lot of them are best friends, and have worked together for years," he notes.

In the same way, Jabben wants younger members to forge similar friendships that would result in personal and professional benefits. "We can develop those close relationships," he says. "There's a new wave coming through, and we have to do our part to make it the best we can."



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## Cortland International Appoints Wolfgang Wandl as Chief Executive Officer Seasoned leader to guide next phase of global growth and innovation

Anacortes, Washington - Cortland International ("Cortland") has announced the appointment of Wolfgang Wandl, a seasoned business leader with more than 30 years of international business experience, as Chief Executive Officer.

Mr. Wandl joined Cortland in March 2024 and previously served as the Company's Executive Chairman. He draws on more than three decades of global experience, including 20 years in oil and gas, 10 years in industrial sectors, and three years in renewables, across Europe, the Americas, and Asia. Over the course of his career, he has built deep expertise in synthetic fiber rope systems, offshore engineering solutions, and renewable energy infrastructure, earning recognition across professional networks and global industrial communities. In his new role, Mr. Wandl will oversee Cortland's day-to-day operations with a focus on driving global sales and product innovation, deepening customer partnerships and expanding

Cortland's presence in key markets in accordance with the company's long-term growth strategy.

Steven Leonard, President and Chief Financial Officer, Aimia Inc., shareholder of Cortland, stated, "We thank Stuart Janke for his years of service. His contributions played an important role in shaping the company's growth and direction."

"We are confident that Wolfgang's leadership will strengthen Cortland's position as a trusted global partner in rope and netting solutions across its core markets. The company will focus on further developments within aquaculture, offshore energy, marine and shipping, as well as sports and recreation and industrial sectors," Mr. Leonard added.

Mr. Wandl said, "I am excited to take on this leadership role at Cortland at such a pivotal time. The company's rich heritage, global footprint, and commitment to engineering excellence provide a strong foundation for continued growth and customer success."

