BUTANE-PROPANE NEWS

BPN

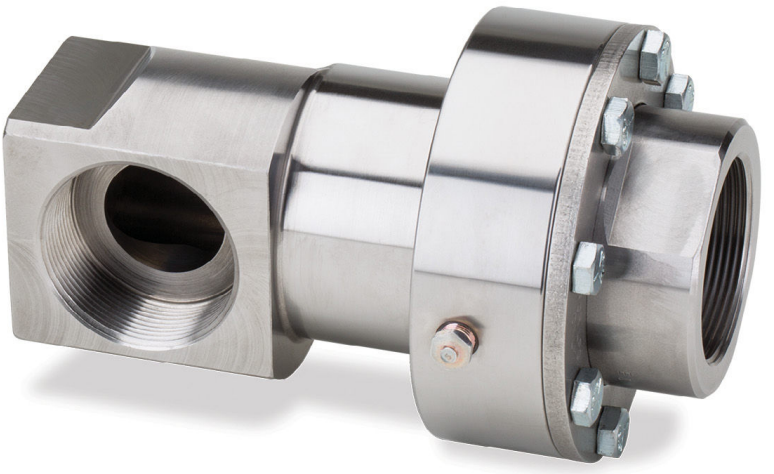
OCTOBER | 2020



DRIVER CHALLENGE

Stainless Steel Swivels for Systems Routinely Blown-down





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SUSTAINABLE AND RELIABLE

STEVE RELYEA

As California and other entities try to decarbonize while also providing reliable energy, there is a tool many policy makers and consumers don't even know exists: renewable propane.

A new online conference aims to build awareness of that fuel and its many benefits. Dubbed "The Path to Renewable Propane," this live, virtual event will be hosted by the Western Propane Gas Association (WPGA). It is to be held Nov. 4.

"Some folks don't realize that renewable propane is here today and available," Joy Alafia, president and CEO of WPGA, tells ***BPN***. "We need to let them know that it exists and, for potential producers, that a market exists. If we are serious about addressing climate change, we have to deploy every tool available."

The conference will teach legislators, regulators, and consumers about renewable propane and how it can contribute to their greenhouse gas reduction strategies. It will also show those in the propane industry how to market renewable propane.

Sessions will be presented by representatives of producers that are already making renewable propane, propane marketers that are already distributing it, and a school district that is already using it. Additional speakers are being lined up. A legislative keynote will be delivered by California State Assembly Member Jim Cooper (D-Elk Grove), who Alafia says is an advocate of all clean energy solutions.

"Many of the early movers for clean energy are in the West and especially in California," Alafia notes. "Some state agencies and municipalities already have sustainable energy targets. We can help them meet these objectives. California is often a harbinger of the future. Other municipalities, states, and nations are adopting similar goals."

"Like its conventional counterpart, renewable propane will still provide energy resiliency, which is particularly important for companies that operate around the clock," she adds.

By sharing both general information about renewable propane and the actual experiences of those who are already handling it, the new conference aims to build awareness of how this fuel can be sustainable, clean, reliable, easy to deploy, and profitable.

"We plan to meet the needs of a broad group of attendees," Alafia concludes. "The conference will cover fundamentals, for those who haven't heard of renewable propane, but it will also address more technical topics like the carbon credits markets. There will be takeaways for everyone."

The conference will take place Nov. 4 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Pacific time. Attendee registration is $100; industry members who enter code "IndustryMember2020" obtain a discounted registration fee of $50. Registration is free for legislators and policy makers. For more information, or to register, visit *https://westernpga.org/the-path-to-renewable-propane-virtual-conference/*. ■

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

VOLUME 52 | NO. 10
OCTOBER 2020

24
ONCE BITTEN, TWICE SHY
JD Buss discusses 2020's supply obstacles.

30
THE BIDEN EFFECT
Business taxes under a Biden presidency.

31
SUPPLY CHAIN LOGISTICS
"Communicate early and often," winter 2020-21 advice.

38
DRIVER CHALLENGE
More than just a friendly competition.

DEPARTMENTS

3 Beyond the Mains
6 LPG Marketplace
8 Newsfronts
14 Propane and the Law
18 Verbatim
44 People
44 Products
45 Calendar
45 Shoppers Mart
47 Classified Advertising
53 Advertisers Index



OUR COVER

Heller's Gas found that its Bobtail Driver Challenge not only provided good-natured competition, but also built morale and camaraderie. Photo courtesy Alicia R. Stavitzski.

Autogas Dispensing

Autogas Dispensers

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NFPA Rules Change Future of Autogas Refueling

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EURO Nozzles & Adapters



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EURO Nozzle
with Scuff Guard
Nozzle Talker

GasGuard Holster-Mod
Flush Mount Lockable Holster
(Nozzle not included.)





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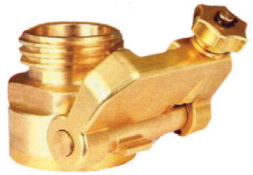

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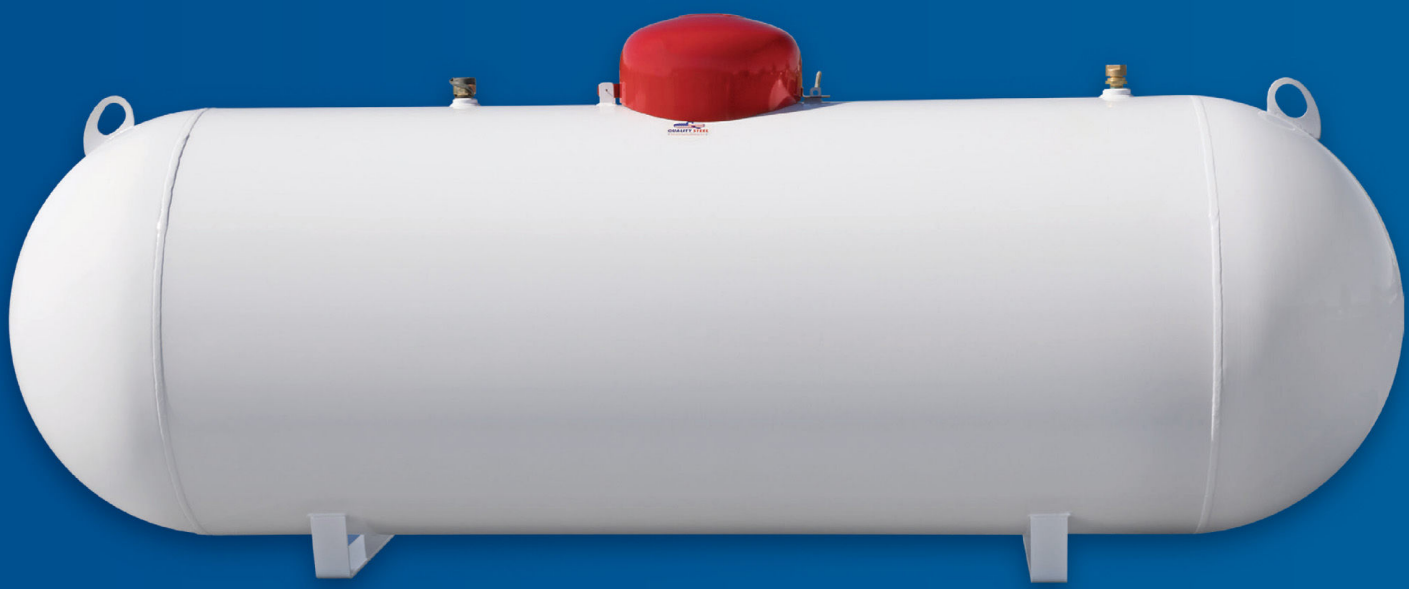

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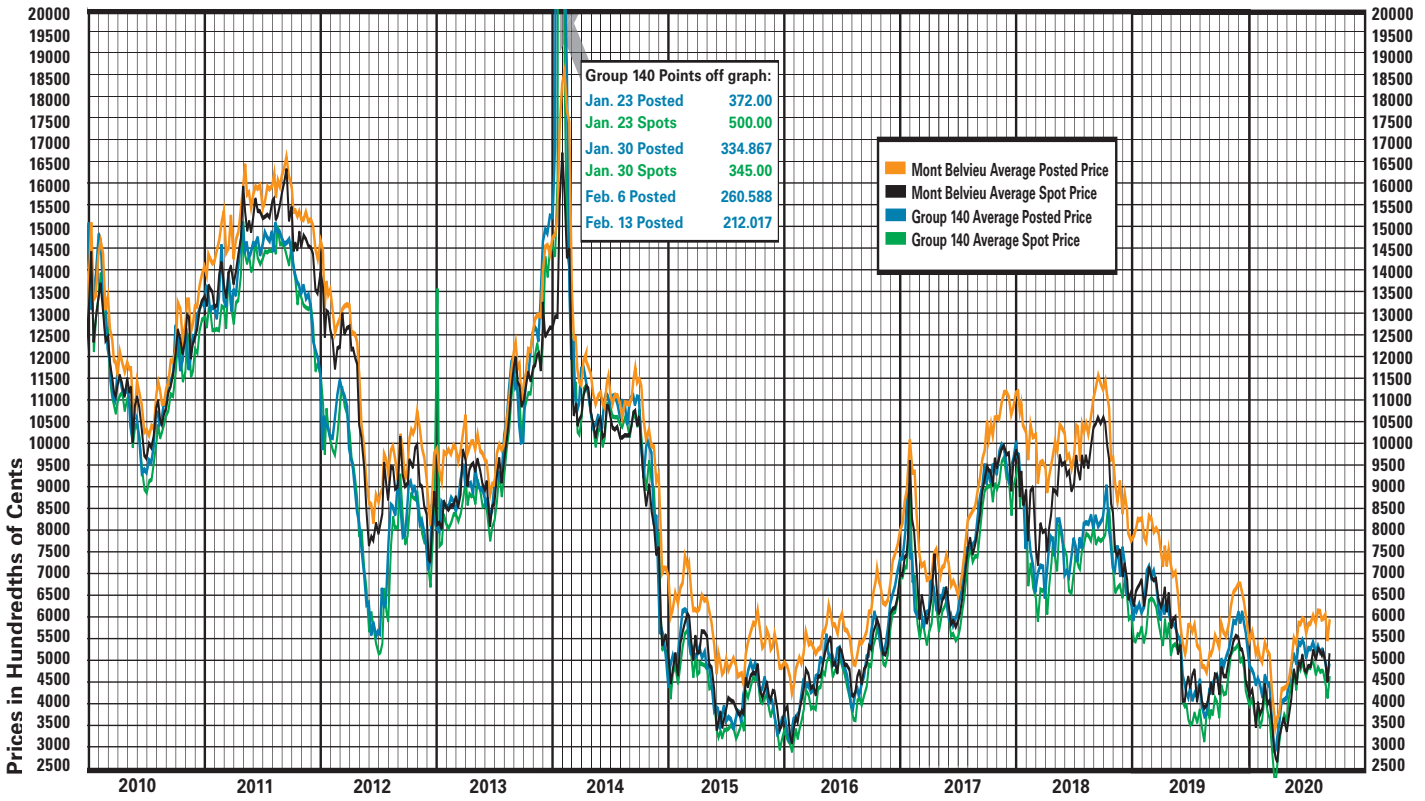


MONT BELVIEU & GROUP 140 AVERAGE THURSDAY PROPANE PRICES

MID-WEEK AVERAGE POSTED/ SPOT PROPANE PRICES

(Cents per Gallon)

Date	Mont Belvieu		Group 140	
	POSTED	SPOT	POSTED	SPOT
8-20-20	59.757	50.50-51.125	52.168	46.625-47.50
8-27-20	59.840	51.00-52.00	51.868	46.875-47.25
9-3-20	60.257	48.50-49.75	50.767	44.50-44.75
9-10-20	54.673	44.75-45.00	46.067	41.25-41.375
9-17-20	59.757	51.375-51.875	49.467	45.75-46.375

CANADIAN INVENTORIES

(Sept. 1, 2020)
Thousand Cubic Meters

PROPANE

Region	9-20	8-20	Change	9-19
Propane—East	859.2	761.1	+12.9%	458.2
Propane—West	1477.4	1285.5	+14.9%	835.6
Total Propane	**2336.6**	**2046.6**	**+14.2%**	**1293.8**

BUTANE

Butane—East	511.1	444.0	+15.1%	445.1
Butane—West	910.8	831.5	+9.5%	607.0
Total Butane	**1421.8**	**1275.5**	**+11.5%**	**1052.2**

Source: National Energy Board

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

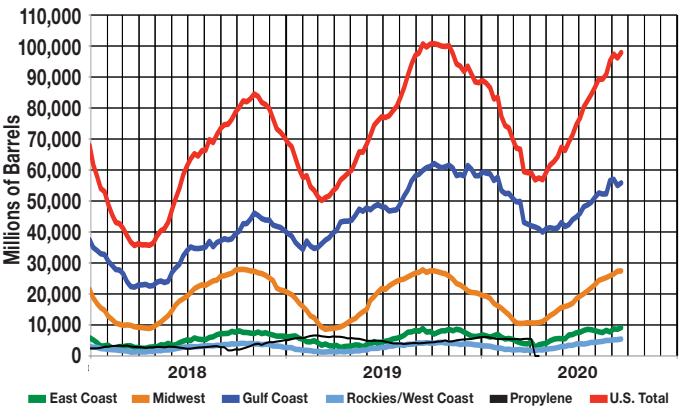
(Aug. 21, 2020 to Sept. 18, 2020 and One Year Ago)
Thousand Barrels

	8/21/20	8/28	9/4	9/11	9/18	9/20/19
East Coast	8,289	7,741	8,740	8,592	9,134	7,677
Midwest	25,256	25,854	26,449	27,334	27,445	26,938
Gulf Coast	52,286	56,605	56,974	54,949	55,851	56,465
Rockies/West	5,002	5,022	5,217	5,266	5,459	4,289
U.S. Total	90,833	95,222	97,380	96,141	97,890	95,368
Propylene	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,301

Source: Energy Information Agency

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

Jan. 1, 2018 to Sept. 18, 2020



Thinking About Selling Your Propane Business?

Hear from a former owner who believes he made the *right choice* with EDP.



> "After narrowing it down to three companies, all with pretty much the same offer, I spent considerable time learning about all three. In fact, I called four former owners who sold to EDP and they all had positive things to say. I kept hearing about the support they received from EDP after the sale. That was a big thing for me."
>
> **Jeff Hynes,** Kent Oil & Propane

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ENBRIDGE TO RESUME OPERATION OF EAST SEGMENT OF LINE 5

Enbridge (Calgary, Alta., and Lansing, Mich.) will restart the east segment of Line 5 in the Straits of Mackinac after receiving authorization from the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) and approval from the Michigan Circuit Court.

Enbridge's Vern Yu, executive vice president and president of liquids pipelines, commented, "The decision to allow the restart of the east segment of Line 5 is very positive for the many residents and businesses in Michigan and the Great Lakes region who depend on the energy Line 5 delivers. Enbridge will continue to focus on the safe operation of the dual Line 5 pipelines at the Straits of Mackinac, ensuring the Great Lakes are protected while also reliably delivering the energy and feedstock that helps to fuel Michigan's and the region's economy."

Throughout this period, Enbridge has kept the State of Michigan fully advised of the status of the west and east segment investigations and will continue to do so.

Following a review of the data from an in-line inspection of the east segment in the area around the damaged screw anchor, PHMSA indicated in a letter to Enbridge dated Sept. 4, that, "The review by PHMSA and its independent third-party expert did not identify any integrity issues. As no integrity issues have been identified in the area around the displaced anchor, PHMSA has no objection to Enbridge restarting the east leg of Line 5."

The west segment returned to operation in July.

Line 5 has served Michiganders safely without incident at the Straits crossing for more than 65 years. Enbridge's focus remains on protecting the Great Lakes, the environment and all the people who use these waters while delivering energy that people rely on daily and that fuels our economy.

The company noted, "as safety and protecting the environment are as important to us as they are to all Michiganders, we continue to work toward, and look forward to, the day when a replacement for the Line 5 dual pipelines is encased safely in a tunnel below the waters of the Straits of Mackinac."

THOMPSONGAS GROWS FOOTPRINT IN CALIFORNIA, MINNESOTA

Continuing in its growth nationwide, ThompsonGas (Frederick, Md.) recently acquired companies in Northern California and Minnesota.

On the West Coast, ThompsonGas acquired Associated Propane Co. (Petaluma, Calif.), a propane provider in Northern California. ThompsonGas is committed to serving the residential, commercial, and agricultural customers who have valued Associated Propane Co.'s service in the area for more than 60 years.

ThompsonGas CEO Jeff Kerns, said, "This new addition gives us the ability to expand our ever-growing California operations." "We are excited to watch the Petaluma team continue to grow and expand its service territory," added Jim Davis, COO.

