



Volume 50, Issue 3

Winter 2024

## FAMILY IS A TRADITION AT MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS



Threshers staff, OT and OT Foundation board members and family bundled up and braved the cold for the Mount Pleasant Holiday Parade! While we didn't take home the win this year, we sure had a frosty good time celebrating the theme of Christmas Traditions.

As you know, family is at the heart of every Christmas tradition—and that includes our Old Threshers Family.

Wishing you all the happiest of holidays! Don't forget to check out the Festival of Lights this season for even more holiday magic. We can't wait to see our family again at the 2025 Midwest Old Threshers Reunion - August 28 to September 1!

## OT TEAMS UP WITH THE MPPD FOR KIDS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:	
A word from the CEO	2
Book Review	3
Trolley Car 381	4
MCCR	5
Festival of Lights	6
Featured for 2025	7
Annual Meeting	8
Volunteer Awards	10
2024 Sweet 16	13
Obituaries	21



Pictured (left to right): Kat Zeglen, MP Police Chief Lyle Murray, Julie Scott, Grant Davidson, Community Service Officer Jared Walker, Steve Tolander, and OT CEO Terry McWilliams.

The Midwest Old Threshers staff, volunteers, and Board of Directors proudly teamed up this holiday season to support the Mt. Pleasant, Iowa Police Department Toy Drive. Through their generosity and community spirit, they gathered an impressive collection of toys to bring joy to children and families in need. This heartwarming effort is a testament to the dedication and kindness of everyone involved and showcases the true spirit of the season.

Dear Friends of Old Threshers,



**Terry McWilliams, CEO  
Midwest Old Threshers**

I'd like to take a moment to reintroduce myself. My name is Terry McWilliams, and I am the CEO of the Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers Association. I first joined Old Threshers in 2001 as the Public Relations and Marketing Coordinator under the leadership of former CEO Lennis Moore. He tasked me with promoting three words that, at the time, seemed challenging to explain: "Old" – because who wants to get old? "Threshers" – What does that even mean? and "Reunion" – Do we really have to visit relatives?

Outside of Old Threshers, my wife and I have three children, three dogs, and a cat, all of whom help keep us busy. In addition, I have served on the Mount Pleasant City Council for the past 14 years. Over the years, I've had the privilege of working alongside hundreds of volunteers, board members, staff, and friends, all of whom have contributed to the ever-evolving Old Threshers family. This dynamic and growing family is one that I am incredibly proud to be part of, both now and into the future.

There is one important aspect of this family that I'd like to focus on in this article for *The Chaff*: **Communication**. Communication is a two-way street, and this is especially true within the Old Threshers family. As the saying goes, "If you don't ask the question, you'll never get an answer." During the Annual Association meeting in November, I spoke about my commitment to improving communication with our association in the coming year. However, communication is not just my responsibility – it's a shared effort between all of us.

To put it simply, **communication** means the exchange of information. At the meeting, I shared an example of how a member of the Old Threshers family spread information they believed was accurate, but without confirming the facts. This quickly led others down the wrong path. The issue arose because the right questions weren't asked to gather the correct information. I want to remind everyone that I am always open to communicating with the Old Threshers family about anything that might be on your mind. However, I believe that communication works best when we're open and honest. I encourage you not to hide behind anonymity. Instead, reach out to me directly. You can call me at the office (319-385-8937), stop by for a visit, or send an email ([info@oldthreshers.org](mailto:info@oldthreshers.org)). I promise to respond as quickly as I can so we can ensure the information you receive is accurate and clear.

Here are a few topics that have recently come up in the Old Threshers family conversations:

**Finances and the Budget:** There have been some concerns about the transparency of the budget, with accusations of high charges and the association being solely focused on money. Let me clarify: Each year, the Board of Directors approves an Expenditures Guideline for the Association. This document adjusts annually to reflect the realities of running our five-day Reunion. During the Annual Meeting, you are welcome to view up-to-date financial reports for the association. Yes, it's true that costs have increased over the past 10, 20, and 25 years. For example, in 2024, our insurance bill is \$94,833, and we expect it to exceed \$102,000 in 2025.

**Admission Prices for the Reunion:** Some have expressed concern that the 5-day and 1-day admission prices are too high. I want to point out that the 1-day admission price has remained at \$15 since 2015, and the 5-day pass has increased roughly every five years. For these prices, attendees get an incredible amount of entertainment, education, and experiences.

What strikes me about these concerns is that no one has come directly to me to discuss them. I've only heard about them through social circles within the Old Threshers family. When we communicate openly, we can exchange ideas, share accurate information, and hopefully reach a mutual understanding. Please remember, I'm always available and willing to have a conversation with you – no spell check needed!

As we approach the holiday season, I wish you and your family a joyful holiday, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year! Let's also look forward to "Celebrating 75 Years" of Old Threshers in 2025 (1950-2025), from August 28th to September 1st.