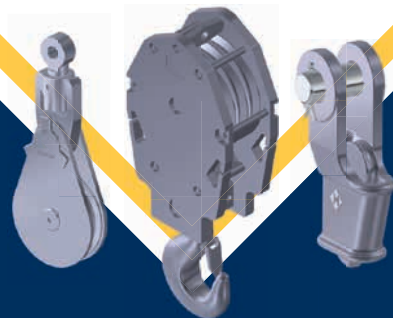


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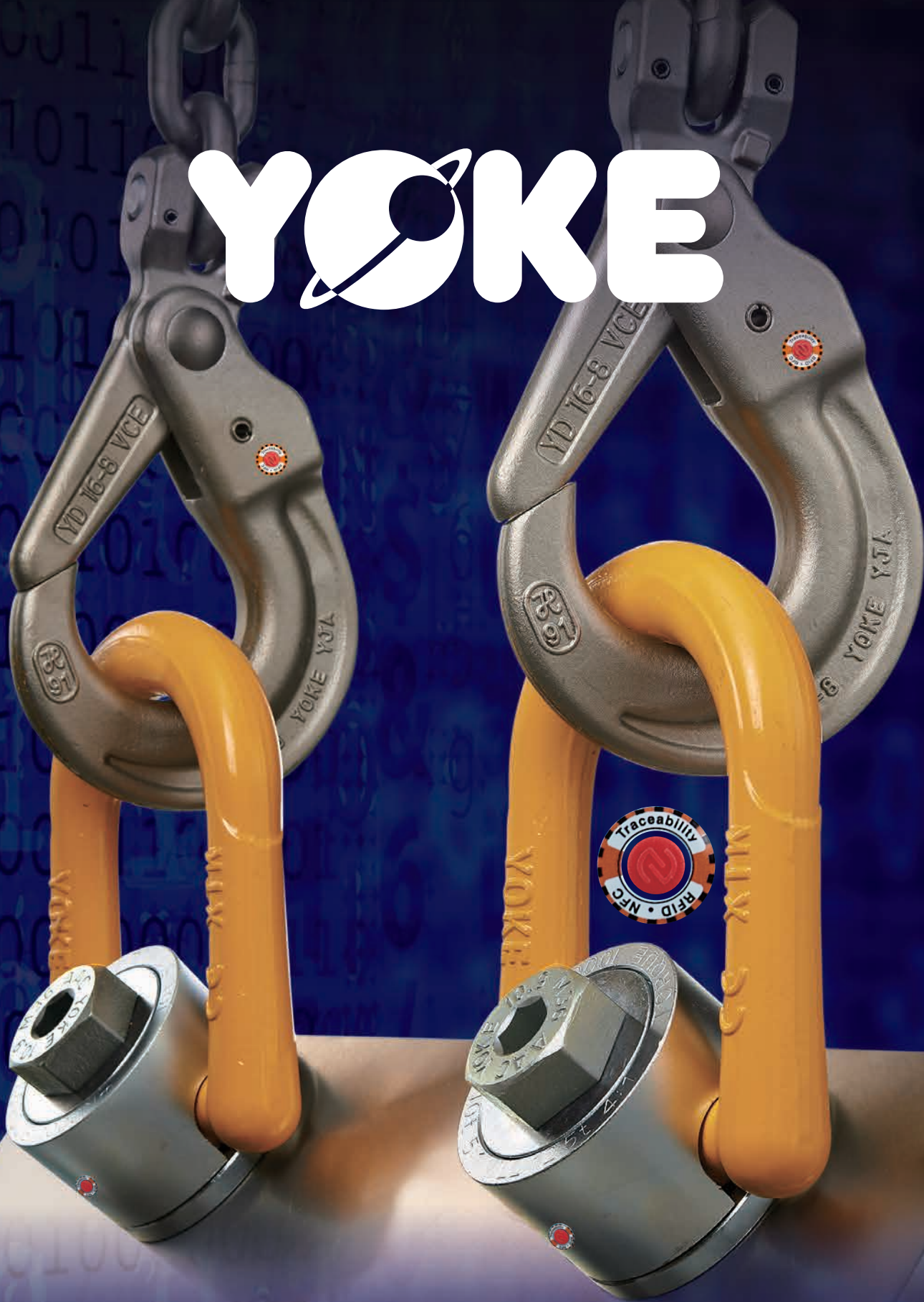
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SC Industries, Inc; Contec Hoist & Rigging

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Dynamic Load Monitoring (UK) Ltd.

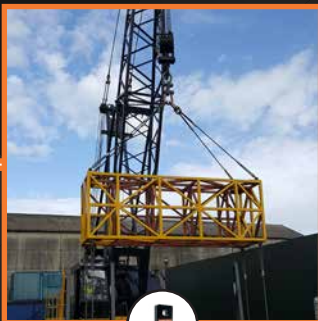
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**Please Note:** Milestones are met after the full year of membership has been established. Members who joined in a year ending in 5, receive their plaques in 2026.