ThompsonGas confirmed Sept. 8 that it had also acquired Pirkl Gas Inc., a propane provider based in Owatonna, Minn. Terms of the deal were not provided. As with Associated Propane, ThompsonGas is committed to serving its customers who have valued the Pirkl's presence and service in the area for 61 years.

"Pirkl Gas is a great addition to our presence in Minnesota," said regional vice president Derek Ashmore. "It gives us another very strong footprint to continue our active growth strategy." Jeff Kerns added, "Greg Pirkl and his family have built a business that strives for excellence in service, which will continue with ThompsonGas."

ENERGY NORTH GROUP EXPANDS INTO THE UPSTATE N.Y. MARKET

Energy North Group (ENG; Lawrence, Mass.) confirmed Sept. 1 that it has expanded into the Upstate New York energy market. ENG is involved in both wholesale energy distribution and retail operations in New England.

Since 1981, ENG has delivered branded and unbranded gasoline and diesel, and continues to grow its Haffner's proprietary brand. Product will be pulled from the Albany, Marcy, Newburgh, Rochester, and Syracuse terminals in Upstate New York.

In addition, it also specializes in propane, oil, and HVAC service in select markets, as well as convenience store and car wash operations, station design, construction, upgrades, and financing programs; co-brand, buying, and partnership programs; and selling, buying, or leasing locations.

Kim Keil, wholesale account manager, will lead ENG's move in the Upstate New York territory.

SIMMONS EXITS THE ENERGY SOLUTIONS BUSINESS

Simmons Foods Inc. (Siloam Springs, Ark.) reported on Sept. 1 that it had sold its propane business to MFA Oil Co. Simmons Energy Solutions is a small propane supply company with locations in Decatur, Ark., and Jay, Okla. Terms of the sale were not disclosed.

"As a food company, we have determined that propane operations are outside of our core business," said David Jackson, COO. "We are confident that we leave our customers in good hands with MFA Oil and we will work together to ensure a seamless transition process."

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"We believe their business approach and culture is a good fit for our valued customers and team members," Jackson added. "We are pleased that MFA Oil plans to extend job offers to the majority of team members currently working in this operation."

MFA Oil is a farmer-owned cooperative headquartered in Columbia, Mo. They have provided fuels, propane, and other petroleum products to customers since 1929.

ENERGY TRANSFER COMPLETES LONE STAR EXPRESS PIPELINE EXPANSION

Energy Transfer (Dallas) announced Sept. 1 the completion of its Lone Star Express Pipeline NGL expansion project, which was a major part of the company's 2020 capital program. The expansion adds more than 400,000 bbld of NGL capacity out of the Permian and Delaware Basins in Texas.

The project was delivered on budget and ahead of schedule.

The new 352-mile, 24-in. pipeline originates in Winkler County, Texas, and connects into the existing Lone Star Express 30-in. pipeline at the Morgan Junction in Bosque County, Texas, south of Fort Worth. It will provide shippers additional connectivity out of the Permian and Delaware basins, further encouraging the recovery of production and jobs underway in the region.

The Lone Star pipeline system ultimately connects into Energy Transfer's Mont Belvieu facility, with its strategic connectivity to more than 35 petrochemical plants, refineries, fractionators, and third-party pipelines. Energy Transfer's seventh fractionator at Mont Belvieu was brought online earlier this year, bringing the partnership's total fractionation capacity to more than 900,000 bbld.

CVSA RELEASES 2020 OPERATION SAFE DRIVER WEEK RESULTS

Operation Safe Driver Week, held from July 12 to 18, was the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's (CVSA) first enforcement initiative of the year. It was delayed as a result of the postponement or cancellation of other enforcement campaigns due to the coronavirus pandemic. Despite the challenges associated with the pandemic, 3681 enforcement officers from 55 Canadian and U.S. jurisdictions interacted with 29,921 commercial motor vehicle drivers.

Commercial motor vehicle drivers were issued a total of 10,736 warnings and citations for traffic enforcement violations, broken down to 4659 citations and 6077 warnings.

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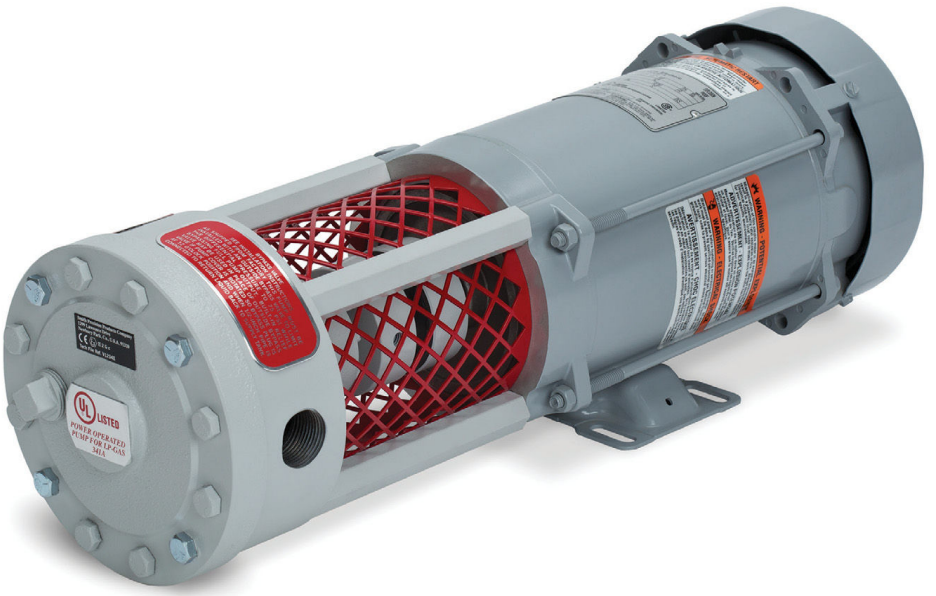

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Traffic enforcement violations include unsafe driving behaviors, such as speeding, distracted driving, following too closely, improper lane change, failure to wear a seatbelt, etc. State/local driver violations may include vehicle-related observations an officer may notice during a traffic stop, such as equipment violations, expired license plate tags, inoperative lamps, etc.

The top five traffic enforcement citations given to commercial motor vehicle drivers were: Speeding/violation of basic speed law/driving too fast for the conditions, 2339; failure to use seat belt while operating commercial motor vehicle, 1003; failure to obey traffic control device, 617; using a hand-held phone/texting, 269; and improper lane change, 122

CVSA president Sgt. John Samis with the Delaware State Police commented, "When commercial motor vehicles and passenger vehicles collide, no matter who was at fault, the results can be catastrophic, especially for the smaller and lighter passenger vehicle. Preventing crashes from happening requires every driver—commercial and personal—to be aware of how to safely share the road with other types of vehicles."

U.S. ENERGY MARKETS ARE REBALANCING, BUT REMAIN FRAGILE

According to the American Petroleum Institute's (API) August 2020 Monthly Statistical Report and Q3 2020 Industry Outlook, the U.S. returned to being a net energy exporter in August despite disruptions from Hurricane Laura and ongoing uncertainty over the pandemic. Higher demand and less supply translated into lower crude oil inventories, further demonstrating the gradual rebalancing of the market.

"Although the market remains fragile, we saw substantive progress in August towards the rebalancing and normalizing of key indicators," API chief economist Dean Forman said. "The U.S. return to net exporter status despite disruptions from Hurricane Laura is significant in that it shows a combination of resilience in international demand coupled with domestic refiners increasingly turning to domestic sweet crude despite, and in fact due to, the pandemic-driven recession."

Some highlights from the August 2020 Monthly Statistical Report include: U.S. crude oil and natural gas liquids production both edged down in August as drilling activity fell to its lowest level since November 2001. However, drilling productivity rose to record highs in most producing basins.

U.S. petroleum demand rose to 18.3 MMbbld in August following further recovery in demand for motor transport fuels. Jet fuel demand continued to be the main source of weakness with deliveries off more than 46% year over year due to depressed demand for air travel.

Total U.S. petroleum inventories (excluding Strategic Petroleum Reserve) increased 0.2% in August to 1.46 Bbbl. However, crude oil stocks fell 3.2% to 502.8 MMbbld, now 6.6% below the record in March 2017.

The U.S. returned to being a net energy exporter in August as imports of crude oil and refined products decreased 5.3% to 7.5 MMbbld and exports rose 2.0% to 7.8 MMbbld.

SUBURBAN PROPANE PARTNERS LP TO ACQUIRE 39% STAKE IN OBERON FUELS

Suburban Propane Partners LP (Whippany, N.J.), a nationwide distributor of propane, fueloil, and related products and services, as well as a marketer of natural gas and electricity, announced a deal Sept. 17 to purchase a 39% stake in San Diego, Calif.-based Oberon Fuels Inc. As a development-stage producer of low carbon, renewable dimethyl ether (rDME) transportation fuel, Oberon has been focused on the research and development of a practical and affordable pathway to zero-emission transportation through its proprietary production process.

Oberon's rDME fuel is a cost-effective, low-carbon, zero-soot alternative to petroleum diesel. Pursuant to the agreements between the parties, Suburban Propane has also committed to provide additional funding to support continued development efforts to begin commercializing an rDME/propane blended product.

"At Suburban Propane, we recognize the need to reduce the nation's carbon footprint and improve overall air quality," said Michael Stivala, Suburban Propane president and CEO. "The current clean-burning attributes of propane are a positive contributor to the goals of decarbonization, particularly when used as a replacement for gasoline and diesel in the transportation sector. Through our *Go Green with Suburban Propane* initiative, we are committed to the development of innovative solutions to further reduce the emissions profile of propane and to creating a pathway to zero carbon emissions."

With recent grant funding from the California Energy Commission, Oberon is developing rDME for a novel use: a blending agent with propane. With an estimated Carbon Intensity (CI) value of -278 according to the California Air Resources Board, and similar handling and storage properties as propane, rDME can be an ideal blending agent that can reduce the carbon intensity of propane. Under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Renewable Fuel Standard, rDME is eligible for renewable identification number ("RIN") credits when produced from dairy biogas using the Oberon process. During 2021, Oberon is expected to begin production of rDME from pulp mill waste (with an annual production capacity estimated at 1.6 million gallons) at its demonstration facility in California's Imperial Valley.

Suburban Propane will have the exclusive rights to work with Oberon to market and sell rDME and rDME/propane blends in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

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LOUISIANA COURT SENDS CSST CLAIM TO JURY

DAVID R. SCHLEE

On April 9, a Louisiana federal judge denied a defense motion for summary judgment, allowing a jury to consider a residential fire claim against Omega Flex, Inc. The case involves corrugated stainless steel tubing (CSST), a thin walled flexible corrugated piping that for the past 20 years or so has been widely used as an economical substitute for more rigid gas piping inside a building. The case is *Attuso v Omega Flex.*

While CSST is relatively easy to install, it is vulnerable if energized by a lightning strike. Arcing as a result of a lightning strike can cause the CSST to leak. When the leaking gas ignites, a fire often ensues. In 2006, an Arkansas court approved a class action settlement in a suit against multiple manufacturers of CSST. Under the settlement, owners of CSST gas piping systems would be entitled to a voucher that could be used toward the purchase and installation of lightning protection or grounding systems that would protect the piping from potentially catastrophic failure as the result of lightning strikes. Based on this and other litigation, NFPA 54 was revised in 2009 to include a requirement that all CSST systems be bonded to the electrical service ground where the gas supply enters a building.

Against this backdrop, on Jan. 21, 2017, a fire destroyed the home of Monique Attuso and her husband, Ricky Rodriguez. The family reported that they were awakened at about 3:30 in the morning by lightning that struck the residence. Power was knocked out, and sparks flew from the living room television set. Sparks also appeared to fall from the roof of the house. There was a small fire under the kitchen sink, but that was put out. Rodriguez inspected the house several times over the next hour. Finding nothing, and with the electricity off, the family went back to bed.

Around 7:00 that morning, several children went upstairs and noticed smoke. Rodriguez then noticed that the wall next to the stairway was hot to the touch. The family evacuated the house, and the fire department was called. Fire ultimately consumed the house.

LOSS OF THE HOUSE

The house was insured by Republic Fire & Casualty Insurance Co., which paid for the loss of the house and its contents under its policy of insurance. Republic then sued Omega Flex to recover the money that it paid under the policy, claiming that the CSST "which supplied propane gas to various parts of the home, was compromised after the lightning strike when electrical energy passed or arced across the ridges of the CSST, puncturing the CSST's wall." Republic alleged that "propane gas leaked into the space between the floor and the ceiling of the Attuso residence and was ignited 'from a competent ignition source.'" Omega Flex disputed the claim, arguing that the CSST was compromised because it was not bonded correctly to a grounding electrode upon installation. According to Omega Flex, "the CSST at the Attuso home was not bonded in accordance with the product's explicit instructions and warnings. The bonding was required to help prevent exactly what Republic alleges in this matter; namely, that electrical arcing from lightning damaged the CSST and caused a fire." Omega Flex added that "had the CSST been properly installed, an arcing event would not have occurred."

Omega Flex's defense was based on its Design Guide and Installation Instructions for the CSST. The Design Guide told the installer to attach a bonding clamp to the gas piping to ground the system. It "expressly warned that '[t]he installation instructions and procedures contained in this Design Guide must be strictly followed in order to provide a safe and effective fuel gas piping system'" and the CSST "'must only be installed by a qualified person who has been trained or otherwise qualified through the TracPipe Gas Piping Installation Program.'"

Omega Flex argued that the CSST was not properly bonded in accordance with the Design Guide. The installer of the CSST did not directly bond to the gas pipe at the entrance, but rather grounded through two water heaters. This, said Omega Flex, was insufficient.

In response, Republic contended that grounding through the water heaters—while not being directly bonded—was sufficient. It argued that the Design Guide's bonding instructions are "confusing" and can be read in such a way as to convey that "the use of direct bonding is just one way of achieving bonding" and "that if this method is chosen the clamp should not be attached to the corrugated services."

An expert for Republic claimed that the National Electric Code does not require direct bonding, and since the Design Guide defers to that code, grounding through the water heaters was acceptable. According to Republic, "the installer can do the so-called direct bond or he can bond per the Electric Code. And either one is acceptable."

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The Court agreed with Republic:

> ***"The Court finds that Republic's position, supported by [the expert] affidavit, presents a genuine issue of material fact as to whether the way the CSST was bonded constitutes a reasonably anticipated use. Omega Flex's assertion that "it is undisputed that the CSST in the Attuso Home was improperly bonded" is not entirely accurate; Republic clearly maintains that the CSST was bonded in a way that the Design Guide deems to be acceptable, as supported by its expert's interpretation of the instructions. Republic's expert, who examined the home, specifically states in his affidavit that "[t]he gas system was bonded via the equipment ground connections at two tankless water heaters" according to industry standards as set by the National Electric Code, the National Fuel Gas Code, and the International Fuel Gas Code. [The expert] states that "[a]s a tested, licensed, and practicing master electrician and electrical contractor ... [he] interpret[s] section 4.10 of the Design Guide as describing that gas piping system [sic] needs to be bonded according to the requirements of the National Electric Code as specifically stated in their last sentence, and the diagram is only an example of how bonding gas piping can be achieved."***

Republic argued that Omega Flex should have provided warnings about the CSST's "propensity to become damaged by the electrical current from a lightning strike" and "that fires could be started by perforations in the CSST due to lightning strikes." In support of these allegations, it offered testimony from an expert that the propane gas in the Attuso home ignited "immediately after the opening [in the CSST] was created," and that "[t]he damage to the TracPipe CSST in this case had all of the attributes of a lightning induced melt opening as the result of arcing of the CSST with a nearby metal object." Republic also offered testimony from another expert who conducted tests on CSST and concluded that bonding and grounding of the CSST—even according to the Design Guide's instructions—"does not always prevent electrical arcing from creating a perforation in the CSST."