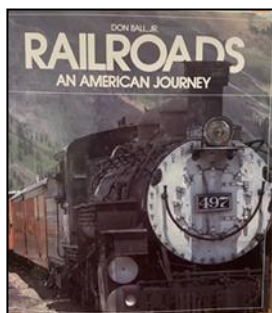


## A BOOK REVIEW FROM THE SHELVES OF THE MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS' LIBRARY

*Editor's Note: This is one of many book reviews by Threshers volunteer Joan Alt Belknap. Joan has made a detailed list of all the books in the Old Threshers' Library in the conference room. "Many of them are amazing for different reasons. It seems a shame for them to just sit there with many people not even realizing they are there," says Joan.*

Let me start by saying that books are my wheelhouse but I lack the valuable background in "things Old Threshers" to help me know which books are most deserving of reviews. So please give me suggestions if you are one of many experts, and I'll do my best to include your favorites.

### ***Railroads: An American Journey* by Don Ball Jr., NY: Promontory Press, c1975**



I chose a railroad book to review because in September, we drove to a location along the highway near Mechanicsville to watch the **Big Boy** roll through. Although our view was fleeting, it was awesome to see the size and hear the whistle blow at the crossing. My nephew, Steve Alt, gave us a full rundown of its history and significance.

***Railroads: An American Journey*** is a book gifted to Old Thresher's from the Roy Setzer collection. The 288 pages focus on the 350 photos taken by the author and 39 other train enthusiasts. All photos are in black and white. This book follows an earlier volume titled ***Portrait of the Rails*** which is also in the library.

Each photo has a paragraph of explanation. The few pages of text introducing the book and each of the five chapters often finds the author reminiscing and lamenting the end of the simpler times of his youth.

Ball says he focused more on "real railroad country" far from the beaten path. He tried to make each picture tell a story, and included both the workaday world and the "romantic moods." He sought out locations where "the last" steam runs were being made.

If you just love to browse, this coffee table book should please. However, if you are looking for something specific, good luck. There is no index, so finding a specific train would involve turning every page.

The book can be found on shelf 6.

If you have a suggested book for Joan to review, you can reach her at [jbelknap2@mac.com](mailto:jbelknap2@mac.com)



**Thank  
you!**



**Thank  
you!**

# THE HISTORY OF CAR 381



In 1929, Perley A. Thomas Car Works, received an order for ten streetcars for Knoxville, Tennessee. These cars, operated in Knoxville until 1947, when service ended. Seven cars never left Knoxville and ended at the hand of the cutting torch. Three of the cars were purchased and sent to Iowa, for service between Waterloo and Cedar Falls, becoming local legends to the population that relied on them daily. Nevertheless, tragedy was right around the corner.



As children were out collecting their candy on Halloween evening in 1954, a small fire was brewing in the car building. By dawn, everything in that building was gone except one remaining trolley car. Car 381 survived that fire and continued in regular service. However, with no maintenance shop or replacement parts, the end of that trolley line was drawing near. Car 381 made its last trip on August 1, 1958, becoming the last streetcar in the State of Iowa to operate in regular passenger service.



The City of Waterloo moved car 381 to a park for display. Unfortunately, the car was continuously met with spring flooding from a nearby river and was an attraction for local vandalism. In 1970, a group of railroad enthusiasts heard the city would be tearing up the park and so 381 would need a new home. To protect 381's history, the City of Waterloo donated the car to Old Threshers in 1972. It was rebuilt and operated for the first time in Mount Pleasant the following year.

In 2018, 381 had some electrical issues and is now out of service waiting for funding so that this amazing piece of history can be restored to its former glory. Midwest Electric Railway is proud of the amazing history that the trolley fleet holds. We continue to fundraise for this collection of amazing trolley cars so that the rich history is never forgotten.

**Trolley School**

Join Trolley School for just \$20! Open to ages 12 and up.  
Class begins June 21st at 8 am at the Trolley Barn.

**For More Information Visit**  
**oldthreshers.com**





# MCRR VOLUNTEERS TACKLED MANY PROJECTS IN 2024

By Lauren and Kendall Osier



It has been a busy year at the Midwest Central Railroad. We are now “full steam ahead” on a large project involving West Side Lumber Co. No. 9 Shay. As I am sure many are aware, her presence has been missed in the last couple Reunions. At the 2022 annual inspection,

it was determined that it could use some firebox repairs to maintain a safe operation. These repairs, while time consuming and expensive, are fairly routine on 100 year-old steam locomotives.

This year, after a thorough inspection and quoting process, we entered into a contract with Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad’s contracting shops. Two of their employees visited the week before the 2024 Reunion to begin work on the Shay.

The Durango team, along with MCRR volunteers, took out the original section of the firebox door-sheet and began fabricating a new door-sheet (photo at right.) There is still much work to be done, but if we keep at the current pace, the Shay may be operational for the 2025 Old Threshers Reunion.

A few volunteers have continued to work on New Berlin & Winfield No. 2’s restoration. The current main focus has been getting the equalizing system rebuilt, with finishing frame buildup to follow. The



original equalizing system was mostly condemnable, so new parts were designed and are currently being fabricated and machined. Several patterns have been made for new parts, and many more should be coming, including those for new frame gibs, wedges, and driving boxes, which all must be remanufactured due to excessive wear. The pilot truck is also being rebuilt currently, and new parts, including custom-designed pilot wheels, are being made.

A team of volunteers have been working diligently on fabricating the new frame for Coach No. 303. Another group of volunteers rebuilt a pair of West Side Lumber Co. trucks for this coach as well. Coach No. 200, the Mignon, also received a much-needed new roof membrane and a new interior.