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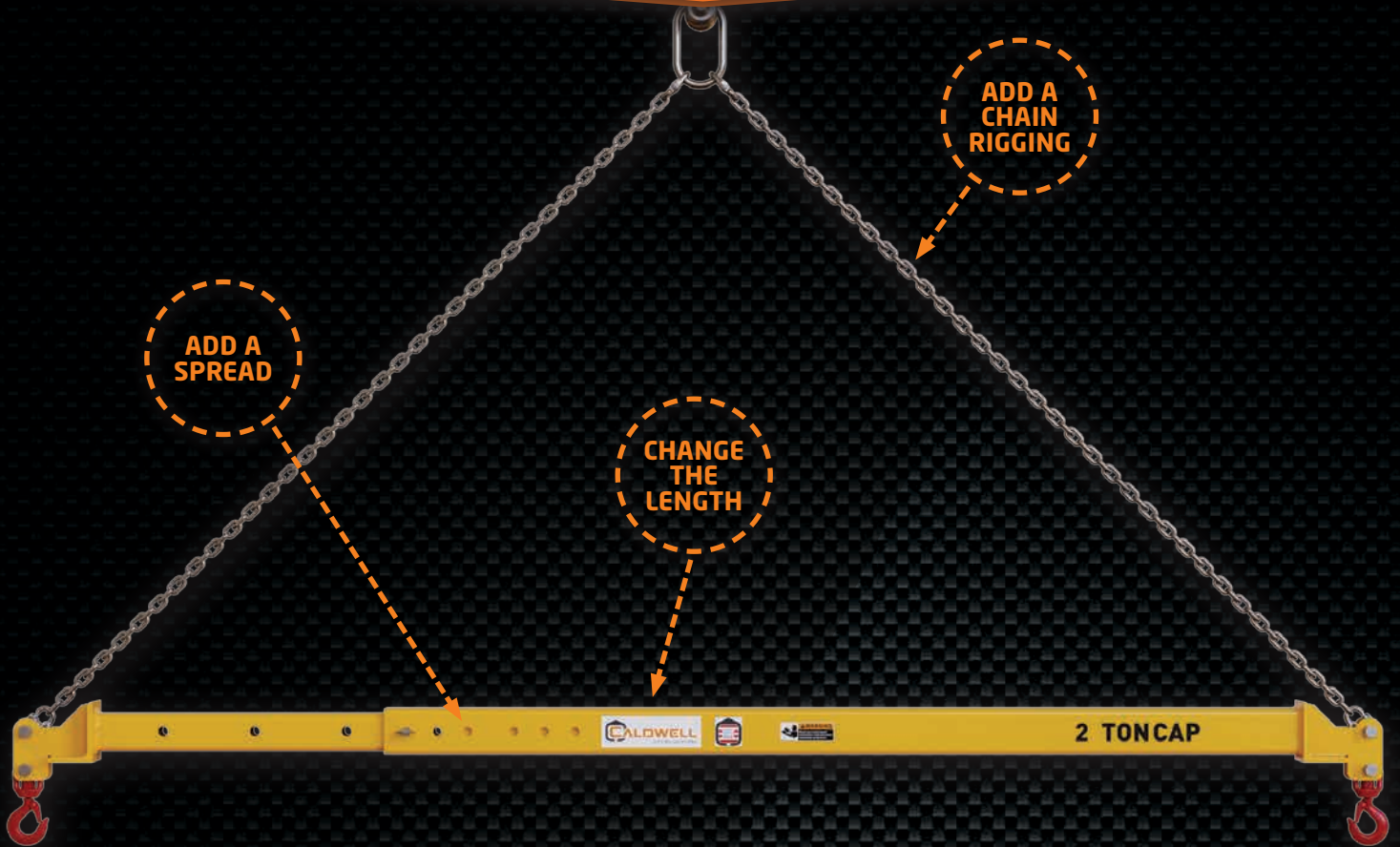


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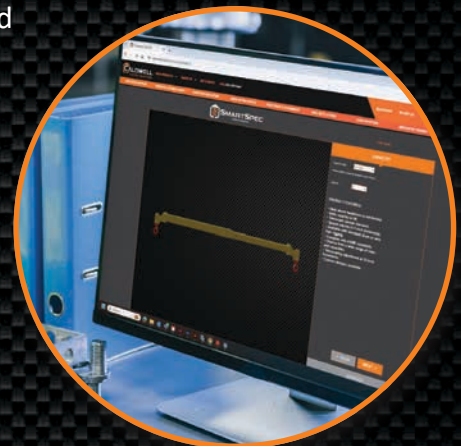
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Kelly Jones  
Holland Nameplate  
Preservation Committee Chair

## Celebrating 50 Years of AWRF: Preserving Our Legacy

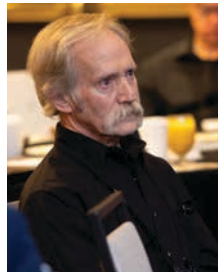
Fifty years ago, thirteen businessmen gathered in Mississippi with a shared vision. Their purpose was simple yet ambitious: *“to discuss the potential of a rigging fabricating association and the ways it might service the rigging fabricating industry.”* From that meeting, an idea was born – and the rest is history.

Today, that vision has grown into The Associated Wire Rope Fabricators (AWRF), an association of more than 300 member companies strong, spanning the globe. What began as a small group of industry leaders has become a powerful network of colleagues, competitors, collaborators – and, for many of us, extended family.

Preserving the rich fifty-year history of this remarkable association has been a significant priority for the Board of Directors. Last year, the Preservation Committee partnered with Heritage Films, a Texas-based company that specializes in creating legacy films through personal interviews and storytelling. Heritage began filming at the 2025 AWRF PIE & Technical Summit in Denver and has since conducted interviews with members across the country. These stories, reflections, and moments of

history are being woven together into a commemorative film that will debut at our 50-Year Celebration in Maui.