Again, the Court agreed with Republic:

> ***"The Court finds that Republic has met its burden of showing a genuine issue of material fact as to its failure to warn claim. Republic supports with summary judgment evidence the allegation that, at the time it left Omega Flex's control, the CSST possessed a characteristic that had the potential to cause damage: alleged susceptibility to rupture and ignition due to lightning strikes. By arguing that the Design Guide's installation instructions were confusing about the bonding technique, and by supporting that contention with [an expert's] affidavit, Republic alleges with support that Omega Flex failed to use reasonable care to provide an adequate warning about the product. Finally, Republic offers summary judgment evidence supporting its position that the allegedly inadequate warning was the proximate cause of the fire at the Attuso home. The opinion of its expert supports***

Continued on **Page 22**



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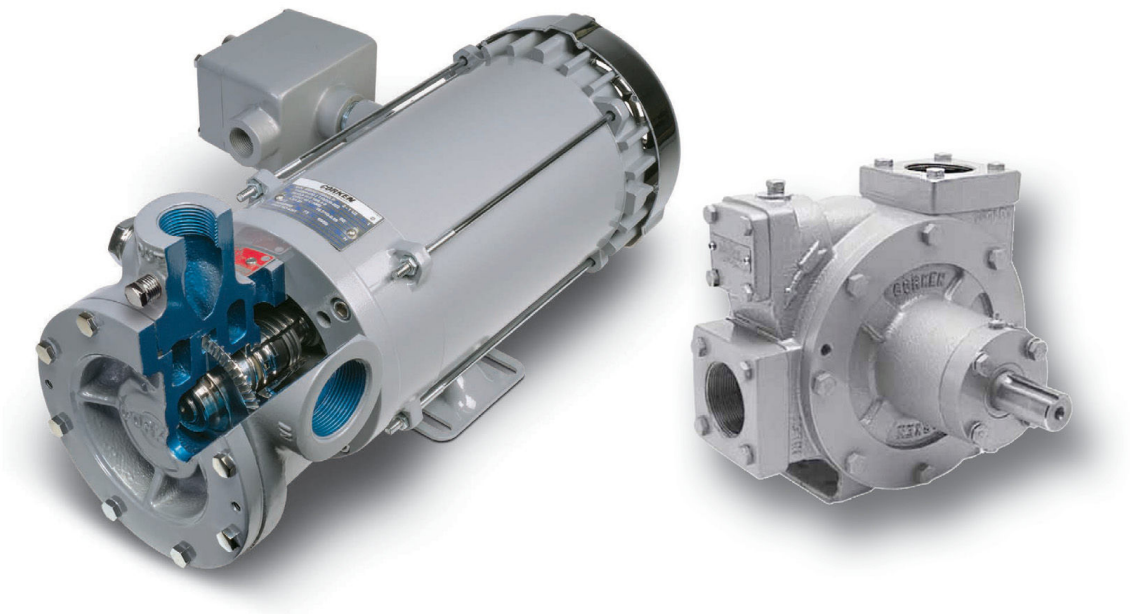

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WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE RECEIVED?

NANCY J. COOP

Did you know some of the youngest among us hold wisdom beyond their years? The answers to this month's question reflect sage advice learned by 14 charter members of the Young Gassers' **30 Under 30 Program**. They are young professionals in our industry who bring a unique perspective to their workplace and our broader propane community. Invited to participate in this column, several of them agreed to share their replies to the question above; advice gleaned from fathers, grandparents, friends, supervisors, and others.

The VERBATIM column poses open-ended questions to industry colleagues. Taken from a familiar "Heard on the Street" format, we offered the "30 Under 30" group a chance to reply via email. Below are their personal thoughts in response. [Note: The 30 Under 30 Program was created this year by the International Association of Young Gassers in conjunction with the National Propane Gas Association and the Canadian Propane Association. The program is meant to invest in, engage, and encourage young professionals working for companies directly involved in the propane gas industry. For more information, visit *younggassers.org*]



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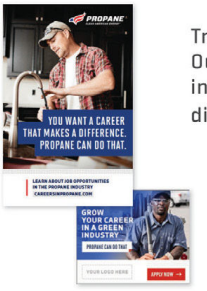
Watch for information about apprenticeships, trade school grants, and more from PERC, coming soon. **To quickly find all these tools, search for the keyword "Workforce" in the Resource Catalog on Propane.com.**



The Workforce Outreach Bundle highlights the benefits of the industry, in English and Spanish.



Trade School Outreach materials include courses, digital ads, and more.

RESPONSES FROM "30 UNDER 30" MEMBERS

When I was a senior in high school, a family friend told me that I should always remind myself that "I'm third." By prioritizing Faith and my loved ones ahead of myself, I'm able to keep things in perspective and focus on what's important. In my professional life, the "I'm third" mantra reminds me to stay humble, while also giving me confidence knowing that I have a strong support system around me.

Barrett Conway
Cetane Associates
Bethesda, Md.

When entering the management program at Dead River Co., I was advised to learn as much as I could from all aspects of the company's operations. A little less than a year ago I permanently began working within a service department. My knowledge and respect I gained have allowed me to show empathy for other departments such as delivery. I am now a firm believer that cross-departmental cooperation is key to success in this diverse industry.

Nathan DeBerdine
Dead River Co.
Auburn, Maine

Cooler heads will prevail. The calmer and more focused you are with your thoughts, actions, and people, the greater influence you will have.

Krista Filous
John Rosbough Trucking
Lodi, Ohio

My grandma's motto was "everything in moderation." I try to remind myself to practice this when it comes to work, stress, and chocolate.

Monika Goss
R.N. Goss Gas Products
Reno, Pa.

Throughout the course of my career, I've been fortunate enough to be placed under the tutelage of many great leaders and mentors, many of whom have given me invaluable advice and guidance. However, the piece of advice that has stuck with me the most has to be from my old supervisor at our Mt. Vernon, N.Y., filling station named Vishnu. The advice was simple, "You must adapt, or you will get left behind." Vishnu emphasized embracing new technology and change, and would always stress the importance of not being "that guy" whose first instinct is to come up with reasons to avoid change, rather than embracing changes through new ideas or technology. I'm sure everyone reading this right now has worked with someone who's "that guy" at some point in their career (you may be thinking of a particular individual right now) and we all know how frustrating that can be. Moreover, having too many people in your organization with that attitude can quickly



lead to its demise. A great example of how detrimental that mindset can be to a business is Blockbuster Video misjudging and dismissing the power and development of streaming services and getting taken out by Netflix. This advice certainly applies to our industry as well. With other competition like alternative energy rapidly gaining more market share every day, we too must continue to adapt and embrace new technology so we don't get left behind, and I'm proud to work for a company that does just that.

Daniel Guglielmo
Paraco Gas
Rye Brook, N.Y.

The best advice I've received is, by far, to take pride in your work. Your work is a reflection of you.

Colton Hayes
Westmor Industries
Shawnee, Kan.

"Always do what you're afraid to do." Reality nowadays has shown us that life can be downright scary at times. Admittedly with good reason; each new day can bring about an unexpected situation that may be uncomfortable, unpleasant, or disruptive. Facing these head-on are how you learn and grow. It's something my grandfather always told me throughout my youth. This is how we live lives that are fulfilling!

Daniel Montero
Warm Thoughts Communications
Clifton, N.J.

You will never know everything…don't be afraid to ask questions and put in the work to learn something new.

Meranda Hormann
Westmor Industries
Morris, Minn.

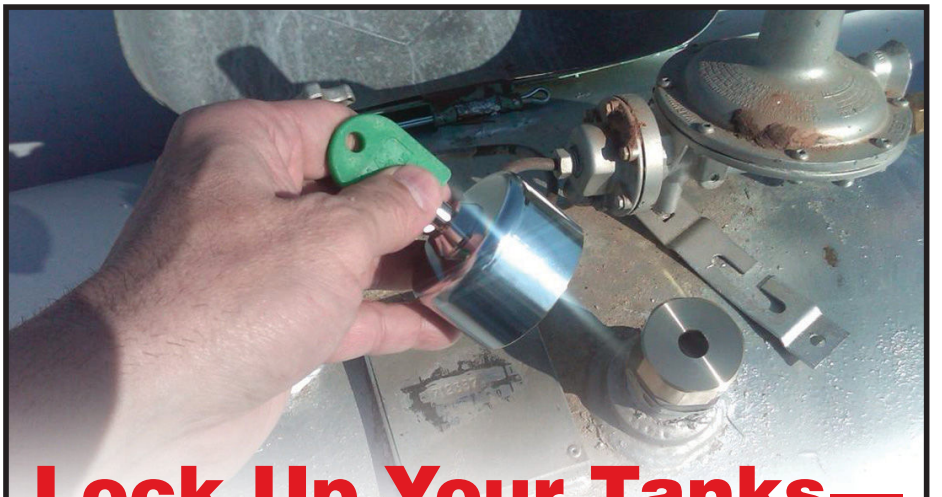
"Don't fear making mistakes, be open and excited to learn from them"

Kendall Hostler
Central Valley Ag
Beloit, Kan.

Slow down, don't assume anything, and ask many questions. This advice was given to me early in my career and has helped me through both my work and personal lives. Regardless the type of the task, whether it be solving a complex problem, assisting a customer, or even general conversations with family, friends, and colleagues, it always pays to approach the subject with an open mind, gather as much information as possible, and then make an informed decision.

Daniel Libralato
Anova
New Providence, N.J.

"Be kind to others." Though this may seem quite vague, I believe this practice is fundamental for life. I have yet to see the downside of being respectful,



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Mike Green, Green's Propane, Smithville, AL

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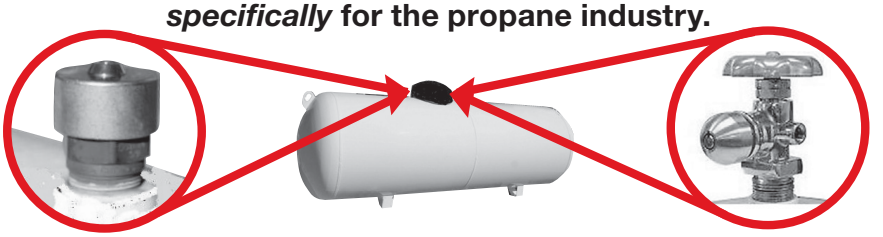

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empathetic, generous, patient, tolerant, and generally showing kindness to those around me. As they say, what goes around comes around. Kindness helps expand professional and personal relationships which will help achieve your goals.

Daniel Quiroga
Metsa Tanks
Monterrey, Mexico

The best piece of advice I have received is to learn from others' mistakes. I have learned several times, the hard way, to overcome obstacles and tasks ahead of me, after realizing there are plenty of co-workers and peers that have been in similar circumstances. Most of these co-workers and peers are willing to give you the advice needed to simplify your next steps. Most often this can be seen by them as ambition to get the job done right. I have now learned over several years that when you are uncertain, just ask for advice! Sometimes this advice can be humbling as well!

Cody Reeves
RegO Products
Elon, N.C.

"If you didn't document it, then you didn't do it—A quote my father, Jeff Shaffer, always preaches during our safety meetings.

Elliott Shaffer
Shaffer's Bottled Gas
Hooversville, Pa.

Work hard, and in the end, it will pay off.

Cooper Wilburn
Propane Resources
Mission, Kan.

IN THE WORDS OF OSCAR WILDE...

"I always pass on good advice. It is the only thing to do with it. It is never of any use to oneself."

Perhaps this group of responders has disproved Mr. Wilde's witty quote as several of them seem to use well the advice they received. And, now they have passed it on to you.

Nancy Coop is an industry advocate. She serves as a director at Cetane Associates. Readers may contact her at ncoop@cetane.net.

PROPANE AND THE LAW

Continued from **Page 16**

the proposition that but for the CSST's alleged defect, the fire would not have occurred."

The Court denied the Omega Flex motion for summary judgment, ruling that it was for the jury to decide the issue.

David Schlee is a shareholder in the Kansas City law firm of Schlee & McCarthy, P.C. Readers may contact him at drschlee@schleelaw.com.



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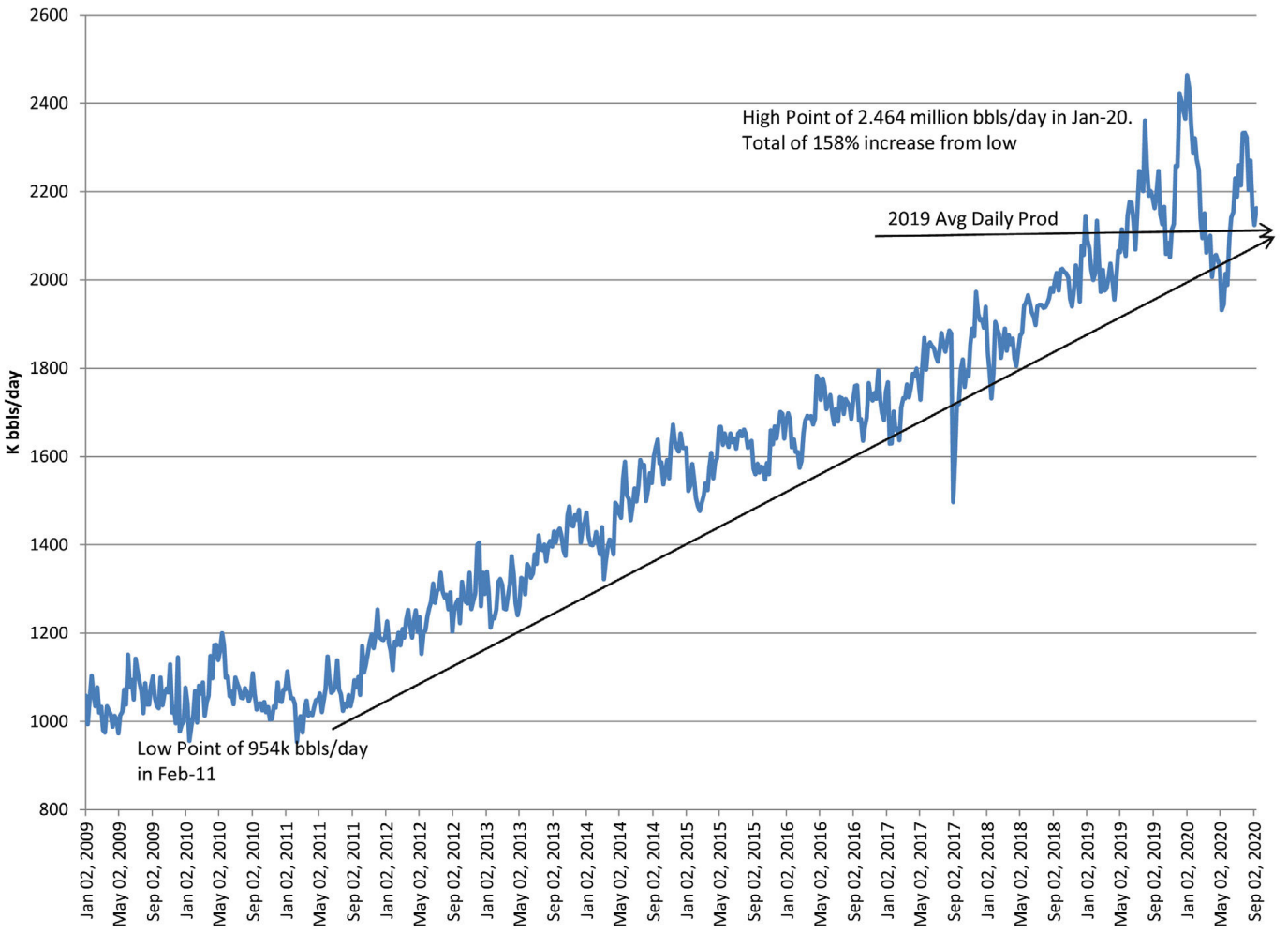
Fig. 1—U.S. DAILY PROPANE PRODUCTION
(Weekly Data)



All graphics courtesy Twin Feathers

ONCE BITTEN, TWICE SHY

JD BUSS

Merriam-Webster defines this phrase as "a person who has failed or been hurt when trying to do something is careful or fearful about doing it again." Another dictionary search placed the origin of this phrase in the year 1894.

A 120-plus-year-old phrase may be the best way to describe the domestic propane distributor's response to this year's COVID-induced supply season.

March 11, 2020, saw an end to the NBA season. In the next 24 hours propane conferences across the U.S. began to be cancelled. Within four days, most of the U.S. had gone on a lockdown. Then North America's lockdown soon became a cry for the energy sector's lockdown as well.

CHAOTIC SITUATION

Over the ensuing weeks, phone call after phone call revealed this refinery shutting production and another producer reducing output. The swift decision makers of the next one or two weeks secured the best supply deals (at that time) while those waiting in the wings were forced to make the tough decision between paying higher supplier costs or risk not having propane later in the season.

The premise for such chaotic producer reactions—a loss of demand due to COVID-19 restrictions that could severely impact energy producers and refiners. That risk drove drastic steps to make sure producer businesses survived.

Fast forward six months and there is a clear need to assess if the rhetoric in early spring was well founded or merely blowing smoke that has covered up another scenario.