Two volunteers, Nelson Smith and Chris Pacha, (pictured at left) were awarded plaques for their 50+ years of volunteer service with MCRR at our pre-show meeting.

If you too are wanting to start your volunteer journey, we are always looking for more volunteers in the shop, especially if you are a machinist, welder or wood worker. The more volunteers we have, the more projects we can accomplish. We are also looking for more volunteers who would like to work as train and engine crew or assist with events.

It has been a great year for ridership between the Reunion and the Midwest Haunted Rails. Our North Pole Express train sold out within 24 hours this year, so be sure to mark your calendars for November 1st, 2025 at Midnight for the tickets for next year. As always, thank you for your continued help and support for Midwest Central Railroad.



## WAGON RIDES A GREAT WAY TO SEE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Seeing the Festival of Lights from a horse-drawn wagon is an unforgettable experience. This year's riders were up to the challenge of temperatures hovering around 10 degrees!

OT Board of Director Paul Bishop and other members of the Horse Area hitch their festive wagons to their draft horses and give two nights of fantastic memories each year during the Festival of Lights.



## CHANCE TO WALK THROUGH THE LIGHTS ATTRACTS 1800+



For two nights only, prior to the opening of the Festival of Lights, the public is invited to walk through the Festival of Lights. The weather this year was a balmy 50 or so degrees for both nights in November. The number of walkers exceeded 900 each night. Parked cars filled the parking lot by Santa's House and snaked down into the South 40 portion of the Campground.

People of all ages were able to walk, take a ride on a trolley ride around the Campground and visit a candle and lamp-lit Log Village.

The Festival of Lights are open from 5:30-9pm thru New Year's Eve.





## FEATURED AT THE 2025 OLD THRESHERS REUNION



### 2025 Featured Car

1923 Hudson Essex  
Owned by: Dennis & Suzy Veenstra of New Sharon, IA



### 2025 Featured Antique Truck

1931 Ford Model A

Owned by: Tim & Lisa Ockenfels of Mt Pleasant, IA



### 2025 Featured Antique Tractor

1936 Silver King R66

Owned by: Roger & Janice Richers of Mt Union, IA



### 2025 Featured Garden Tractor

1963 Montgomery Wards Squire 6  
Owned by: Eddie Ward Family of Belton, MO

### 2025 Featured Traction Steam Engine

1922 Russell 30 HP

Owned by: Pub & Sarah Melsha of Springville, IA



### 2025 Featured Horse

Percheron



### 2025 Featured Antique Gas Engine

The Field-Brundage Co Field Type W 1 1/2 HP  
Owned by: Brian & Brent Bambrook of Eddyville, IA

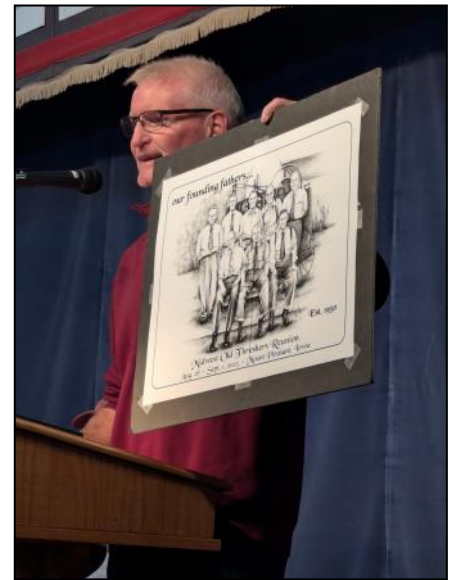


## 2025 30-HOUR AWARD REVEALED AT ANNUAL MEETING



The 2025 30-hour volunteer award was revealed to the attendees at the OT Annual Meeting in November. Pictured below at left (from L to R) are volunteers Todd Mabeus, Linda Enearl, Dan Daugherty, Joann Daugherty, Shelia Bell, and Chris Bell. This group of six were the first to receive the award for their hours worked since the end of the 2024 Reunion.

In honor of 75 years of celebrating agricultural history, the OT founding fathers were drawn by artist Robin Fisher. OT CEO Terry McWilliams makes the big reveal below.



## THANK YOU



Electrician Pete Kilbourn was recognized at the 2024 OT Annual Meeting for his 18 years as the official electrician of the Old Threshers Reunion. Happy retirement Pete!



## VOTED IN FOR ANOTHER TERM

The Old Threshers membership voted unanimously to accept the Nominating Committee's slate for board members. Pictured L to R: Paul Bishop, Rich Seberg, Bob Myers, Chris Heaton.