Be sure to look for Chance and the Heritage team at our Spring Meeting in Houston. They will continue capturing the stories that make AWRF so special.



Bob Cushman  
watching his  
commemorative tribute  
in Charlotte, NC.

In addition to the anniversary legacy film, the Board has also engaged Heritage to create tribute videos for recipients of our annual Lifetime Achievement Award. Our second honoree, Bob Cushman, was recognized with a beautifully produced film this past October – a meaningful and lasting tribute to his contributions. We look forward to continuing this tradition, honoring the individuals who have shaped AWRF and our industry.

If you have a story to share about your experience with AWRF, we encourage you to connect with the Heritage team in Houston. Our history is built on the people who have dedicated their time, talent, and passion to this association.

We have so much to celebrate – and even more to look forward to. As we honor our past, we also continue building the future of AWRF. We can't wait to share the results of this important work with you in Maui.



The Founders in Biloxi, Mississippi December 12, 1975

Back Row: David Bishop, Jim Yarbrough, Al Rubin, Jeff Weber, Bill Killian, Robert Ashley

Front Row: Dick Miller, Jack Driggs, Ken Kirby, P.J. Cortez, Harry Truitt, Al Kopicie, Tell McClarity

Continued from page 23

You could hear a pin drop. It did not help the room was stacked with avid golfers. After what seemed like an eternity I said that although it was on my agenda it was not a priority. When we got to new business I skipped the subject. Years later Duane said to me 'Gary I never was a big supporter of you becoming President. However, I have changed my mind and believe you made a good President'. I never asked him if he changed his mind because I capitulated over changing the location of the winter board meeting. One year it snowed in Palm Springs - hard to believe but true - the guys still golfed."

During the budget discussions, the mandatory cap on reserves was adjusted to cover administrative core expenses only, because other budgeted expenses could be reduced easily if it ever became necessary to keep the association active without any income for one year. Mike Hughes' Safety Committee presented an idea for a swager guarding advisory. The plans for the Technical Committee included activity by AWRP's Web Sling and Roundsling subcommittees. This caused a minor confrontation with a multi-location member who said a trademark group of affiliates tried to dominate both subcommittees. The right of the chairman to choose his own group of volunteers and seek board approval for them was reaffirmed, however.

During the Spring general meeting in Paradise Valley, Arizona north of Phoenix, a new record of 245 total members was announced. The meeting was well attended by 348 delegates from 132 member companies. They enjoyed beautiful weather in an outdoor climate.

The first three AWRP Test Programs were underway at the venerable Fritz Engineering Laboratories in Bethlehem PA. Approximately 1000 web slings had been fabricated by members from yarns and webbing donated by producing companies. Test Program I was designed to learn, for the first time, the efficiencies of web slings made from very wide webbing 8 inches to 12 inches in width. Test program II would reveal similar efficiencies for 3-ply and 4-ply nylon Class 5 slings, and Test Program III covered 3-ply and 4-ply nylon Class 7 slings. The tests were all set up based upon existing WSTDA parameters. It was understood the results, if approved, would be adopted by WSTDA and would be submitted to augment the tables already listed in ASME B30.9. This step also required AWRP to adopt a policy regarding publication of results. The ASTM model for distinguishing



All the receptions and the banquet were held outdoors in April 1995

between a recommended practice and a recommended guideline was endorsed.

Gary O'Rourke convened his July 1995 board of directors meeting in Niagara-On-The-Lake, Ontario. A few easily solved procedural matters were reviewed including the standard practice of greeting first-time attendees in a special way which had grown cumbersome now that the meetings were so much larger. Dan Giannatasio pointed out the key phrase "and load securement" must be added to the AWRP Purpose Statement due to adoption of new wording related to tiedowns already added on the face of the AWRP logo. David Bishop stepped down after having served ten years as a volunteer on the Technical Committee. This highlighted a question about the continuity of AWRP committee seats. Were they intended to be permanent as long as a volunteer showed interest, or were intended to be renewed every year at request of the chairman?

O'Rourke was eager to discuss plans for the PIE at the Fall meeting. He iterated the pros and cons of the tabletop format. It was popular with small-scale exhibitors for a variety of reasons, but any company with a product too large for the top of the table was at a disadvantage. Gary favored expanding the format to include floor mounted exhibits. Surveys of exhibitors had indicated a desire to retain the limitations of the relatively drab booths and tabletop presentations. The Directors were divided on the issue, but they decided not to change the original tabletop rules.