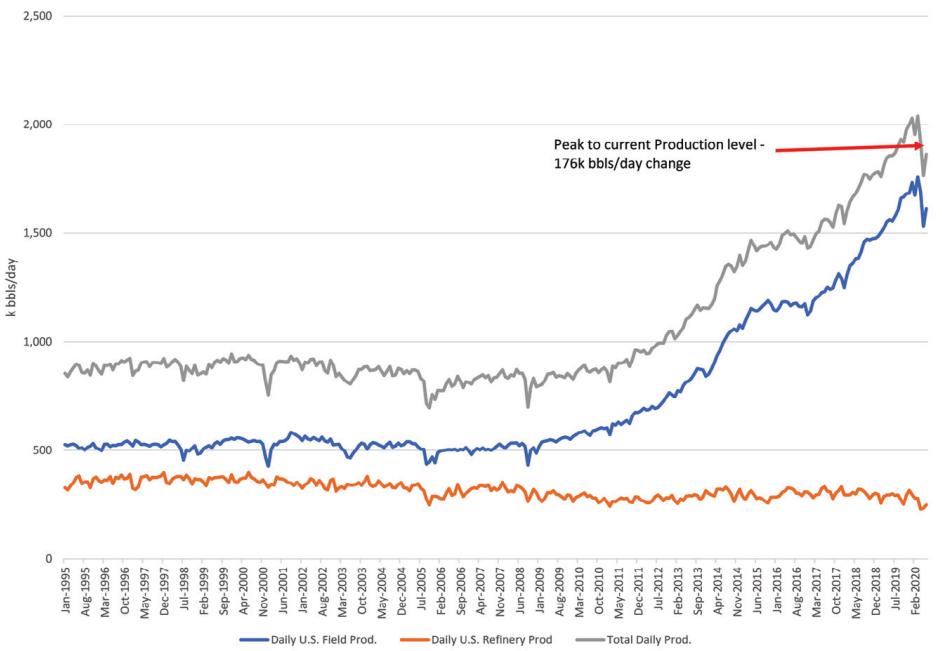
Twin Feathers' view (and mine) has always been that data speaks louder than words and that will be where this discussion begins. As a graph of EIA's weekly propane production from 2009 to the present day (Fig. 1) shows, the 2010-2020 decade saw incredible growth in propane production with a 158% total increase from trough to peak. From the peak in January 2020 to the recent low in early May 2020, total production did see a 532,000-bbld decrease or almost a 22%

decline from the top. However, if we look at the production data in a different way, we see these results:

1. Q1 2020 production averaged 2.232 MMbbld while Q2 2020 averaged 2.053 MMbbld—only a 179,000-bbld, or 8%, decline.
2. 2020 production through the end of August has averaged 2.171 MMbbld versus the same period in 2019 of 2.097 MMbbld. The first eight months of 2020 have actually been *higher* than 2019.

Weekly data from EIA can be subject to shifts when the delayed monthly data comes out, so we prepared a chart from the combined U.S. natural gas field and refinery production of propane (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2—COMBINED U.S. NATURAL GAS FIELD AND REFINERY PRODUCTION OF PROPANE
(Monthly Data)



We see several similarities between the charts: similar growth from 2009 forward, similar peak in January 2020, and similar drop in production after the January high. Two other data points caught our attention:

1. The peak to current production gap (current being June 2020 data, which is the most recent) is 176,000 bbld. That is almost equal to our Q1 vs Q2 gap presented in the first graph.
2. The first six months of 2020 averaged daily production of 1.928 MMbbld while the first six months of 2019 averaged 1.819 MMbbld.

Looking at these two data sets from EIA we see that production *did* decline in late Q1 to early Q2 2020, but we have seen production rebound, as well as seeing total 2020 production above the prior year. That seems to paint a different picture than what was projected back in March and April of this year.

But maybe all of this production is necessary because inventory levels remain low and there is still a risk of lower supply during the peak winter demand season? Let's pull up the inventory charts to support or negate this theory (Fig. 3).

National Energy Board (NEB) in Canada provides monthly statistics on propane inventory for the nation in total and both Western and Eastern sections. This graph highlights the fact that the August report for inventory was the *highest* level for Canada in the last two decades. What else provides some intrigue is that *all* of the prior inventory peak levels occurred either in October or November. The implication now being that Canadian inventory levels could get even higher by the first of November 2020.

But high Canadian inventory does not necessarily mean U.S. levels will be similar. Or will they?

Our total U.S Inventory graph for 2020 (Fig. 4) reveals that the

Fig. 3—CANADIAN PRODUCTION INVENTORY LEVELS

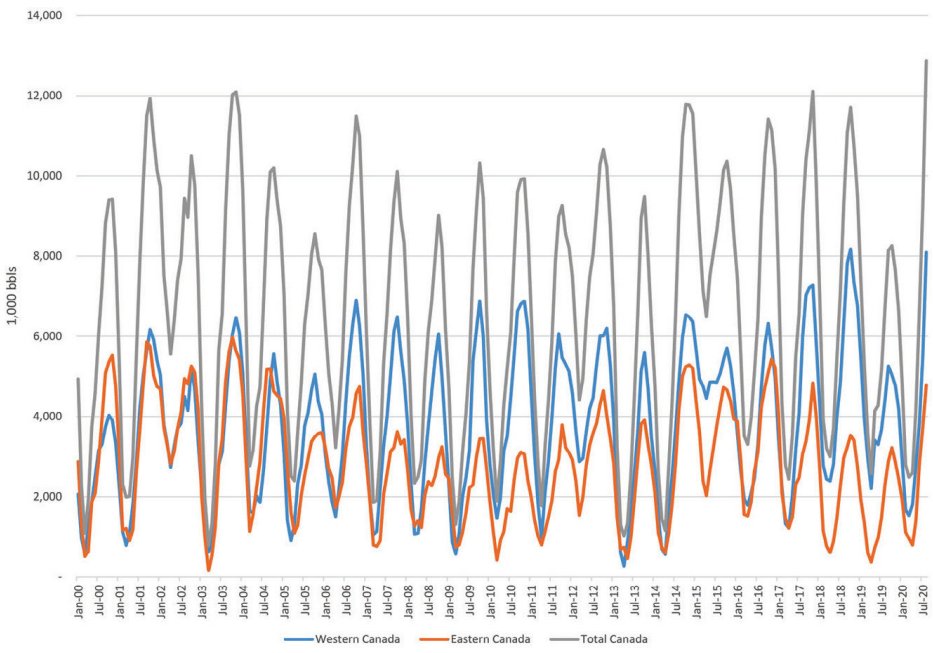
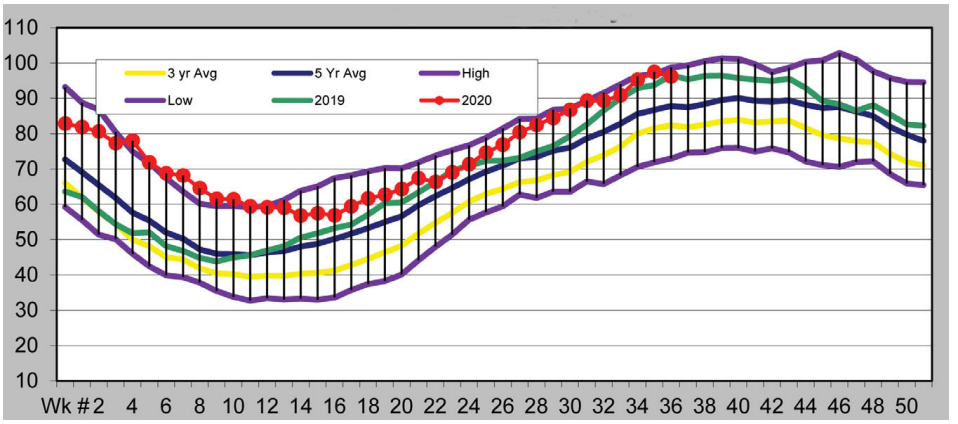


Fig. 4—TOTAL C_3 INVENTORY



U.S. inventory levels are right at the five-year-high mark and there is only one year that has a higher level—the infamous summer of 2016 that led into the record high of 101+ MMbbl. Inventory levels as of week 36 were already resting at 95.22 MMbbl—only 6 million from the prior peak.

High inventory levels seem to negate our earlier claim that higher production was necessary to meet peak winter demand. However, domestic demand, and specifically winter demand, has taken a backseat in the last seven to 10 years. Exports now dominate the demand side of the equation. Maybe exports have risen in 2020 and are justification for production to remain high.

Again, using EIA data, we can see the growth of exports for the last four years (Fig. 5).

In some respects, this graph appears similar to the production graph from EIA—exports peak through the first few months of 2020 and then decline after that. When we look at the EIA monthly data on exports and do a comparison of 2020 to 2019, we see these items:

1. Total of 221.672 MMbbl exported in the first six months of 2020 versus 188.719 MMbbl in the first six months of 2019. This calendar year exceeds 2019 by 183,000 bbld.

2. Five of the first six months of 2020 have exceeded the prior year's monthly total, with only May 2019 exceeding May 2020 by 1 MMbbl.

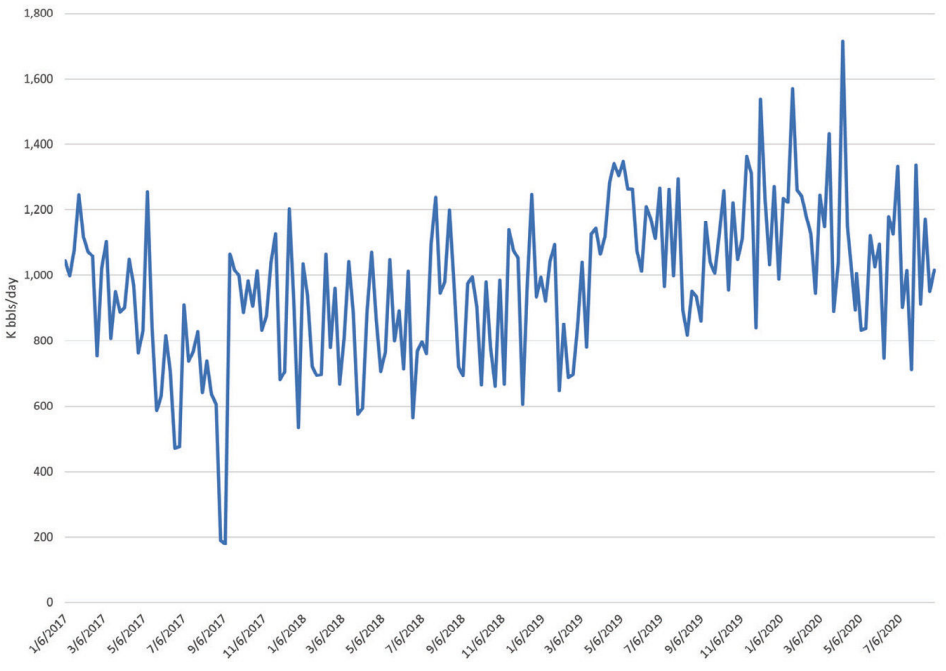
With this snapshot of data, we see evidence that export demand has been higher in 2020 and likely to stay that way for the remainder of the year. This increase of 183,000 bbld surprisingly almost matches the increase in 2020 propane production (179,000 bbld) versus the 2019 production.

JUSTIFICATION FOR PROPANE PRODUCTION

Exports provide some justification for propane production levels to remain elevated, but the real risk to production may not lay in the current data. Throughout the last six months, oil and gas rig counts have plummeted. The fear of future lower production, whenever that future may be, provides a great deal of support for rhetoric of this past spring. A recent Baker Hughes rig count graph (Fig. 6) demonstrates that fact.

The Saudi-induced price war of late 2014 and 2015 coincides with a massive reduction in rig counts that essentially bottoms out in the summer of 2016. Then rigs saw a resurgence that built to a new high of 1062 total rigs in the summer of 2018. From that time to February 2020, rigs saw a steady decline before essentially "falling off a cliff" in March to July of 2020.

Fig. 5—WEEKLY U.S. EXPORTS TO ALL COUNTRIES OF PROPANE AND PROPYLENE
(Thousand Barrels per Day)



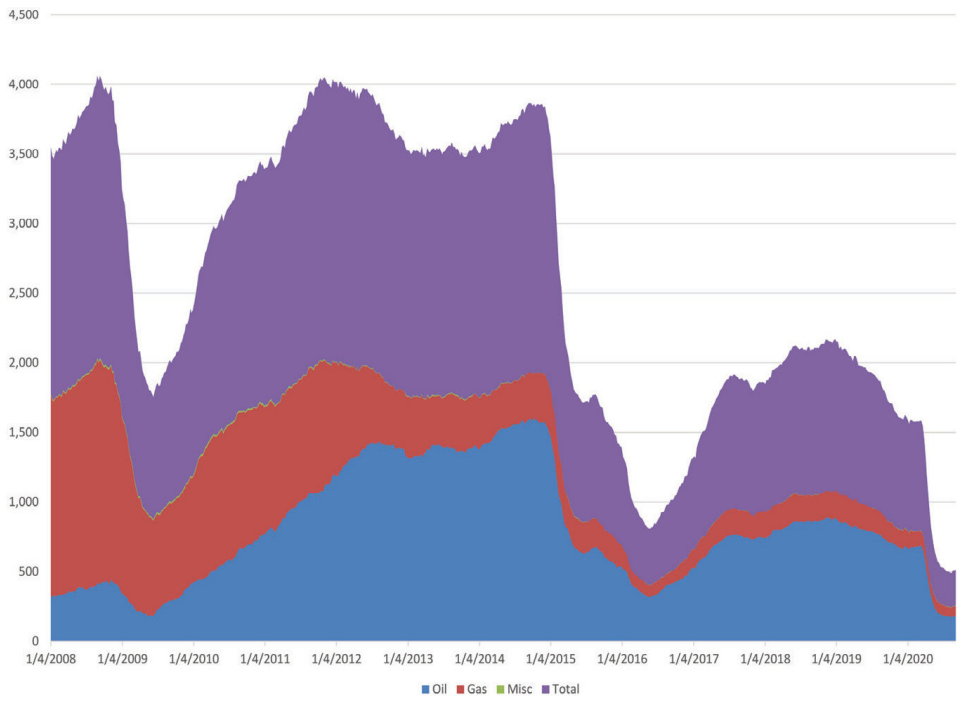
We could go into a lengthy discussion regarding well production rates in different shale formations and the fact that some wells may have production falling off faster than others, which precipitates the need for additional, new wells. The fact, however, is that the data has failed to show these types of production declines (at least not yet). Furthermore, another graph (Fig. 7) highlights the strong growth in oil production even as oil rigs saw massive decreases during the 2014-2016 timeframe.

Technology has vastly improved in the last 20 years and the market has seen this in higher production levels per well. Which

should beg the question, will existing producers push to get even more from each well remaining in the field?

Through our assessment of the last six months, it certainly seems that the original mantra being pitched in the marketplace has failed to come to fruition. Propane production levels did move lower from the January 2020 peak, but we are still maintaining at or above the 2019 levels. Both major producing regions of North America—Canada and the U.S.—are sitting on record inventory levels of propane. Exports have continued their upward trend, but that is merely eating away at 2020's production excess over 2019. The largest support of the March cries for lower production are the huge decline in rig counts. Yet even this data point lacks some conviction when we see the strength of production in prior years when faced with a low number of operating rigs.

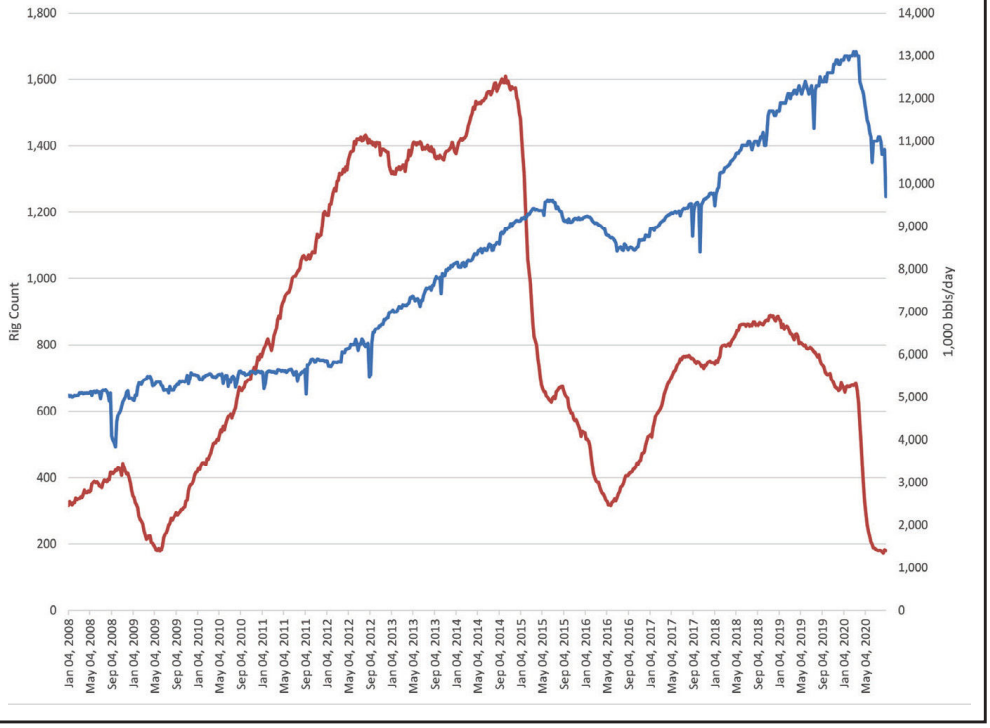
Fig. 6—BAKER HUGHES RIG COUNT (Oil/Gas/Misc.)