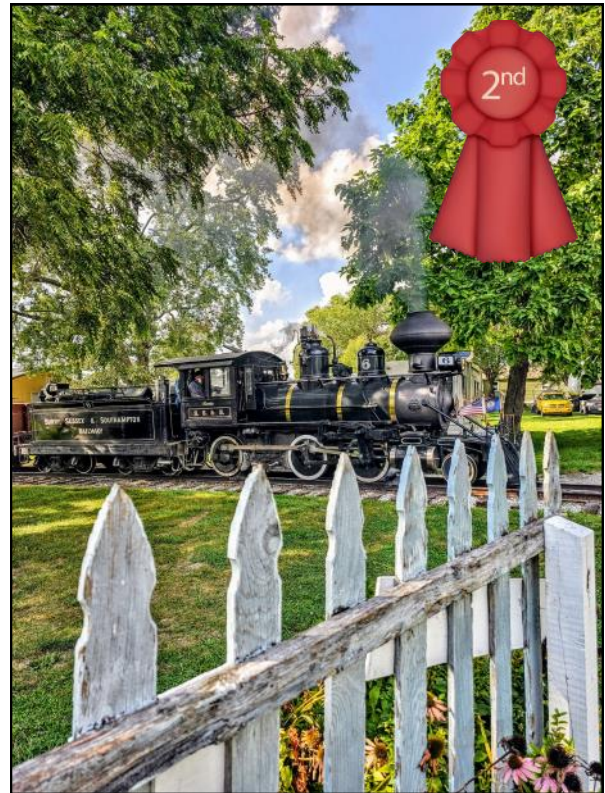


## 2024 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

More than 700 photos were submitted for the 2024 Old Threshers Photo Contest. Three members of the OT Board of Directors were appointed judges. They each picked their three favorite to move on to the final round of judging performed by the Old Threshers staff. Congratulations to everyone who submitted. There is a lot of talent out there!



Ashley Thompson of Sigourney, Iowa



Kimmy Johnson of Center Point, Iowa



Greg Hughes of New Haven, Indiana

## 2024 VOLUNTEER AWARD WINNERS



Back row, L to R—Tim and Teresa Cochran; Brady Harp; Tasha Allen; James Bruns; Jay Sigafoose; Frank Tharpe; Brent Reneau; Dean Alan Grimm, Jr.; Jenna and Frank Olcott and Judy Washburn. Front row, L to R— Bridget and Perry Smith; Don Nevins; Dean and Ruth Soenksen; Stephanie and Jim Dawson; Jan Johnston; Lisa Price and Kenny and Myla Hansen.

### **Tim and Teresa Cochran** **St. Charles, IA**

Tim and Teresa Cochran have been married for many years and are the proud parents of four grown children and grandparents to nine grandchildren. Teresa was born and raised in Des Moines, IA, and worked in the banking industry for over 40 years before retiring. Tim, originally from California, moved to Mount Pleasant, in 4th grade and later grew up in Keota, where he graduated high school. He served in the military for over 38 years before retiring.

Teresa has been a volunteer in the trolley area at Old Threshers since the early 2000s and helps in the tractor headquarters. Tim has been volunteering in the Tractorland since 1995, working closely with Roy on the gas truck, and also assists with the "Drive a Tractor" program. The couple are John Deere and AC enthusiasts who enjoy restoring vintage campers, with hopes of launching a vintage camping area at Old Threshers. They encourage others to volunteer and build lasting friendships within the Old Threshers community.

### **Tasha Allen and Brady Harp** **Ladora, IA**

Tasha Allen and Brady Harp, both from Ladora, Iowa, are set to marry in May 2025. They are proud parents to two

young children.

Tasha, originally from Wellman, Iowa, moved to Ladora in 2019. She graduated from Kirkwood Community College with a degree in agricultural business and now works in counter sales at Heartland Co-op. Tasha is also involved in running two family businesses: Harp Farms LLC and Double Creek Carriage Company. She has been attending Old Threshers for five years, where her family brings horses and volunteers at various events. This year, her team of miniature horses, trained by her and her son Rhett, is featured on T-shirts and cloisonné pins.

Brady Harp was born and raised in Ladora. He owns and operates Harp Farms LLC, specializing in custom hauling, quality beef, and mechanic work. Along with Tasha, he co-owns a carriage company. Brady has attended Old Threshers since childhood, continuing a family tradition that began in 2008 when his family first brought a team of horses to the event. Now, he brings his own teams to the Reunion.

### **James Bruns** **Cascade, IA**

James Bruns is the father of three children, all of whom volunteer at the Log Village and have attended the Log Village School. They also assist with the ground train at the Old Threshers

Reunion.

James was raised on a family farm in Zwingle, Iowa, and has one older brother who volunteered in the Log Village until 2019. He holds an AAS degree in automotive electronics and has worked at White Front Feed and Seed in Cascade, Iowa, for over 25 years. In addition to working part-time on his family's 80-acre farm, James is involved in various tasks at the Log Village, including setup and teardown in the barn and woodlot areas. He also brings several tractors to the Reunion each year.

### **Jay Sigafoose** **Iowa City, IA**

Jay Sigafoose, originally from Hayesville, Iowa, is married to Melanie, and they have one daughter. Jay has been attending the Old Threshers Reunion since childhood and has taken on various roles over the years, including washing and put away traction engines, serving on the boiler inspection committee, and being a member of the Old Threshers Foundation. Since 1996, Jay has been a steam class instructor for Old Threshers, also exhibits steam traction engines at the Reunion. He is also a member of the Southeast Iowa Antique Car Club and currently practices law in Iowa City.

Continued on page 10



## 2024 VOLUNTEER AWARDS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

### Frank Tharpe

#### Albia, IA

Frank Tharpe, a lifelong resident of Albia, Iowa, is married to Annie and has one daughter.