The PIE in San Antonio, Texas in October was a resounding success, breaking records in all categories. 61 exhibits were viewed by 436 attendees representing

160 companies. The downtown river walk was even more delightful than it had been 10 years earlier. It was a perfect way to conclude the association's second decade. Three memorable events related to the AWRP Presidency marked the end of the decade. First, Past President Otis Dufrene, whose term had been challenged when he changed jobs and went with Crosby, reversed the process and went to work for Indusco. Second, the incoming President Mike Hughes, who was the first-ever AWRP leader elected from one of the wire rope companies, went to the podium to make his acceptance remarks equipped with a 3-ring binder. He delivered a long, elaborate and passionate speech emphasizing the need to support the US wire rope companies, all of which were being threatened by business conditions at the time.



Mike and Mary Ann Hughes

The third event was unusually emotional. It was traditional to present the outgoing President with a commemorative gavel. When the order was being placed for O'Rourke's gavel, Gary and Sayenga got into a discussion about how Duane Kaminski had served AWRP as a director more times than anyone else. It was well known that many years earlier Kaminski's business had suffered a devastating fire. Other AWRP members had helped him at the time by loaning inventory but not many people were aware Duane's commemorative AWRP gavel had been destroyed at that time. O'Rourke conspired to surprise Kaminski by presenting him with a replacement gavel at the banquet just prior to O'Rourke leaving office. It was a great gesture and a great way to end a successful second decade!



In 1995, Gary O'Rourke presented Duane Kaminski with a replacement gavel in 1995



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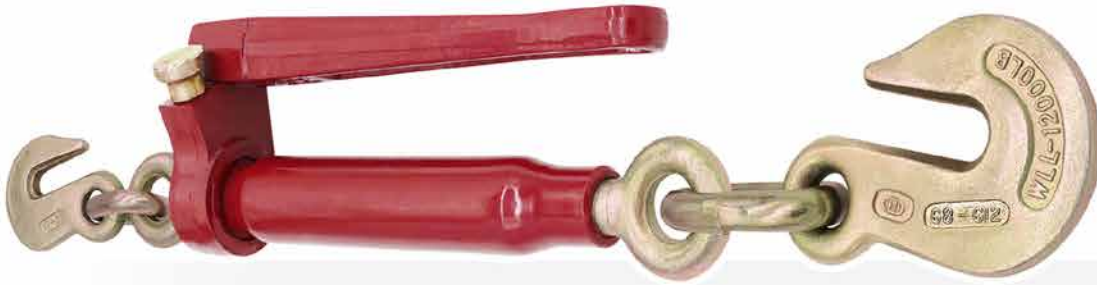
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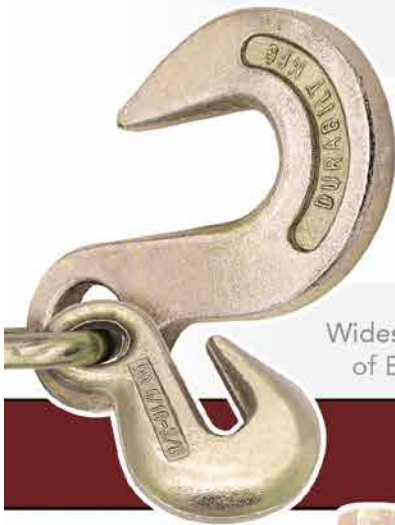
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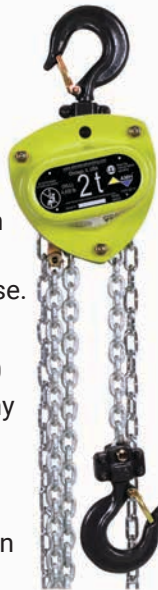
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- Optional overload protection via a one-directional clutch that slips only in the lifting direction
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AMH MA Hoist



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Badger Hoists feature **zinc-plated Grade 80 load chain** for enhanced corrosion protection and are **proof tested** to ensure reliable performance. Standard lift lengths are available, with custom configurations offered to meet specific job requirements.