Does this mean that the rhetoric of early spring was a blatant attempt to manipulate the market? We will answer that emphatically, "*No.*" Based on data at the time, the assessment made was the most accurate available. But going forward, the propane distribution community should keep a few things in mind:

1. Remember that the supplier/producer selling propane is also the one producing it. Simple fact, we know, but in order for a producer to be profitable, they have to have product to sell.
2. Watch prices! This is our first mention of prices in the article, but it is important. After the April 20, 2020, dive into negative territory for crude, prices have shot back up and seen large gains. In addition, natural gas experienced almost a 100% increase this summer. Rising crude and natural gas prices support production.

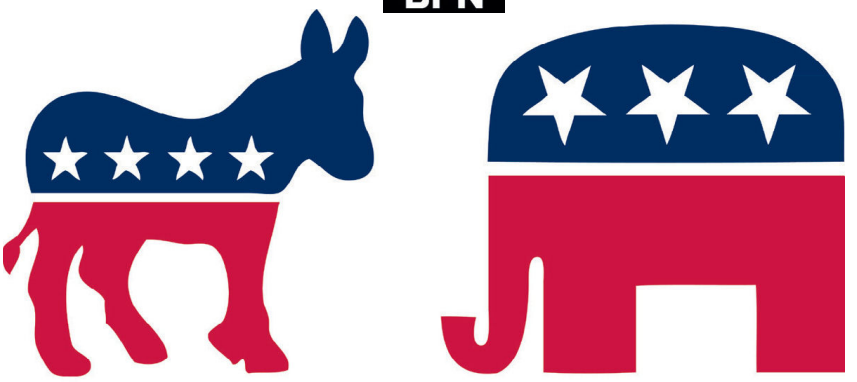
Fig. 7—RIG COUNT vs. OIL PRODUCTION



3. Finally, review the data. All of the data presented here is publicly available from EIA or Baker Hughes. Watching the data from March forward, we have seen some of the earlier fears fail to materialize and that has in turn modified some of our actions.

If you find yourself feeling "once bitten, twice shy" this year, contact us at Twin Feathers so we can provide advice and assistance in navigating these volatile times.

JD Buss, certified public accountant (CPA) and commodity trading advisor (CTA), has been with Twin Feathers since 2008 and advises retail propane distributors on propane supply and risk management strategies. He can be reached at (913) 851-7575 or jd@twinfeathers.com.



INDUSTRY STRATEGIES FOR VARIOUS NOVEMBER ELECTION OUTCOMES

PAT THORNTON

With the November presidential, congressional, and state elections just a few weeks away, the stakes are high as fossil fuels and their impact on the environment are discussed and debated in forums from coast to coast. As of mid-September, Democrat Joe Biden has been ahead of the Republican incumbent, President Donald Trump, in most polls for many months. But, as the country learned in 2016, the only poll that counts is the official election count. "Many voters who only have cell phones are never surveyed, there is a lot of misinformation being spread, and mail-in voting will be at an all-time high," said Jeff Petrash, vice president and general counsel for the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA). "Much can happen in the final days of an election and many outcomes are projected to be close in presidential swing states as well as states that will determine whether the Senate will remain controlled by Republicans or switch to Democratic control. Most expect the House will stay in Democratic control."

NPGA PREPARED FOR ALL ELECTION OUTCOMES

"As a staff representing our members, we have to be prepared for whatever scenario comes about," said Tyler Lawrence, NPGA's manager, legislative affairs. "Propane has a great story to tell. It is a clean, abundant fuel. With the composition of Congress and key issues always changing, we are always adapting our approach to achieve the industry's best outcomes."

Lawrence noted that in Trump, the industry has an administration that has continued to support fewer regulations, even actively seeking ways to remove burdens. "This administration has served as a firewall against some Democratic policies that would place a heavier level of regulation on the industry," he said.

"A Biden administration would represent a change of pace," Lawrence said. "Biden has promised to rejoin the Paris Climate Accord on Day One; he advocates for net zero emissions by 2050; and he has a variety of other tangible goals to reach by 2025." Industry veteran Randy Doyle of Holtzman Propane (Mt. Jackson, Va.) agrees that a Biden administration presents more challenges to the propane industry. "No matter how clean our gas is, we will be rolled up with all of the other fossil fuels and lumped in as advocates call for other energy sources to replace us," he said. "There are those who believe all fossil fuels are a threat to environmental justice and certain vulnerable communities are more hurt than others by their use."

"The electrify everything movement could gain momentum with a Democratic White House and a Democratic Senate and House," Petrash explained. "We'll need to be as vocal as ever that as long as coal and natural gas are the fuel source for the electricity, the electrify everything movement is a step backward for the environment!" Petrash noted that while some states, such as California, have very clean, renewable sources of electricity, most do not and will not for many, many years. "This will be an education process that needs to be ongoing at all levels of government."

CHANGE MAY NOT BE EXTREME AFTER THE ELECTION

"Controlling the White House and both Congressional chambers doesn't mean absolute control," Petrash said. "We saw that the Republicans couldn't repeal the Affordable Care Act in this scenario in 2017 and in 2009, the Waxman-Markey energy bill was never taken up by the Democratic Senate due to various overreaches in the legislation." The 2009 bill, formally known as the "American Clean Energy and Security Act," would have established emissions caps through 2050 for several greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, and instituted a system for trading emissions allowances. The bill's sponsors still say it sowed the seeds for other climate change efforts.

Lawrence points out that several successes with the Democratic-controlled House demonstrate the propane industry can enjoy similar success next year. "Last year the propane industry received $15 million in federal appropriations funding," he said. "The Department of Energy (DOE) granted propane and natural gas $10 million for combined heat and power (CHP) systems and $5 million for propane vehicle engine technology development."

"This year, NPGA submitted four requests, all of which were approved by the Democratic House earlier this summer," he said. "Unfortunately, the Senate has not completed their appropriations process, so fiscal year 2021 will likely be funded by a continuing resolution." The four requests were for research, development, and demonstration dollars for propane vehicle engine technology, renewable LPG, microgrid/resilience, and micro-CHP systems.

"Representative Lizzie Fletcher (D-Texas) offered an amendment to include propane and natural gas into a $350-million annual grant program included in the House highway bill. During the mark-up, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee voted 37-26 in favor of the amendment."

GREEN TAX PACKAGE

Lawrence noted the Alternative Fuel Tax Credit and the Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Tax Credit are included in the House Democrat's green tax package.

Petrash pointed out that while Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), also known by her initials AOC, has become well-known as a young Democratic congresswoman promoting the "Green New Deal," history has shown she will have trouble getting it into a bill. "She hasn't been around long enough to know the struggles of gaining support for a bill," he said. "After 34 years in the House, Ed Markey, the co-sponsor of the failed 2009 Waxman-Markey bill, was elected to the Senate in 2014 and has won his primary this year for a second term. Assuming he returns, he'll be an old energy hand who is interested in green issues and has the experience to know how this goes. He will be more carefully calculating about what can reasonably be accomplished in Congress."

For Doyle, concerns about a Biden administration and a Democratic House and Senate depend on just how radical Democrats choose to be. "Typically, left-wing leaders will make it harder to develop land, harder to get local permits for bulk tanks, and harder to expand pipelines," he said. "Forbidding the export of fossil fuels was supported by several of the Democrat presidential candidates."

On the other hand, Doyle notes a couple of silver linings that could come about for the propane industry with a strong movement toward electricity. "Electric prices will likely go up, making propane more favorably priced. The positive benefits of propane's comfort will get more attention," he said. "Another sensitivity will be the electric grid and its failures as we have already witnessed. As more people see the need to control their own destiny, propane will be very visible as a clean, reliable alternative. We should see propane power generation sales increase."

Petrash and Lawrence believe more moderate Democrats, known in Congress as Blue Dog Democrats, will be more reasonable regarding energy and the environment. "These Democrats tend to be from swing districts, which are never strictly Democratic or Republican," Lawrence said. "They usually have to take more moderate approaches to get elected from these districts." To engage with congressmembers, Lawrence and NPGA representatives often discuss the usage of stand-alone power generators as well as energy neutral and zero net energy (ZNE) construction.

According to a one-page overview published by NPGA, ZNE means that the amount of energy used by the structure on an annual basis is equal to the amount of renewable energy created on-site. Many ZNE homes rely on solar photovoltaic panels as a source of renewable power. But it isn't practical to rely on solar power alone. Using low-carbon propane for energy-intensive systems such as space heating and water heating provides an effective mix for ZNE homes even when the sun isn't shining.

Petrash also discussed the roles of the president and Congress in nominating and selecting members of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the federal agency that regulates the transmission and wholesale sale of electricity and natural gas in interstate commerce and regulates the transportation of oil by pipeline in interstate commerce. The Senate Energy Committee held a hearing Sept. 16 to consider the nomination of Democrat Allison Clements and Republican Mark Christie to become FERC commissioners. "It is important to have a full commission of members who are supportive of the propane industry," Petrash said.

This is a return to the traditional pairing of Democratic and Republican nominees to FERC, a norm temporarily discontinued when the Trump administration nominated Bernard McNamee and later James Danly without Democratic partners. If confirmed this year, FERC will have its full slate of five commissioners for the first time in the Trump administration. The commission was incomplete due to the death of former chairman Kevin McIntyre and early retirements while the Trump administration appeared to consider nominating new commissioners a low priority.

PROPANE ADVOCATES NEEDED AT ALL LEVELS

Lawrence, Petrash, and Doyle all spoke about the importance of having propane advocates talking to government officials. "We've got to tell our story to everyone who will make energy regulatory decisions," Lawrence said. He noted the PropanePAC helps to ensure key people are elected to Congress every two years. "There is no set formula, but we often consider propane volumes sold in the district, committee assignments (Ways and Means and Transportation and Infrastructure Committees are important ones to the propane industry), relationships with the industry, allies through voting, and an interest in helping us out are all factors."

"In addition to the 40-plus members of the Propane Caucus, there is plenty of need for advocates for the propane industry as we face the challenges of the Green New Deal and the Electrify Everything movements," Lawrence said. "We need more advocates who are well-versed in the positive benefits of propane. It is also important that our advocates are talking to customers and community members." Doyle agrees with the need for building a base of industry advocates for all audiences. "We need to continue to have strong coordination between NPGA, PERC, and the state associations," Doyle said. "We need significantly more people at local levels across the country who can speak the message of propane's clean energy benefits." ■

THE BIDEN EFFECT

STEVEN ABBATE

There is a lot of discussion of how a Biden presidency would affect business taxes and after-tax payouts on the sale of business assets. While we can't project the future, especially where politics is involved, we can make some educated guesses.

There was a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal*, titled "Read Joe Biden's Lips: New Taxes." The article went on to highlight Biden's proposal for increasing taxes on high-wage earners and businesses. The No. 1 item that caught my eye was his proposal to eliminate the favorable capital gains tax on the sale of a business and to instead have the income be taxed as ordinary business income. This tax modification, coupled with an increase in the top corporate tax rate, would equate to a rate of 39.6% as compared to the current rate of 23.8%. Throw in the proposal of no cap on payroll tax, which is currently capped at $137,700, and a seller of a business may be paying around 22% more in taxes on the income from the sale.

COST BASIS

Every company has a slightly different cost basis on the assets being sold and every state has a different rate for capital gains and income taxes, all the way up to 13.3% in California. For discussion purposes, if we use 6.5% state tax and the current 23.8% capital gains tax, a seller can expect to pay around 30.3% in taxes. A seller who receives $5 million for the sale of his or her assets should net somewhere around $3.5 million before paying down debt. Under the Biden proposal, the tax appears to be in the 45.6% range, so the same seller would see around $2.7 million or around 23% less. Another way to think about it is if an owner was looking to have $350,000 annual income for 10 years, it will only last a little over 7.7 years.



We have had a small rush of activity, especially from owners in their mid-60s, who want to protect some of their after-tax earnings. We have also had many conversations with owners nearing the time to consider a sale. We understand that some owners want to protect themselves and take advantage of the current strong market for a seller and the current tax structure, which will likely increase. With that said, we always caution owners to consider other factors. If your plan today is to own and operate your business long into the future, and that is what makes you happy, then stick with your plan. You may even want to expand your business, and acquisitions are a great way of doing that.

With the existing Section 179 accelerated depreciation schedules, it is a great time to buy assets in an acquisition or just to upgrade your fleet and other depreciable equipment. Investing in technology such as new computers or tank monitoring systems can have strong payoffs in operating efficiencies. It's also a good time to invest in additional storage capacity. If you are in it for the long haul, you should consider capital improvements.

Extremely low interest rates is the other reason capital improvements are currently a great investment right now. If you have a good relationship with your bank, we suggest you meet with them to discuss capital improvement projects and cost-effective term loans. Another consideration would be to meet with equipment leasing companies. Capital leasing is a strong option to avoid the red tape of a bank while still achieving your growth and financial goals.

The bottom line is that if you already had plans to sell in the next three or four years, you may want to consider moving up your timeline. It would be unlikely a new tax law would go into effect before the end of 2021. We recently surveyed a group of CPAs who all confirmed that a retroactive tax on capital gains is highly unlikely. If you're in it for the long haul, you may want to take advantage of some of the tax programs currently in place.

Steven Abbate is managing director, principal, at Cetane Associates, LLC. Cetane provides financial advisory services to owners of propane and heating oil distribution businesses.



Photo courtesy Tri Gas & Oil

SUPPLY CHAIN LOGISTICS FOR WINTER 2020-21

PAT THORNTON

With much uncertainty about wholesale propane supply in late spring as the result of COVID-19, the export situation, and other factors that all seemed to point toward a tight winter, the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) organized a series of four webinars to educate marketers. Held in July through September, the theme of the webinars was "Preparing for Peak Demand."

"These webinars highlighted the strong need for communication between retail propane marketers and all partners in their supply acquisition process, especially wholesale suppliers and transportation providers," said Steve Kossuth, chairman of the NPGA Supply and Logistics Committee and vice president of global LPG supply at UGI Corp. (AmeriGas' parent company). "'Communicate early and often' was frequently repeated advice when talking with experts from the supply, logistics, and transportation fields. NPGA wanted industry members to hear firsthand from people who provide key services they need to be able to successfully meet the needs of their retail customers."

"We had over 160 people registered for each webinar," said Jeff Petrash, NPGA vice president and general counsel. "I was pleased to see such strong participation throughout all four of the webinars." Speaking in mid-September, Petrash noted that the NPGA Supply and Logistics Committee had recently met virtually and he was relieved there were no new issues brewing. "Production declines that looked so concerning back in April bottomed out and the data shows we are steadily climbing again. With fewer alarms going

off with production levels and crop drying not expected to require excessive volumes of propane this year, I am glad to see we maintained great participation through all four webinars."

The first presentation, headlined by Rusty Braziel, founder and CEO of RBN Energy (Houston), was detailed in the September issue of ***BPN***. Braziel will be featured in a video interview with ***BPN*** later this fall updating his thoughts based on current market information.

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

The next webinar focused on transportation, with a panel of experts from Enterprise Products (Houston), LP Transportation (Chester, N.Y.), Grammer Logistics (Houston), and Hilco Transport (Greensboro, N.C.). James Winton, chief operating officer with Grammer Logistics, said the company has always had a philosophy of planning for the worst, but hoping for the best. "The important thing is to be prepared for all that can happen in a high-demand period," he said. Grammer Logistics' Angela Branchi, who serves as senior vice president, NGL division, pointed out, "Trucking lanes have gotten stretched in the past five years. The sooner the call to the carrier for a load, the better off you will be." She and Kossuth, facilitator of all four webinars, discussed the challenges often presented by the calls for loads that come between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. "These always throw things out of whack," Kossuth said.

"Loyalty matters," explained Casey Teague, Enterprise Products' vice president, trucking. "Those customers who represent year-round business will win the tie when several customers are in a bind. What is done in the slower off-months matters." Art Ogden, CEO of LP Transportation, said he feels his company is more in the communication business than the transportation business. "Some of our customers share their tank monitor data directly with us," Ogden said. He also discussed the importance of being prepared for lifting loads at sites not typically used. "It's good to have drivers certified at non-traditional sites before winter gets here," he added. Ogden noted this is especially important while the threat of COVID-19 is strong. Several experts discussed the need to keep drivers from congregating too much. "It certainly creates a problem if too many drivers are out due to illness at the same time," Branchi said. All agreed that COVID-19 certainly adds a new dimension to challenges that typically include hours of service, crop drying demand, and illness due to typical winter flus.