A 1991 graduate of Albia High School, Frank earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing from Iowa State University in 1995. He has been the owner and operator of Napa Auto Parts in Albia since then. Frank has been attending the Old Threshers Reunion regularly since 2008 and has been a steam school instructor since 2018. His passion for steam engines is evident in his ownership of two 22-horsepower Wood Brothers traction engines and a 5/8 scale model of the same.

### Brent Reneau

#### Hamilton, IL

Brent Reneau has been married to his wife, Emilee, and they have two children. Raised on a farm in Hamilton, Illinois, Brent continues to live near his parents and the family farm.

With nearly 20 years of experience in local government, Brent has spent the last five years working as a land specialist for Whitetail Properties Real Estate. At Old Threshers, he has taken on various roles in Tractorland, including numbering tractors, shelling corn, serving as a parade marshal, cooking, assisting with tractor pulls, and setting up and taking down bleachers for nightly entertainment. Brent enjoys hunting, fishing, and watching his kids play sports in his free time.

### Dean Alan Grimm, Jr.

#### Charlotte, IA

Dean Alan Grimm Jr. is the father of four children. He was born in Decatur, Texas, but lived most of his life in Charlotte, Iowa. Dean works as a mechanic at Jim Hawk Trailers in Davenport, Iowa, where he specializes in spotter and semi-trucks and trailers.

Dean has been a dedicated volunteer at Old Threshers for 25-30 years, primarily in Tractorland, but he's always willing to help wherever needed.

### Jenna and Frank Olcott

#### Lawson, MO

Jenna and Frank Olcott, married for 22 years, live in Lawson, Missouri, with their son and three daughters. Jenna, originally from Stewartville, Missouri, is the Director of Tree House Preschool and also works as a commissioned artist. She has been attending Old Threshers since 1983 and began volunteering in the campground three years ago, inspired by her father's involvement and friends' participation.

Frank Olcott grew up on a farm north of Kansas City and is a Shift Supervisor at Bayer Crop Science. He has attended Old Threshers since 2001 and started volunteering three years ago. Together, Jenna and Frank are dedicated participants in the Reunion, sharing their passion for the community.

### Judy Washburn

#### Zionsville, Indiana

Judy Washburn has been married to her husband Jim for 53 years, with Old Threshers being a central part of her life. A lifelong resident of Zionsville, Indiana, Judy graduated from Eagle Township High School in 1965 and has worked in accounting for the Heritage Group for 40 years.

Judy's connection to Old Threshers began in 1955 at age seven, and she hasn't missed a year since. She has volunteered in numerous roles, including working in information booths, judging the Sweet 16 contest, and washing dishes in the Finley Church tent. Currently, she volunteers in the Old Threshers Foundation room, leads hymn singing in Center Chapel, sings with the volunteer choir, works at the Paul Anderson Welcome Center, and announces the noon whistle. Judy is honored to be considered for this award.

### Bridget and Perry Smith

#### Alleman, IA

Bridget and Perry Smith have been married for 32 years and have four children along with four grandchildren,

with a fifth on the way. Bridget, originally from Ankeny, Iowa, moved to Alleman after marrying Perry, where they've lived for 31 years.

Bridget has worked for the same company for 38 years, starting with Massey Ferguson, now DLL. She began volunteering at the Log Village in 2002, inspired by her daughter Halley's interest in attending the Log Village school. Over the years, Bridget has taken on various roles within the Log Village, making it her second family and a place she eagerly looks forward to each year.

Perry, born and raised in Iowa, is self-employed and has also lived in Alleman for 31 years. He started showing gas engines around 2000 and began volunteering at the Log Village in 2003. Perry's involvement includes showing gas engines with his sons and taking on various tasks in the Log Village, including rope making, rail splitting, and maintenance.

### Don Nevins

#### Wayland, IA

Don Nevins is married to Marie and has six children along with 19 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Don was born and raised in Stuart, Iowa, graduated from Stuart High School, and attended the University of Northern Iowa.

Don began attending Old Threshers in 2000 after moving to the area. He joined the car club in 2013 and has been an active volunteer ever since, with the Antique Cars & Trucks

### Dean and Ruth Soenksen

#### Cedar Rapids, IA

Dean and Ruth Soenksen have been married for 33 years and have three children. Dean, originally from DeWitt, Iowa, developed an early interest in threshing through the Winston Smith event and was taught by Dick Campbell, a former Old Threshers exhibitor. Ruth, born in Manchester, Iowa, grew up near Coggan and was named Linn County's 1968 Dairy Princess.

Dean has been a truck driver since his first wheat harvest in 1984, while Ruth

## 2024 VOLUNTEER AWARDS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

dedicated 41 years to working at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids. Together, they have been involved in various volunteer activities at Old Threshers, including setting up and taking down snow fencing around the car building, cleaning and dusting the museum for school tours, and selling showers at RAGBRAI to benefit Old Threshers and the car club. Despite only volunteering for a few years, they find it incredibly rewarding, and Dean is committed to ensuring the car club's success.