#### Additional benefits include:

- **Lifetime Limited Warranty**
- Cast latches for more reliability
- Replacement parts fully stocked and ready to ship, ensuring long-term serviceability
- Optional overload protection via a one-directional clutch that slips only in the lifting direction
- Compliance with **ASME/ANSI B30.16, OSHA, and NASA-STD-8719**.

Badger Hoists are **available for immediate shipment**, helping distributors and end users avoid costly downtime.

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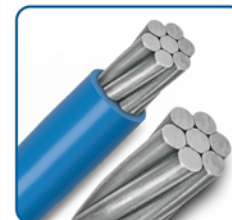
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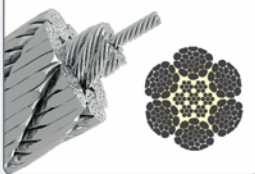
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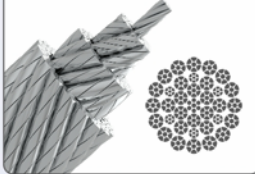
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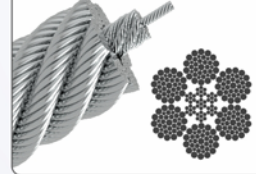
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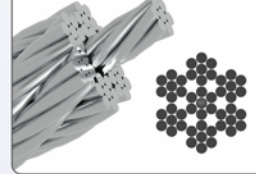
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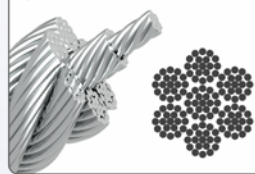
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## Guarding Your Reputation

In an industry as specialized and interconnected as lifting and rigging, Fireovid says reputation travels fast. The same relationships that make AWRF supportive also demand accountability. Over time, he's learned that technical skill alone isn't enough; character matters just as much.

"You've got to guard and keep your reputation high," he says. In a community where competitors still sit at the same table, fairness and respect aren't optional.

Mistakes happen, he adds, but owning them and treating people honestly builds long-term trust. That shared understanding helps maintain the association's close-knit culture, where members compete in the marketplace but still look out for the industry's overall health.

## The Power of AWRF Membership

After more than two decades of attending meetings, Fireovid says the reason he keeps coming back is simple: the people. While the business value is real—vendor relationships, technical updates, and industry discussions—the friendships built over time are what anchor his commitment.

Many of those connections began as professional acquaintances and evolved into trusted relationships. In a field where companies compete daily, AWRF creates space for mutual respect and collaboration. Members share lessons learned, compare challenges, and celebrate each other's successes.

"I really look forward to connecting with people who've become my friends," he says. "That's a big part of it."

## Looking Ahead

As AWRF moves into its next chapter, Fireovid believes the organization's strength will depend on continuing to adapt while holding onto its core purpose. Industry consolidation, generational turnover, and evolving business models mean the audience inside the room is changing. He sees that as an opportunity rather than a threat.

The association, he says, is already shifting its focus deeper into member companies. It's reaching sales teams, shop leaders, and younger professionals who work directly with products and customers. That broader engagement ensures knowledge doesn't stay at the ownership level but spreads throughout the workforce.

For pioneers and long-time members, he sees an important role: explain the "why" behind established practices, then trust emerging leaders to decide what comes next. That balance between tradition and progress is what will carry AWRF forward.

After 50 years, Fireovid believes the formula that built the association still holds: bring the right people together, share what you know, and the industry will continue to grow stronger.

For Fireovid, the anniversary marks more than a milestone for the association it mirrors his own journey. He entered AWRF as the next generation, watching pioneers at work. Now, he's part of the group shaping what comes next. Fifty years in, the tradition continues: learn from those before you, then pass it forward.



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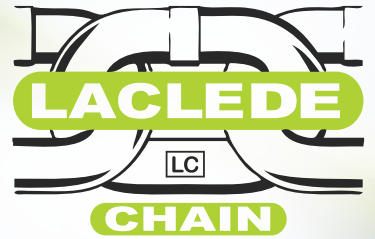
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in the 2024 Safety Awards.*

**Your commitment to safety is deeply appreciated  
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## Diamond Level

Cable Cisco  
Cascade Rigging, Inc.  
Chant Engineering Co.  
Fulcrum Lifting / Kentuckiana Wire Rope  
Mazzella Companies  
Memphis Chain & Cable LLC.  
Pacific Industrial Supply Co.  
The Rigging Box, Inc.  
John Sakash Co., Inc.