Wait times at terminals were another topic for discussion. It was noted that many drivers waited more than 12 hours for loads during the polar vortex of 2013-14. Participants agreed more 24-hour origin locations would be ideal, but that being prepared for tight supply situations is also very important. "Being prepared is critical," Branchi said. "Working off the top side of the tank, not the bottom side, is important. Keeping tertiary storage topped off as best as possible is also very important."

Kossuth mentioned NPGA's new Propane Logistics Analysis Network (PLAN) app, which is a crowdsourced online tool for updating the status at terminals relying on user input, especially from drivers, dispatchers, terminal managers, and wholesalers. The app can be found at *https://plan.npga.org* and through an update to the NPGAction app. To get the NPGAction app, visit the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store.

MIDSTREAM LOGISTICS

The following webinar, an update on midstream logistics, included experts from Enterprise Products Partners LP (Houston), Blackline Marketing LLC (The Woodlands, Texas), Targa Resources (Houston), and Crestwood Midstream (Kansas City, Mo.). "It sounds cliché, but as we've said on every webinar so far, we're all in this together," Kossuth explained as he opened the discussion on midstream logistics. He discussed the importance of taking advantage of all storage available in the industry and described results of a 10-year-old study Purvin & Gertz did for the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC). "It showed there were 136 million barrels of primary storage, 103 million barrels of tertiary storage, 15.6 million barrels of retail storage, and 15.7 million barrels of rolling storage," Kossuth said, noting that the data probably hasn't changed all that much.

David Herr, vice president of Blackline Marketing, commented that while there is a good amount of inventory on paper, the challenge is always getting the product to where it needs to be. Panelists agreed that it often takes 15 to 45 days to get product to a destination where there is demand and that it is good for retailers to build a history on a pipeline. "It is our goal at Blackline to know the retailer's plan. We want to work collaboratively with customers," Herr said.

"Honoring commitments and generating history are important to building supply relations between midstream suppliers and retail marketers," said Tug Hanley, senior vice president, pipelines and terminals of Enterprise Products Partners LP. "It is important to use the pipe in the summer to earn volume in the winter." Once again, as in the transportation webinar discussion, panelists agreed that communication between retailers and midstream suppliers is extremely important. It was discussed that midstream suppliers often suffer due to downstream overcommitment, but the consensus was that with consistent communication and efforts to set and meet commitments, midstream suppliers like to work with customers who like to work with them.

CROP DRYING DEMAND NOT EXPECTED TO BE STRONG

In the final presentation, agriculture demand was discussed. Kossuth reminded participants that the polar vortex winter of 2013-14, which had major distribution challenges, began with a huge crop drying season. "We learned a lot from the 2013-14 season," added Michael Caldarera, NPGA's senior vice-president, advocacy & technical services. "The harvest was wet, large, and late. It led to record propane demand. In 2019, cold temperatures and wet conditions delayed planting. A spike in propane demand led to a series of infrastructure challenges. Numerous relief measures were sought and/or put into place."

Caldarera shared some history of the development of additional agriculture information. "After the winter of 2013-14, more information was provided to help marketers prepare for peak demand periods. Monthly inventory trends reports were provided to supplement EIA data," he explained. "After the 2019-20 season, NPGA and PERC saw a need for more crop-specific data to facilitate planning. The USDA *Crop Progress Report* is issued weekly during April through November and it is referenced weekly in *NPGA Reports*."

Another presenter, Mike Newland, director of agriculture business development at PERC, shared data showing this season, due in large part to earlier planting, would likely not be a high-demand year for propane. He discussed the Aug. 10 derecho that caused extensive damage in Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois, and southern Wisconsin. "After field teams assessed the damage, we found that 200 million bushels of corn were damaged," Newland said. "There is also an untold story that some corn was lost to dry conditions as well." He then shared a new PERC tool for estimating dryer demand, a calculator at *propane.com.*

MORE THOUGHTS FROM EXPERTS ON PROPANE SUPPLY

"In the Southeast, supply or transportation issues typically only come up every few years," Phil Farris, director of wholesale marketing at 3eight Energy (Denver, N.C.) told ***BPN***. "Most of my customers are in the Southeast and with enough storage, they can get through a cold winter in this region." Farris noted that problems that affect the Southeast region are often the result of a domino effect from problems that originate elsewhere.

Farris said that contracted volume in the Southeast is lighter than a typical year, despite all the talk of lower production from earlier in the year when COVID-19 hit. "Retailers understand the importance of keeping storage full and giving as much notice to their carrier as possible," he said. "Many know they can allocate deliveries to their customers and go several days, if not weeks, between wholesale deliveries. So, most retailers believe it's unlikely they will ever go out of business because they just can't get product. Naturally, all this leads to complacency, and supply planning based on 'reaction' rather than 'preparation.' Especially when the cost of propane remains at current low levels for extended periods." Farris notes that unlike regions in the Northeast and North Central U.S., the Southeast marketers can get by for a couple of weeks of below-normal winter temperatures before they feel significant stress.

Jeff Thompson, supply analyst at Propane Resources (Mission, Kan.), represents retailers in various parts of the U.S. but is also a lot less concerned about this winter having major distribution issues than he was back in April when there was a big fear of lack of production. "With production now higher than at this point in 2019, no expectations for significant crop drying gas demand, and no signs the La Niña will lead to a much colder than normal period this winter, we are less concerned about major supply distribution issues," Thompson told ***BPN***. "There may be some regional challenges, such as in the North Central United States, but I don't foresee significant problems."

A concern Thompson shared is that traders, concerned about a pullback, will sell off propane positions. "That could result in propane retailers possibly paying 20 to 30 cents per gallon more if cold weather and demand pick up and buyers have to come back into the market."

"I don't think this is a year where companies will not have access to supply, but it could cost them more in certain areas," Anne Keller, managing director and founder of Midstream Energy Group (Sugar Land, Texas), told ***BPN***. Keller also feels the upper Midwest region is the most vulnerable. "Midwest supply has been impacted by cuts in field production compared to a 2019 baseline primarily because of reduced crude production from the Bakkan, and refinery run cuts," Keller said. "We estimated a supply shortfall versus December of 10-11 million barrels by September for this region. Canadian imports have been reduced by 5 million barrels compared to last year as exports from British Columbia replace shipments to the U.S. Inventory levels have been maintained at typical averages for the season so far via reduced transfers to the Gulf Coast. Watch the Conway/Mont Belvieu differential for indications of market conditions. Spreads currently indicate that barrels will continue to move south at least until winter weather shows its hand."

"The Northeast could also face challenges in the event of a cold winter," she explained. "Along the East Coast we've seen regional production increases from gas processing slightly exceeding the reduction in refinery supply. Export liftings were maintained close to last year's levels. A seasonal inventory build was maintained this year mostly due to supply coming in from the Gulf Coast early in the season." Keller feels that this played a part in keeping Gulf Coast inventories relatively flat. "Refinery supply will continue to be curtailed due to lackluster driving demand continuing into fall," Keller said. "The possibility for higher prices and spot shortages increases if winter is severe since the European market will also be looking for barrels."

LESS CONCERN ABOUT THE GULF COAST

"There is always less concern about the Gulf Coast due to lower demand in the region and usually plenty of supply," Keller said. "Net regional production is down by about 3 million barrels compared to December 2019 levels, as refinery run cuts have outpaced strong gas plant production." Keller notes that export liftings are 26 million barrels higher than the first half of 2019, which has kept inventory levels essentially flat with last year. "Gas plant production increased due to higher levels of ethane recovery, which pulls more propane out at plants with older extraction technology that leaves propane volumes in the gas stream during ethane rejection," Keller said. "Ethane prices have softened with the storm induced downtime at several Gulf Coast ethylene plants."

As for the West Coast, Keller told ***BPN*** that the primary source of regional production is from refineries. "The estimated impact of decreased refinery run levels is about 1.5 million barrels through mid-year," Keller said. "The impact of the fires is likely to cut demand by more than enough to offset a continuing shortfall in refinery runs, and stockbuilds should provide backup supply." ■

MYERS' CAREER: AUTOGAS, GLOBAL PROPANE GROWTH, AND SO MUCH MORE

PAT THORNTON

Bob Myers' career in the propane industry began as many careers begin in the industry—driving a propane truck and delivering fuel. However, during his 25 years with Petrolane, he did leave once to serve in the United States Peace Corps. Upon his return, he settled back to work at the home office, involved with sales as well as purchasing. And that is just the beginning.

In the early years, Myers operated a joint venture for Petrolane with Mobil Oil in the Northeast for three years, which included managing the first tidewater refrigerated propane terminal. Later work included managing supply and distribution for Petrolane in Houston. At that time, the U.S. was still very much a net importer of propane and he imported a great deal of propane for Petrolane from Venezuela. Leading the marketing functions for Petrolane was the next venture for Myers, beginning in 1978. Petrolane was sold to Texas Eastern in 1984 and five years later Texas Eastern was purchased by Quantum Chemical, the parent company of Suburban Propane.



Propane autogas has been a constant component in Bob Myers' life, whether working with WPGA, WLPGA, PERC, the LP-Gas Clean Fuels Coalition, or Petrolane.

INTRODUCING THE LP GAS CLEAN FUELS COALITION

With a two-year "golden parachute" and a wealth of propane industry experience, Myers was asked by a number of "gearheads" to form an organization to promote propane autogas. The group came to be known as the "LP Gas Clean Fuels Coalition." Amendments to the original Clean Air Act of 1970, the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990 were introduced in the late 1980s and signed into law by President George H.W. Bush on Nov. 15, 1990. Initially, the singular purpose of the coalition was to see that propane was included in the CAAA. In the initial legislation draft dealing with alternative fuels, propane was not listed. The natural gas, ethanol, and methanol industries made sure they were included but refused to include propane. The National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) had propane autogas as a fifth priority at a time when the top three priorities had consumed all its budget and lobbying time. With a grim prospect of being included in the CAAA, the separate coalition was formed.

Jerry Schmitt of Ferrellgas was a leader of the effort to start the coalition. Others included Larry Osgood of Phillips 66, Darrel Reifschneider of Manchester Tank (Tenn.), Milford Therrell of Squibb Taylor (Texas), Glenn Miller of Miller's Bottled Gas (Ky.), Tim and Jay Wood of Northwest Propane (Texas), Gerry Misel of Georgia Gas Distributors (Ga.), Steve Moore of Mutual Propane (Calif.), Curtis Donaldson of Conoco, and Bill Platz of Delta Liquid Energy (Calif.). The incorporation documents for the coalition were completed by Bill Halliburton of Occidental Petroleum (Tulsa), who later served as the group's first chairman. Myers was the president and treasurer. Rick Roldan, who later served as CEO of NPGA, became executive director of the LP Gas Clean Fuels Coalition later in 1994 under the direction of then chairman, Jim Ferrell, president and chairman of the board of Ferrellgas.

Myers' agreement to lead the organization was to be "brief," but ended up lasting about four years. "I had no interest in moving to Washington, D.C., from California, but I spent about half of my time there lobbying for propane," he said. "I made over 100 personal calls on members of Congress, the Department of Energy (DOE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and joint committees of Congress dealing with energy and taxation." He noted that Jean Mestres of Occidental was extremely helpful in his lobbying efforts. "She provided me a key to her office when I was in town and I had free access to her office anytime

day or night," he said. "I was never charged for use of the phone, fax, or copy machine. Furthermore, she often arranged for me to have dinners and lunches with key Congressional members and always picked up the bill."



From left, Bob Myers, Millford Therrell, and John Huffhines discussed their strategy prior to an autogas meeting.

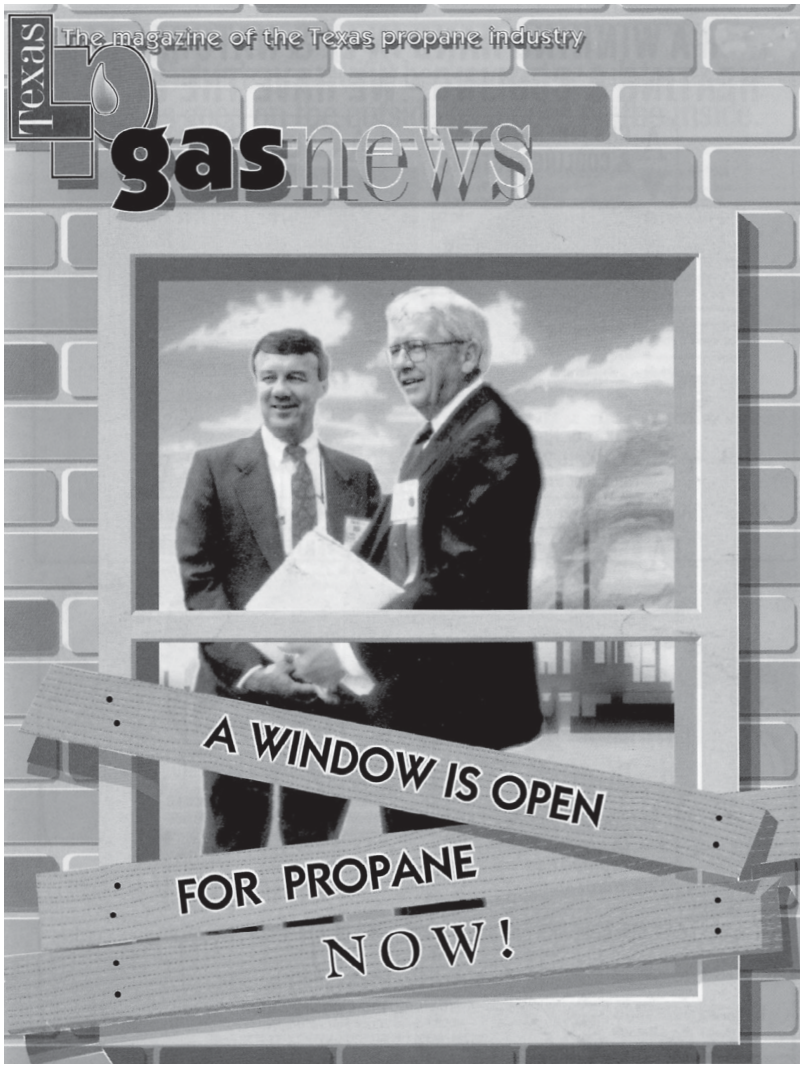
WHY PERC WAS LAUNCHED

"NPGA's board always had an ambivalent attitude toward autogas other than forklifts," Myers said. "After all, it rarely if ever represented more than 5% of total retail volume, a very similar level to what it represents today." Myers noted, however, that within NPGA there was a group of ardent supporters of autogas, particularly after the Arab crude oil embargoes of the 1970s, who challenged that reasoning. "This group saw all kinds of growth potential in response to shortages of gasoline with high prices," Myers said. "Rising from this discord was the formation of a group of retail marketers, equipment manufacturers, and distributors that volunteered to collect money based on the sale of each tank and propane mixer to be used in autogas promotion." According to Myers, NPGA, fearing this group would lead to a fracture in the industry, offered two seats on its board, the only time an end use market ever had specific representation on its board.

"The Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) is the legacy of NPGA's reluctance to give more support to the autogas market," Myers said. He pointed out the work of Milford Therell, who would later be known as the "Father of PERC," whose efforts along with Glenn Miller promoted the establishment of a propane checkoff program. "I suggested the checkoff program to Milford from my experience growing up on a farm where 'checkoffs' were common," Myers said. "I wrote his first speech on the subject, which he gave to the Kentucky association at Lake Barkley when he became NPGA president in 1991."

The Propane Education and Research Act (PERA) was passed in 1996 by Congress and PERC was launched in 1997 to assess one-tenth of a cent per gallon of odorized propane sold. For each of five years, PERC was able to add an additional one-tenth of a cent per gallon up to a limit of five-tenths of a cent per gallon. For many of the formative years and beyond, Myers was paid on a retainer or on a contract basis to do a variety of projects for PERC. "In the early years, I helped with many aspects of the establishment of the organization and its procedures. Later, I was involved in many of the research and development areas," Myers said. "Scouting markets for propane was a key function for me for several years. We studied propane's potential role in the automotive area, forklift equipment, fuel cells, and a number of other areas."

Some of the seeds planted came to fruition while others did not. "Certainly, a lot of strides were made in the automotive arena as well as with forklifts. Other areas, such as fuel cells, did not pan out at the time. Propane definitely proved to be a great fuel for fuel cells, but there were a lot of other factors that were big impediments to fuel cells being widely used, including the high cost and a lot of questionability of the longevity of the equipment. With new technology, fuel cells may yet have potential. If so, propane will again be a great fuel for them."



On the cover of the June 1991 issue of *Texas LP Gas News*, Bob Myers (left) and Milford Therrell of Squibb-Taylor are shown at the time they were discussing a checkoff program for the propane industry.