### **Stephanie and Jim Dawson Independence, IA**

Stephanie and Jim Dawson, residents of Independence, Iowa, have been married for several years and have two adult children. They moved to Independence in 2014 after living in Washington, Iowa.

Stephanie graduated from high school in 1995 and earned an Associate of Applied Science degree in Paralegal Studies from Kaplan University. She is a homemaker and has been volunteering in the gas engine area since 2018. Stephanie also participates in the Thrashers House of Terror and has volunteered at the trolleys and Santa House during the Festival of Lights.

Jim, a native of Washington, Iowa, graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in Business Administration and a minor in Sociology. He is the Cheese Department Manager at Wapsie Valley Creamery and has been volunteering in the gas engine area since 2018. Jim's volunteer work also includes contributions to the Haunted Rails,

Threshers House of Terror, and various projects in the North Village, Log Village, and trolleys.

### **Jan Johnston Springville, IA**

Jan Johnston was born in Postville, Iowa, and moved to Cedar Rapids at the age of three. She earned a master's degree and completed coursework for a PhD. Jan is a retired counselor and administrator from the Cedar Rapids school system.

Jan's involvement with Old Threshers began by assisting her husband with electrical work in the Museums. Over the years, she has been a dedicated volunteer, contributing to the office and souvenirs. She started her journey with Billy Turley, then worked alongside Karen Timmerman, and now supports the current staff. Jan also attended one of the first steam schools and helped sell tickets during the Halloween events. She is a member of the Old Threshers Foundation and has previously been involved with the gas engine and car areas but now considers the Office, Traction Steam & Antique Car area her home.

### **Lisa Price Mount Pleasant, IA**

Lisa Price, daughter of Larry and Doris Price, was born and raised in Mount Pleasant, IA. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from Iowa Wesleyan College and has been a dietary manager at Halcyon House in Washington, IA, for 26 years.

Lisa's volunteer journey with Old Threshers began in the early 1980s at the

Methodist Church tent. Over the years, she has ushered at the grandstand for country music shows, sold tickets, served on the entertainment committee, and currently assists with ground entertainment and the Main Stage Entertainers. Lisa has also volunteered through Iowa Wesleyan and values the many years of meeting new people and looks forward to continuing her involvement in the future.

### **Kenny and Myla Hansen Winthrop, IA**

Kenny and Myla Hansen have been married for 51 years, with three children, six grandchildren, and four grand-dogs. Myla, originally from Quasqueton, Iowa, spent her career as a secretary and retired after 20 years as a middle and high school secretary. She has volunteered at Old Threshers for four years, primarily in the vendor/crafter area and information booths, and has attended the event with her family since the mid-1980s. Myla is active in her church, enjoys camping, quilting, and supporting her grandchildren's activities.

Kenny, originally from near Urbana, Iowa, grew up in Lamont and worked in tractor mechanics before a long career with Buchanan County Secondary Roads. He has volunteered at Old Threshers for over 40 years, starting in the Traction Steam Area and assisting with various tasks, grounds setup including stage setup and sound equipment and heavy equipment operator. Kenny treasures the friendships and memories he's made through his decades of involvement at Old Threshers.



## SWEET 16 PARTICIPANTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE



From L to R: Roma Bride—2nd Runner-up, Meadow Carter—1st Runner-up, Zenlynn Lee—Miss Volunteer, Jacie Campbell—Miss Sweet 16.

Congratulations to everyone who participated in the 2024 Miss Sweet 16 Program.

Each contestant volunteers in numerous positions around the Old Threshers grounds, such as assisting our guests, answering questions, and lending a helping hand to our many non-profit organizations' booths.

Each of the contestants is judged on their volunteerism, a presentation along with an interview, knowledge of Old Threshers, and their overall hospitality.

The Sweet Sixteen contestants can be seen at the Harvest Parade, at the Carousel, the Paul Anderson Building, and strolling the grounds in the period dress for women of the late 1800s to early 1900s who lived in the Midwest.

If you are interested in becoming a Miss Sweet 16, call Midwest Old Threshers at 319-385-8937 or go to the OT website [www.oldthreshers.org](http://www.oldthreshers.org) for an application.





## '24 REUNION ATTENDANCE ADDS TO THE RECORD BOOKS

The 2024 Reunion saw hard ticket sales of 35,707 putting it in the top five in recent history. Great weather greeted visitors from all across the United States.

The Campground opened with 883 camping sites reserved. The new, full hook-up sites in the South 40 were ready to welcome campers.

The Grandstands were full for The Don Carlson Memorial Horse Pull.

All four nights of music on the KILJ Grandstand stage saw great crowds.