## Platinum Level

Actek Manufacturing & Engineering  
Esmet, Inc.  
Handling Systems International  
Metro Wire Rope Corporation  
ProofCert, LLC.  
Roberts Calibration, Inc.  
SWOS  
Royal Van Beest N.A.

## Gold Level

American Rigging - San Diego, CA  
Cable Moore  
Hoisting Wire Rope & Sling  
Holloway Houston  
Slingmax Group  
Kulkoni, Inc.

## Silver Level

Alps Wire Rope  
American Webbing & Fittings, Inc.  
Amick Associates, Inc.  
Cableco  
Consolidated Rigging & Marine Supply  
Fulcrum Lifting / Tri-State Wire Rope  
Global Rigging and Synthetics, LLC.  
Industrial Magnetics, Inc.  
Liftgear International, Inc.  
Rugged Controls LLC.

## Standard Level

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Bishop Lifting  
Carpenter Rigging  
Carpenter Rigging - Bakersfield  
DCL Mooring & Rigging  
Eriez Magnetics  
Fulcrum Lifting / Tri-State Wire Rope, Dayton, OH  
Fulcrum Lifting / Vernon Lifting  
Hercules Crane & Lifting Supplies  
Industrial Splicing & Sling Co.  
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Kito Crosby - Corona, CA  
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Kito Crosby - South Holland, IL  
LAMCO Slings & Rigging, Inc.  
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Marine Rigging, Inc.  
Maskell Rigging  
Mid-America Rigging  
Mile High Rigging, Inc.  
Paducah Rigging  
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Royal Rigging  
Total Tool Supply, Inc.  
West Coast Wire Rope & Rigging, Inc.  
Wiscolift, Inc.



Rugged Controls LLC.



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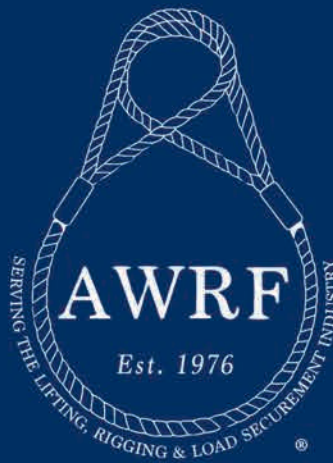
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# FUTURE MEETINGS

**TECH SUMMIT & P.I.E. 2026**

**APRIL 20-23  
MARRIOTT MARQUIS  
HOUSTON, TX**

**TECH SUMMIT & P.I.E. 2027**

**APRIL 5-8  
MARRIOTT MARQUIS  
HOUSTON, TX**

**TECH SUMMIT & P.I.E. 2028**

**APRIL 2-5  
OMNI CHAMPIONSGATE  
ORLANDO, FL**

**FALL GENERAL MEETING 2026**

**OCTOBER 18-21  
WAILEA BEACH RESORT,  
MARRIOTT MAUI  
MAUI, HI**



**FALL GENERAL MEETING 2027**

**OCTOBER 18-21  
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# The Government Affairs Committee of Associated Wire Rope Fabricators



*Left to right - Giovanni Coratolo US Chamber of Commerce, Rep Donald Manzullo (R-ILL), Howard Will – The Caldwell Group, Barry Epperson AWRF General Counsel, Jeff Gilbert Executive Director, AWRF*

*The Government Affairs Committee of Associated Wire Rope Fabricators began in 1978 when the Founding Fathers decided that the Association needed a presence in Washington, D.C. There were entirely too many regulations and laws pouring off Capitol Hill every week that affected the rigging industry either directly or indirectly. So there was an obvious need to monitor and sift through this data to determine where to allocate our resources in terms of support or obstruction. It was clear that we had to be both vigilant and proactive. I don't remember whether I volunteered for the job or was drafted, but it soon appeared to me to be a good fit. I had majored in political science in college and had some experience as a government lawyer, all of which was helpful in understanding, drafting and dissecting proposed regulations and legislation. I was anxious to begin promoting the AWRF brand in Washington and that is what we have been doing for the last forty-two years.*

*Barry Epperson*