From left, Bob Kranz of Impco, Dan Myers of NPGA, Francine Myers, and Bob Myers talked at the 1990 World LPG Forum in Australia.

WORKING WITH THE WORLD AND WESTERN ASSOCIATIONS

In 2000, Myers shuttered his consulting work and moved to Paris, France, where he became the technical director of the World LP Gas Association (WLPGA).

"A big issue for WLPGA was the need for stoves that could be fueled by propane," Myers said. "For $40 to $50, we could implement a cooking plan for people in developing countries throughout the world so that they would no longer need to use cow dung, trees, grass, or charcoal to fuel the fires to cook and feed their families. This was a huge step forward for these people and literally brought low-income families into the middle class."

Other organizations such as the United Nations and Cooking for Life were supported by WLPGA in this major effort. Myers noted, though, that large corporations such as Total and Shell did not have operations in a lot of the rural areas of developing countries.

"One of the most powerful presentations I heard during my career was by a lady named Susan McDade. It has been over 20 years, but I still vividly remember not only her name but how she presented the important role LPG can play in breaking the cycle of poverty throughout the world," he said. "After mingling with company executives during the cocktail hour, she spoke later during the Gala event and confronted some of what she heard over cocktails. She stated that many in the LPG industry have no idea how big a role they play in breaking the cycle of poverty and giving people a better life. She described how in many poor countries, men work day labor jobs such as picking beans, women spend about three hours a day gathering wood for cooking, and daughters often help the mother, which means they are being deprived of an education. She said that the simple addition of a five-kilo stove cuts out three hours a day of gathering wood for the mother and daughters. This then allows the daughters to go to school and can allow the mother a chance to do something that may bring more income to the family."

In addition to helping families gain more income and education, cooking with propane is much safer, causing fewer fires, and much healthier as the inhalation of smoke is very damaging to people's lungs. "Many people, both young and old, lost their lives due to the inhalation of too much smoke in the daily cooking process," Myers said. "Amazingly, a five-kilo stove, a regulator, and a two-burner hot plate can move a family into a much higher standard of living."

In her remarks, McDade said that several people had commented during the cocktail hour that getting LPG out to the remote rural areas is too difficult. "She reiterated the important role LPG plays in moving these families into a better life," he added. "And then she mentioned that she had traveled to many remote corners of the world herself and everywhere she goes she can buy a Snickers bar and a can of Coke." At that point, McDade said, "The Coke is liquid in a can just like LPG. If we need to, let's talk to the guy who sells the Coke cans; he knows how to distribute them."

Myers was pleased to be a part of the transition from the World LP-Gas Forum to the World LP-Gas Association. "This transition was led by Jim Ferrell," Myers said. "The World LP-Gas Forum was an annual gathering of propane leaders from around the world. Jim Ferrell made the case for establishing an association with a defined purpose, staff, and events throughout the year. The World LP-Gas Association still hosts the annual Forum, but there is so much more that can be accomplished with an association of propane leaders from around the world."

The Western Propane Gas Association presented another opportunity for Myers to solve problems. “California has, as most know, the most stringent laws and regulations in the country for protecting air quality. Navigating the various state agencies including the Air Resources Board and the California Energy Commission can be challenging. Autogas and many types of engines that run on propane represent unique solutions in California due to their low level of emissions.”

AUTOGAS A CONSTANT THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER

Propane autogas has been a constant component in Myers’ life whether working with WPGA, WLPGA, PERC, the LP-Gas Clean Fuels Coalition, or Petrolane. “The first gallon of propane Petrolane sold went into a vehicle in 1928,” Myers said. “I drove my first propane-powered pickup during a summer job in 1958. It had an IMPCO Imperial 300 Mixer with Bowden cable. Having spent much of my career with marketing responsibilities for increasing sales, I have always favored autogas. It was the market that could, in today’s vernacular, ‘flatten the curve’ between summer and winter demand. When retail plants were mostly dependent on residential heating demand, many actually lost money in summer. Not so when there was an autogas market.”

Myers notes that a Petrolane plant in Casper, Wyo., had a bottle dock, dispenser, and a key lock accessible 24 hours a day. “In some summer months at that plant more volume was delivered from the dispenser than from bobtail deliveries, and with the exception of electricity to run the pump there was no delivery expense,” he added. “At the apex of autogas demand, Petrolane’s autogas volume represented about 25% of total retail demand, and in the summer, it represented over 40%. But autogas required a different mindset than other retail markets. Few had it then, few have it today, in my view.”

Interestingly, Myers notes U.S. autogas usage still doesn’t exceed volumes used in the 1980s. “The technology has definitely improved and the vehicles run much better. There is much more potential for the future,” he said. “But according to NPGA’s Market Facts in 1983, a publication that has since been discontinued, there were 1.1 million propane vehicles utilizing nearly 1.5 billion gallons of what we now call autogas, far more than what is sold today in the U.S.” He notes there can be valid arguments about data collection methods both then and now. “And lest there be a rush to claim the genius of those engaged in those 1983 numbers, keep in mind that most of the vehicles were conversions done under EPA’s Memo 1-A and costing about $1000 each. The quality of many of those conversions was rightfully suspect compared to today, but they did produce the volumes.”

Myers believes autogas would represent a much higher market share if three of the challenges of the past were resolved much faster:

1. There was a lot of lousy equipment jammed on a customer’s vehicle that should never have been taken out of the box.
2. There was a lack of convenient customer service with qualified technicians.
3. There was erratic fuel pricing that destroyed the economics and made no sense to the customer.

“Today, as I did 50 years ago, I believe the growth in the retail market, if any, will in some way be associated with something with a spark plug,” Myers said. “That may be vehicles, forklifts, industrial engines, generator sets, CHP, lawn and gardening equipment, heat pumps, air conditioning—anything with an engine. But resolving the three fundamental issues listed above and a commitment with a different mindset will spell the success or failure of the autogas market in the future. It always has, worldwide.” ■





Photos courtesy Alicia R. Stavitzski

DRIVER CHALLENGE BUILDS MORALE, CAMARADERIE

STEVE RELYEA

When Heller's Gas (Berwick, Pa.) held their 2nd Annual Bobtail Driver Challenge Aug. 21, they found that the event provided more than just good-natured competition. It also allowed drivers and other staff to meet, have fun, and share ideas.

"We got to hear from the drivers who are in constant contact with our customers," marketing coordinator Alicia Stavitzski tells ***BPN***. "We're in various locations and don't always get to hear their ideas in an open forum like this. When we got together, managers, human resources, and others were able to hear drivers' feedback on customer satisfaction; policies and procedures; social media; and other company practices."



"This event also showed our appreciation and provided a safety opportunity where everyone could refresh their minds on propane safety practices."

Twenty-five drivers from Heller's Gas locations throughout Pennsylvania and Maryland participated in the event. Other Heller's staff were on hand to serve as judges.

The Bobtail Driver Challenge included three categories. First, there was a written test that covered basic principles of propane as well as the company's policies and procedures. Next up was a vehicle inspection challenge that simulated a pre-trip inspection. Each driver had 10 minutes to inspect a truck and find faults that had been put there by the judges, such as a taillight that was out and a tire that was flat. Finally, there was a driving course challenge.

The driving course challenge tested five skills: driving close to a cone; making a left-hand turn; blind-side backing; driving between two rows of tennis balls that got progressively narrower; and making a front stop—stopping the front bumper as close to the finish line without going over. For added realism, one of these challenges included a mailbox as an obstacle to avoid.

This 2nd Annual Bobtail Driver Challenge was held at Heller's Gas' internal training facility. The idea for such an event was originally suggested by Brad Breisch, director of training and compliance. When drivers showed interest, the Heller's Gas Safety Committee and safety director Jason Koch began organizing it. The first event was a success, and only two changes were made for the second year. Two trucks were used in the vehicle inspection challenge this year, rather than one, so that two tests could be run simultaneously. Second, attendance was limited this year due to the pandemic.

"This year's event was especially important, because we couldn't have our annual company picnic due to the COVID-19 pandemic," Koch says.

Four sponsors also contributed to the day's fun. Five Star International, a Pennsylvania truck dealer, brought a food truck and catered the event and donated prizes to the top three award winners. Ray Murray Inc., a wholesale supplier of gas equipment and products, contributed the trophies presented to the winners in six categories. F.W. Webb Co., a wholesale distributor of plumbing, heating, cooling, and industrial supplies, provided prizes and giveaways for the competition, and Home Depot Pro donated a prize for the challenge. Heller's Gas thanked the sponsors by including them in a video of the event and recognizing their participation on social media.

"This event was all about feedback, promoting safety, and acting as a big morale booster for our delivery drivers," Stavitzski says. "We're aiming to make this a bigger event, with a competition, for our other divisions too."

Koch adds, "It was a great way to bring people together, recognize their achievements, and grow as a company." ■

VEHICLE INSPECTION



OBSTACLE AVOIDANCE



STOPPING ON A DIME









"THE WORLD IS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS AS NEVER BEFORE"—E-LPG WEEK, NOV. 2-6

STEVE RELYEA

When staff at the World LPG Association (WLPGA; Paris) saw that this year's LPG Week would have to be virtual, they decided they wouldn't try to just replicate the physical event, they'd work to make something better.

LPG Week is the annual global event centered on the World LPG Forum. Last year's edition, which was held in Amsterdam, drew more than 2000 participants from 108 countries. This year's was to have been held in Dubai. Due to the pandemic, however, the physical event was postponed to next year and a virtual event was developed for this year. The first e-LPG Week is to be held Nov. 2-6.

e-LPG Week will have the same global perspective as the earlier, physical events, but will be easier to attend. With no need for travel, accommodations, and time away from the office, participation is open to a wider pool of presenters and attendees.

"This is a massive value proposition for the event," WLPGA's CEO and managing director, James Rockall, tells ***BPN***. "Time, travel, and budget are all barriers to participation that only a few senior company representatives felt they could justify. We now have the opportunity to attract young and emerging talent, logistics managers, procurement professionals, HR managers, safety and environment representatives, etc. Added to the private sector participation, we also expect a great deal of lawmakers and public sector representatives for the same reasons."

"The headline for this event is, the world is at your fingertips as never before," he adds. "For people in the U.S., we are a complement to NPGA and PERC, offering access to global players and ideas."

e-LPG Week will feature interactive sessions and partner events; online networking opportunities; and a virtual showcase for LPG companies. In addition to the World LPG Forum, events include Autogas Day, the Global Technology Conference, the LPG for Development Summit, and the World LPG Challenge. e-LPG Week also introduces three new areas of focused content: a Global LPG Price Drivers Workshop, a U.S.-focused presentation called "Prepared for Peak Demand," and 15-minute prerecorded presentations named e-Snapshots. "It's not just the Forum, but also regional and technical content," Rockall explains.

Noting that many new virtual events have been rolled out since the start of the pandemic, Rockall says that what differentiates e-LPG Week is its depth and breadth of content. It brings together intelligence that is not available elsewhere; it covers the full LPG value chain across the globe; and it offers access to a global network of potential business partners, customers, and suppliers. He adds, "LPG Week aims to further gather the entire LPG value chain under one umbrella in one place during one week to improve efficiency for the industry and to drive the sustainable LPG market growth agenda."

BETTER, MORE EFFICIENT

As a result of e-LPG Week being virtual, it will provide benefits that can only be delivered online. Rockall outlined some of the ways the sessions, the networking, and the exhibition will benefit from the new virtual format.

In the interactive sessions and partner events, those who connect live will be able to ask questions and vote in polls. In addition, the sessions will be recorded and made available for future viewing. "Our virtual event is so much more than a conference," Rockall says. "You can of course connect live to a session, interact, ask questions, vote in polls, etc. But if you

miss it, if you have another work commitment in parallel or it's just dinner time for you, everything is available on repeat, via the platform, 24/7. And it will be available for months afterwards. This is highly valuable, stored knowledge that you do not get with a traditional event."

As for networking, e-LPG Week's online networking opportunities will be conducted through a database that enables visitors to connect with those with specified titles and interests. Visitors be able to access the event's database, find useful contacts by entering key words, and then get contacts' details and request appointments during the virtual event. "Meeting new contacts in a physical event is often random and unplanned," Rockall notes. "Our virtual platform allows very targeted and efficient networking, facilitated by artificial intelligence that helps matching individuals with your interests." He adds, "The tangible value of networking—creating new and valuable human contacts—is actually far better and more efficient in the virtual platform."

In the virtual showcase for LPG companies, attendees can visit each exhibitor's virtual trade show booth and linked resources and then set up a time to meet in a video call. "Our virtual exhibition will showcase everything that the exhibitors wish to show," Rockall says. "It will allow face-to-face meetings and will enable company purchasing managers, technical staff, and project managers all to talk directly to their suppliers—something that was previously not possible when only a limited number of people from a company would travel to the exhibition."

WLPGA GOALS, OBJECTIVES

During e-LPG Week, WLPGA members will also be able to take part in association meetings to participate and learn. Rockall notes that members agreed to a new three-year strategic plan at last year's World LPG Forum, and new activities and resources have been made available to members during the year since.

"Our new plan, entitled 'Solutions for a Responsible Energy Future,' groups our activities under just three main goals that we believe are most relevant to our global sector: Advocating LPG as part of the solution to future energy challenges; Supporting efficient and responsible business; and Innovation & Growth," he explains. "Each of these goals targets three objectives over the coming three-year period. New member working groups have been set up to meet these objectives with new leadership structure in place for governance. All of our members can be involved with these objectives and we meet, either physically or virtually, at least three times per year in our 'member engagement meetings.'"

Rockall also highlights four of the most exciting things that are currently happening with LPG around the globe, each of which will be addressed in sessions during e-LPG Week.

One is Cooking for Life, which aims to convert 1 billion people to LPG from biomass as a cooking fuel, in order to reduce dangerous indoor air pollution. Thus far, 500 million have converted, and that has halved the number of premature deaths each year. "People are still dying from cooking their food every day," Rockall reports. "We could solve indoor air pollution with LPG."

Second is clean transport. In a recent success, France, which has been pushing electric vehicles, this year acknowledged a role for LPG as a transport fuel. "There's a link between air quality and COVID-19, so there is an interest in clean transport."

Third is LPG for marine. Companies pressed to show emissions reductions have been moving to LPG as a marine alternative fuel. That's been happening with very large gas carriers (VLGCs), but it will happen with smaller ships too. "This is a big story and it's getting bigger, because it is easy to convert to propane."

Fourth is power generation. "Whether it is centralized power gen, for a community, or distributed power, LPG is cleaner."

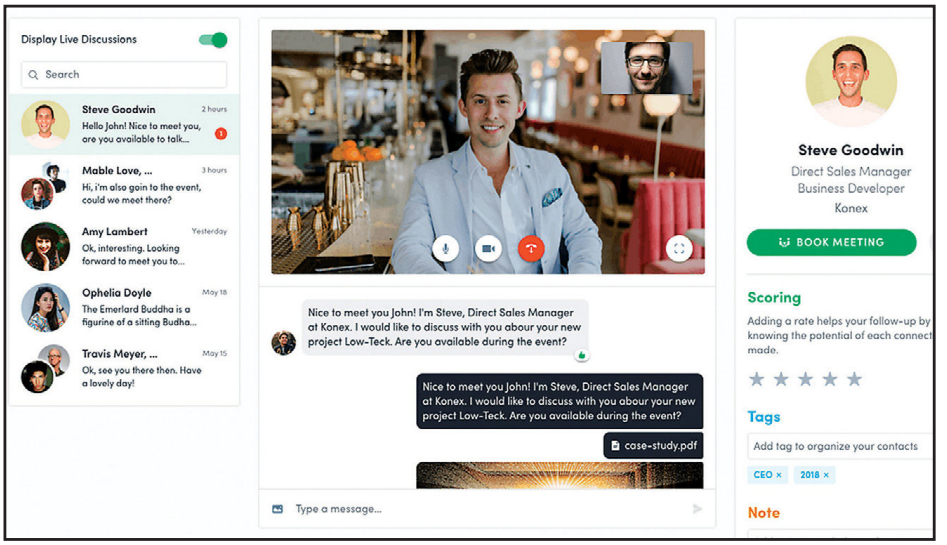
Also new this year from the association are resources related to the pandemic. "WLPGA has a COVID-19 critical exchange platform active on its website," Rockall says. "This information-sharing platform allows the industry from across the world to pose questions and receive answers to all matters related to the impact of the pandemic on our business."

ADEPT AT ADAPTING

WLPGA has adapted to the effects of the pandemic and has continued its work. The association team has shifted to working remotely from home offices. Staff are accustomed to working remotely, though, because they serve clients in some 125 countries around the world. "Our 2020-2022 strategic plan includes nine specific objectives and we are able to continue with nearly all of these planned," Rockall reports. "What we do miss is face-to-face contact with key individuals and groups, which is often vital for effective advocacy work. But with many meetings now shifted effectively online, we are now able to continue most of these meetings as well. In short, I would say that WLPGA is very adept at adapting."