Continued on page 15

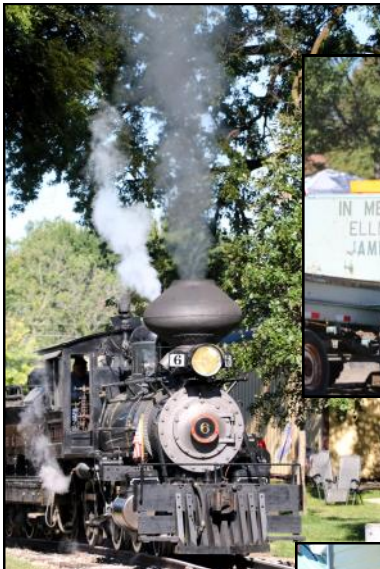


## 2024 REUNION FRIDAY



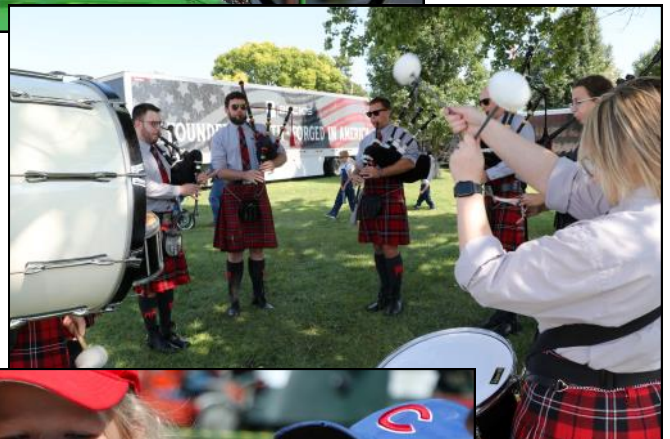


# 2024 REUNION SATURDAY





## 2024 REUNION SUNDAY



Continued on page 18



## 2024 REUNION MONDAY—LABOR DAY





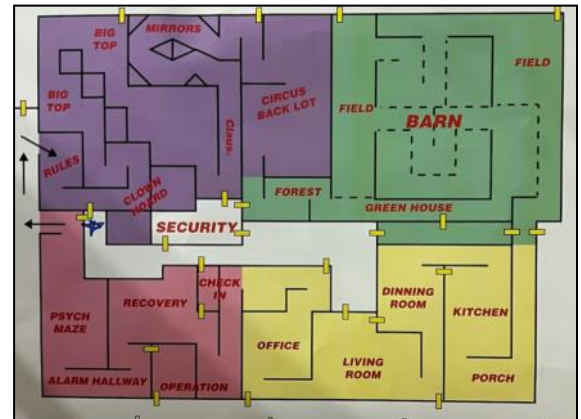
# THOT ACTORS ENTERTAIN MORE THAN 7000 IN 2024

Planning for any given year of the Midwest Old Threshers Reunion starts before the current year's is over. That's no different for the Thrashers House of Terror. A dedicated group of volunteers, gather together around the board room table to share ideas and ultimately come away with a floor plan. Pictured at right is the 2024 THOT floor plan.

A lot of hard work, blood, sweat and tears turn that floor plan into Iowa's premier haunted attraction. Construction begins just five days after the Old Threshers Reunion.

First open in 2007, the haunted house started in the basement of the Antique Car Building. It now takes up almost all of the top floor. Guests choose to give up their hard-earned cash to wait in line to get scared.

The 2024 season saw 104 volunteers get in make-up and costumes for 13 nights to scare 7,483 guests. Some were more than scared as is shown by the tik marks to the right. Some never even make it past the entrance before chickening out.



**BIG THANKS**  
TO THE CORE TEAM



HERE FOR GOOD



**EXTREME THANKS TO**  
ALL OUR VOLUNTEER ACTORS & CREW MEMBERS



Thank You, Thrashers House of Terror Fans!

What a season! A massive thank you to our incredible cast and crew who brought the scares to life this year—your hard work and dedication made every scream possible. And to every brave soul who walked through our doors, thank you for being part of the fright-filled fun.

Stay spooky, and we'll see you next year!

## WHAT IS IT? WHERE IS IT?

Can you tell what these things are? And if so, where can one find them during the Old Threshers Reunion?  
Answers are at the bottom of page 22.

**A****B****C****D****E****F**



## OBITUARIES

### Virginia Wistrom

Virginia Wistrom, 97, of Fort Worth, Texas, formerly of Burlington, Iowa, died September 8, at the Harris Methodist Hospital in Fort Worth, Texas.

Born September 21, 1926, at home in rural Winfield, Iowa, she was the daughter of Ray Walter and Bertha Marie Schenk.

She was a graduate of the Iowa School for the Deaf in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

She married Leonard Wistrom on April 8, 1950 in Des Moines, Iowa, he preceded her in death on November 18, 1987. She married Jacob Bice in Fort Worth, Texas.

Virginia was a spunky, social butterfly. She loved sweets and looked forward to a cup of coffee and a cookie every morning. She was outright flirtatious and loved to laugh. She enjoyed shopping and would never miss an opportunity to dance.

She is survived by her husband Jacob Bice of Fort Worth, Texas; three children, Dan (Jacky) Wistrom, Rod (Debbie) Wistrom and Phyllis Benz; eight grandchildren; 16 great grandchildren; sister Kathryn Schenk (Chuck) Benz; brother Cecil (Betty) Schenk; nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, daughter Lusena Carpenter, and son-in-law Richard Carpenter.

A memorial has been established for the Iowa School of the Deaf in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

### Gary Flemming

Gary Fleming, Sr., 73, of Platte County, MO passed away, October 1.

He was born March 25, 1951, to William Robert and Margaret (Myers) Fleming in Leavenworth, KS. Gary grew up in Platte County and graduated from Park Hill High School where he met the love of his life, Teresa Ann Sickman.