When it became clear that the physical LPG Week for 2020 would have to be postponed, the decision to hold a virtual

Continued on **Page 52**



PROPANE MISER GIVES TERMINAL OPERATORS EVERY GALLON OF FUEL THEY'VE PAID FOR

STEVE RELYEA

Compressor and pump manufacturer Corken (Oklahoma City, Okla.) has launched a new propane railcar unloading system that fully evacuates propane from railcars during offloading with up to 25% faster unloading speed compared to conventional compressor systems. The company notes that conventional unloading systems with a single-stage compressor abandon the final 230-400 gallons of propane in each railcar.

"We are solving a real problem folks have lived with—getting that last bit of propane," Steven Willoughby, global business line director at IDEX Advanced Flow Solutions (Corken, Liquid Controls, SAMPI), tells ***BPN***.

Conventional systems are unable to evacuate a tank below 30-40 psig during the vapor recovery process, he explains. Corken's new Propane Miser, on the other hand, overcomes this barrier and achieves evacuation as low as 0 PSIG. It does so using a two-stage compressor controlled by a Programmable Logic Controller (PLC).



"The control system is patent pending," Willoughby says. The liquid transfer and vapor recovery processes use separate performance algorithims, so they each operate with the maximum possible speed and efficiency. The system also offers three different liquid transfer modes for maximum unloading flexibility. With the unique control system, Corken's Propane Miser offers these primary advantages: faster unloading, flexible unloading rate, faster vapor recovery, and deep evacuation capabilities. "With this unique controller and two-stage compressor, the Propane Miser quickly and safely empties the railcar to zero PSIG."

This turnkey railcar unloading system includes the control system, a touch screen, a Corken D791 compressor, and all necessary safety equipment. The Propane Miser is Corken's first unloading compressor offering with such a sophisticated control system, though the company has done less-elaborate custom systems in the past. It was officially launched Sept. 1 and is now available through a select number of distributors.

On its website, Corken provides a tool that will calculate a terminal operator's potential savings with Propane Miser. The Railcar Offloading Business Opti-MISER asks the visitor to enter their average propane cost per gallon; their normal vapor recovery stop pressure; their optimal vapor recovery stop pressure; the number of railcars their operation unloads per year; and the number of years over which they would like to calculate their potential savings. "It's just five questions and some personal information; it takes less than a minute if you know the answers," Willoughby says. "It will tell you what you will save over the life of the unit."

"Any terminal could use these," Willoughby concludes. "If you recover 1% more propane, that adds up quickly, a couple hundred gallons at a time. The payback is a year or two."

For more information about Corken's Propane Miser, and to use the Railcar Offloading Business Opti-MISER, visit *www.corken.com*. ■



ONE MESSAGE, TWO ORGANIZATIONS, EFFECTIVE OUTREACH

STEVE KAMINSKI

I have been fortunate enough to lead the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) for almost a year now. I've learned a lot since October, both from the NPGA membership and our propane industry partners. When I joined NPGA, I was new to propane. But I was not new to Washington. And I knew one thing in Washington is true. You always need friends.

NPGA is fortunate to have a strong friend and partner in the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC). PERC is currently led by Tucker Perkins, president and CEO. NPGA's efforts to advocate and PERC's efforts to educate have combined to effectively define, to a broad audience, propane's role in the low-carbon future.

NPGA and PERC both employ data-based messaging to reach their different target audiences. The message offered is consistent—the necessity of maintaining energy choice. And the propane choice is one that is cost-effective, clean, and versatile. But there the organizations branch out. NPGA proactively targets policy makers at the national, state, and local level that are considering bans on the use of propane. And PERC targets the propane consumer base to raise awareness

Continued on **Page 52**

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PEOPLE



JOHN ARMENTANO



MICHAEL GIOFFRE

Blue Peak Resources



SONNY CATLETT II
Ferrell North America

John Armentano and **Michael Gioffre** have launched **Blue Peak Resources** (West Palm Beach, Fla.), a new partnership specializing in propane gas and fuel oil mergers and acquisitions. John Armentano began his career in the family business at Paraco Gas (Rye, N.Y.), where he remains a stockholder and has more than 30 years of sales and merger/acquisition experience. Michael Gioffre, former president of Paraco South, also has more than 30 years of entrepreneurial, sales, marketing, and general business expertise and was a key executive at Paraco Gas for over 20 years. In 2012 the two extended the company reach to a national level through a joint venture relationship with a multi-location cylinder exchange company. In 2017, the pair left Paraco to begin American Cylinder Exchange.

Executives who will be joining Blue Peak Resources include **Andy Hino**, former director of corporate development with AmeriGas Propane; **Tom Jaenicke**, current district 6 director of the National Propane Gas Association; **Mike DiGiorgio**, transportation and safety expert with Silverback Consulting and Propane University; **Steve Sheffield**, former senior vice president operations/marketing with TexGas, Suburban Propane, AmeriGas, and Heritage Propane; **Bob Zola**, former president of Sharp Energy; **Gaston Wilson**, licensed CPA with CFO experience; **Jeremy Glaisher**, president JG Energy Solutions, and **Lisa Gioffre-Baird**, legal counsel.

Blue Cow Software (Lynnfield, Mass.) has added six more staff members during the third quarter of 2020. **Alex Delavan** and **Khadija Shafiq** have joined the firm as Implementation Specialists. In this position, the two will train and support any new users of the Blue Cow Ignite software suite of products.

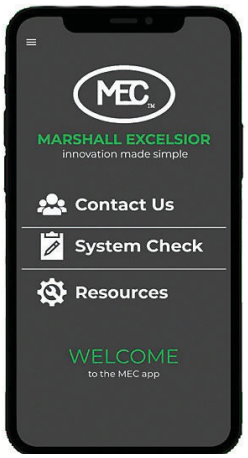
Janine Venuti is the firm's newly named technical support specialist.

Crystalyn Shea and **Larry Thibault** have joined Blue Cow as customer support specialists, with responsibility for helping the firm's current users utilize all aspects of the Ignite Suite of Energy Software Products.

Kiran Sripada, an SQL and ISS professional, will be an SQL server developer and will also work with the Data Conversion Team.

Sonny Catlett II has been named vice president of **Ferrell North America** (FNA; Overland Park, Kan.). An 18-year transportation industry veteran, Catlett joins FNA after serving in senior roles at both HNRY Logistics and YRC Worldwide, where he focused on the automation of supply chain decisions. In his new position, he will be responsible for the acquisition and transportation strategy of all raw materials for Blue Rhino and parent company Ferrellgas, in addition to leading Ferrellgas' mergers and acquisition team.

PRODUCTS



APP. Marshall Excelsior (MEC) has introduced its new app, available in app stores by searching "Marshall Excelsior." The app links to an MEC product catalog, service handbook, and videos, as well as other literature. The app's Gas Appliance System Check includes a place to record customer information; appliance check that answers by a simple yes, no, or N/A; and a place for notes, installation photos, and an electronic signing feature that allows customers to sign and immediately generate a finished PDF form to be emailed to the office and customer. The Gas System Check tool offers a place to record customer information, document container information, and a regulator check that eliminates the need to keep track of stickers or write down regulator info. By scanning the Excela-Flor regulator barcode, the tag information automatically populates the form. A Pressure Test/System Leak Test or an individual System Leak Test, also included on the Gas System Check, can be completed with the app.
marshallexcelsior.com

INDUSTRY CALENDAR

All events are subject to cancellation. Before making plans to attend an event, please contact the organizer.

2020

Oct. 5-8—Manufactured Housing Institute 2020 Annual Meeting (Virtual Event). *info@mfghome.org; manufacturedhousing.org/conferences-meetings/*

Oct. 14-15—Propane Gas Association of New England Annual Fall Meeting (Virtual Event). (888) 445-1075

Nov. 5-6—National Propane Gas Association Fall Benchmarking Council Meeting. (202) 466-7200, ext. 335; *npga.org/organization/npga-events/*

Nov. 10-11—PERC Council Meeting, The Henderson, Destin, Fla. (202) 452-8975; *propane.com/newsroom/events/perc-council-meeting-4/*

Nov. 16-18—Air-Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration Institute Leadership Forum, Virtual. (703) 524-8800; *ahrinet.org/News-Events/Meetings-and-Events*

2021

Feb. 4-5—2021 PACEshow, Kansas City Convention Center, Kansas City, Mo. *info@paceshow.com; paceshow.com*

Feb. 9-11—NAHB International Builders' Show, Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Fla. (202) 266-8184; *buildersshow.com*

Feb. 15—Deadline for Submitting National Propane Gas Foundation Scholarship Applications

Feb. 18-24—NRECA PowerXchange Annual Meeting, Virtual. (703) 907-5500. *cooperative.com/conferences-education/meetings/annual-meeting*

Feb. 22-24—The ARA Show, Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, New Orleans. (800) 334-2177; *arashow.org*

March 4-5—National Propane Gas Association Spring Benchmarking Council Meeting, Sheraton Charlotte Hotel, Charlotte, N.C. (202) 466-7200; *npga.org/organization/npga-events/*

March 7-9—National Propane Gas Association Spring TS&S Committee Meeting, The Fontaine, Kansas City, Mo. (202) 466-7200; *npga.org/organization/npga-events/*

For additional calendar items visit ***bpnews.com***



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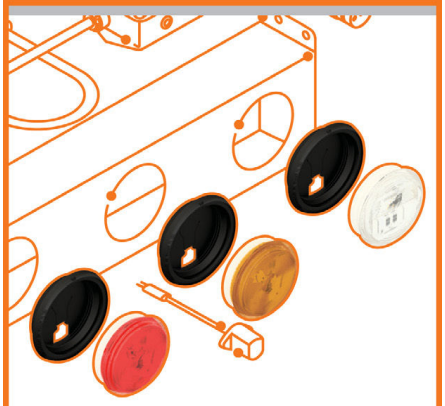

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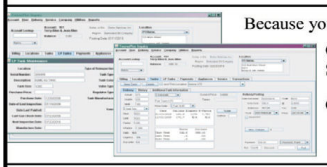

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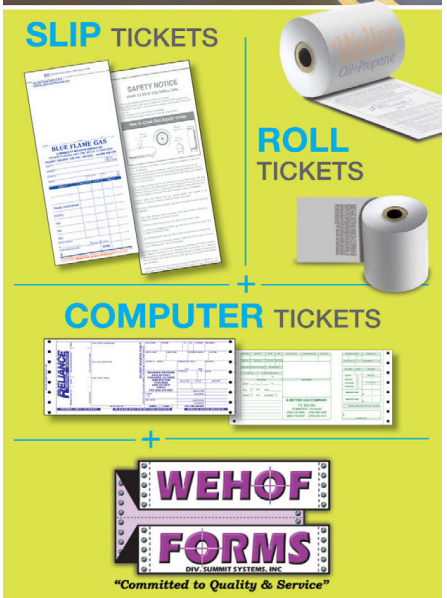

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NPGA UPDATES

Continued from **Page 43**

about the use of propane and its environmental benefits.

PERC and NPGA's coordinated efforts are effective in other areas, too. Congressional appropriation of $9 million dollars to be disseminated by the Department of Energy (DOE) for propane engine technology and other propane-related projects provides a great example of those efforts. While propane technologies easily fit with DOE's goals to support efforts to improve energy efficiency and fuel economy, the multi-industry competition for appropriated dollars is intense. The research dollars are highly sought after by a variety of alternative fuel industries. To strengthen the legislative request for appropriated research dollars, PERC developed a comprehensive technical package on the environmental benefits of propane. The technical package provided a critical piece to NPGA's legislative advocacy on Capitol Hill. Similar to the data-based messaging, advocacy requires technical backing and the concerted efforts of both groups made a difference in the successful appropriation of funds.

Together NPGA and PERC amplify the work of one another. Sharing the same ultimate goal of ensuring propane is a fuel of the future provides a framework for our current and future work together.

Steve Kaminski is president and CEO of the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA).

E-LPG WEEK

Continued from **Page 41**

event was challenging, Rockall says. "But we adapted extraordinarily quickly at a time when all of our business was shifting online. We solve the problem by looking at the virtual event as something with intrinsic value in its own right."

"For those who have never attended a previous Forum, this is the opportunity to do so," he concludes. "It involves no travel, no accommodations, no visas, and no time out of the office. Added to which the registration fees are some 80% lower than normal."

For more information about e-LPG Week, and to register to attend the Nov. 2-6 event, visit *www.lpgweek.com.* ■

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FINDING PASSION IN PROPANE AFTER 20 YEARS IN OIL, GAS

KAREN MASSMAN VanASDALE

In her 20-plus years in the oil and gas industry, Leanne Mazoch has worked in the crude oil, refined products, natural gas, power, natural gas liquids, sulphur, and propylene sectors—but she found her passion in propane.

Last year, Mazoch joined Ray Energy as vice president of supply after 14 years with BP Energy and nine years prior with Unocal.

"These guys know propane, so I get to learn more about the downstream from them, and also mentor about the upstream," Mazoch said of her role at Ray Energy. "This was a big change because of the difference in size, but also because of the focus. When I worked at BP, Ray Energy was a customer, and I was impressed with their growth. I think I am a good fit because we speak the same [propane] language."

Her primary responsibility is procuring propane supply for Ray Energy's Northeast and Southeast businesses using all modes—rail, pipeline, and truck. Ray Energy, headquartered in Albany, N.Y., is a midstream wholesale propane distributor. Mazoch works out of her home office in Houston.

Growing up in the oil and the gas industry (her father worked for Tenneco Gas and her mother for Shell), it seemed only natural for Mazoch to take a job on the crude desk at Unocal while working her way through college. "It was before we had all the controls, and I was able to get my hands wet in so many areas," she said.

"I did things backwards," she explained about her career path. While working at Unocal full-time, she married, had two boys, and earned degrees in finance and marketing from the University of Houston.

"People would ask me, 'How do you do it?' I didn't know how to answer because I just did it, it was all I knew. It was tough in the beginning with two babies three years apart. But life was simple back then. I was just really tired all the time," she said.

"After I graduated, I thought I would do something different and fantastic. But I didn't have any idea what that was. I got scared and jumped back into the oil and gas world."



Mazoch spent the next 14 years navigating through various roles and departments at BP including business development, corporate intelligence, power, natural gas, and eventually NGLs.

"I was excited because BP was a huge international company with robust training and a reputation for being a 'first mover,'" she said, "But when I started, it was winter and it was dark when I came into the office and dark when I left. I wondered if I had made a huge mistake!"

"In a company that size, it helps to have someone champion you. In my case it was Angela John. She was on the recruiting team when I was hired and years later, I ended up working on her team. We were completely different personalities and I didn't always make her job easy! But she obviously saw something in me and supported my development by making opportunities available. I was the one who had to say yes, and then work hard to be successful. But she allowed me the space I needed to take on new responsibilities and thrive."

Maneuvering through oil and gas companies also meant steering through the "good old boys" network. "There are more women now, but it's still a male-dominated industry. I think I have the right personality for this business. It's unpopular to say, but sometimes women are their own obstacle. Always know your business, your audience, and your boundaries."

"I've had some really good male mentors throughout my career. I know how I think, but sometimes I needed to hear the male perspective," Mazoch said. "We all have our place here."

Balancing work while going through a divorce was sometimes a challenge, but she is proof of the old adage, "if you want something done, give it to a busy person." She found the time to volunteer in her community—president of summer league swim team and vice president of athletic booster club were just a few roles.

Today, she continues to volunteer by working with a faith-based program for teen moms. "Finding something to feed my soul at the end of the day was important to me," she said. "It [parenting] can be hard. They [teen moms] can do these things, but everyone needs a little help. I'm thankful to share my time and my story." ■

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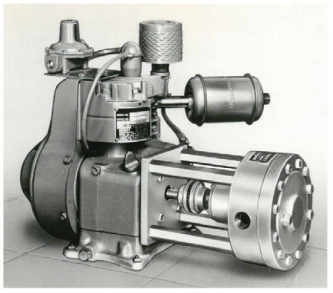
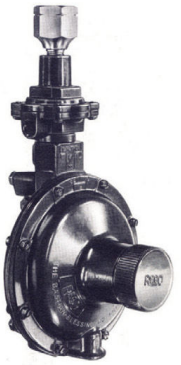

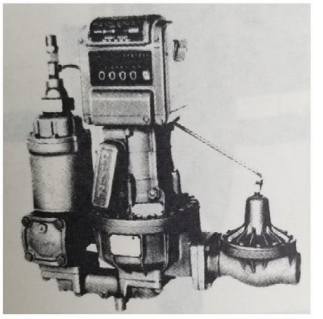

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