On June 6, 1970, he was united in marriage to Teresa. After their marriage

they lived in Platte County where they made their home. On January 17, 1972 they welcomed a son, Gary Michael Fleming. His wife, Theresa, preceded him in death on August 24, 2002.

Gary ran his own business operating a backhoe for many years and was a heavy equipment operator for Operating Engineers Local 101. He also farmed for many years.

He was a member of the Platte County Fair Board and a member of the Steam and Gas Association. He loved collecting Steam Engines and Antique Tractors with his son. He also loved traveling throughout the United States to steam engine shows where he met many great friends. He cherished the many friends he met through the steam engine hobby and many of them became "family." Gary was an avid fisherman his entire life and loved spending time with his girlfriend, Lisa, fishing and enjoying their place in south Missouri in his later years. Gary will be truly missed by so many. He never knew a stranger and his smile and contagious laugh will never be forgotten.

Gary was also preceded in death by his parents.

He is survived by his son, Gary Fleming and wife Dawn; grandchildren, Taylor Bascue, Lexi Bascue, and Rayleigh Gann; great-grandson, Rhett Hall; longtime girlfriend, Lisa Shene and her family; other relatives and many friends.

Donations may be made to the Northcare Hospice House or the First Christian Church of Platte City.

### John Watkins

John Charles Watkins, 85, of Miamisburg, passed away peacefully on October 1, 2024.

John was a lifelong resident of Miamisburg. He was a third generation to own and operate Kitch Greenhouses. During his lifetime he enjoyed private plane flying, sailing around Lake Erie with the family, scuba diving and was an instructor, bonsai, and had visited all 49

continental US states in his old Airstream. Each August he looked forward to going to Iowa for Midwest Old Threshers Reunion to operate a huge steam engine over Labor Day weekend.

John helped his father build and run the Kitch Greenhouse Steam Calliope. Around 1970, John started working at Hutchings DP&L power plant. One year later he passed the state board for Class 1 Power Steam Engineer. He went on to teach steam engineering at local vocational schools. John worked at Good Samaritan Hospital running their power plant for 25 years until his retirement.

John was quite involved with the Miamisburg Masonic bodies and held many positions, including Past Master Minerva Lodge, Past Illustrious Master of Adoniram Council, Past High Priest Trinity Chapter, Past Commander Valley Commandery, and served over twenty years as secretary of Valley Commandery. He had many other Masonic affiliations.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Anna Jane (Kitch) and Clovis L. Watkins.

John is survived by his wife of 61 years, Caroline (Josse) Watkins; daughter, Ruth Moore (Charles); son, John Charles Watkins II; grandchildren, Jacob Moore (Donna) and Nicholas Moore (Randi); and many friends and loved ones.

### Ronald Wright

Ronald W. Wright, 62, of West Burlington, died October 24, at his home.

Born November 8, 1961, he was the son of Robert W. Wright and Joan Marilyn Gregg-Vargason. He was a high school graduate.

Ronald was a laborer for various companies. He was a caretaker for his mother before she passed away. He was an exhibitor in the Gas Engine Area.

Ronald was preceded in death by his parents.

## OBITUARIES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

### Peter Weller

Peter John Weller, age 84, of Washington, Iowa, passed away November 1, at the Halcyon House in Washington.

Peter was born January 13, 1940, in Chicago, Illinois, the son of Carl Wilhelm and Kathryn (Bieber) Weller. He attended school at the Lane Tech Preparatory High School in Chicago, Illinois, and received his Business Administration Degree from Wartburg College. He then attended the University of Iowa where he received his master's degree in Recent American History in 1964 and moved to Washington later that year. In 1968 Peter's life was forever transformed after meeting the love of his life in Oxford, England, when Sandra Ray Parker, visiting from California, stepped on to the tour bus he was riding. Their first date was an eight-week tour of Europe followed by a year of love letters and long-distance visits. Peter was united in marriage to Sandra on August 9, 1969, in Rancho Cordova, California. Their shared love of travel, world history and cultures, and careers in education bonded them for the next 55 years as they explored the world together.

Peter was a well-loved teacher and an author. He taught World History, Social Studies, American Government, Economics, and Business for the Washington Community School District for 36 years, retiring in 2000. He was known as a challenging teacher who inspired his students through his annual Middle East peace simulation, deep dives into the functions of our branches of government, and class simulations playing the stock market. Peter was a member of the Immanuel Lutheran Church where he sang in the church choir, wrote the church newsletter, and was President of the Church Council. He was a member of the Washington Education Association, National Council for Social Studies, and the Iowa Council for Social Studies. Peter was a founding

member of the ISEA Geode Regional Education Association.

In support of his student Russell Crone, he was proud to have been one of four national essay finalist teams in the 1983 Middle East Cross-Cultural Tour sponsored by the Arab Women's Council and Attyeh Foundation. Each student's essay described how they understood world events and how they would go about crafting a plan to bring lasting peace to the Middle East. Peter, Russell, and the rest of the finalist winners traveled to the Middle East for three weeks learning more of the region's culture and meeting with world leaders from Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel to hear directly their perspectives.

Since childhood, Peter expressed interest in the world of trains, both those thundering through town and model railroading with local and regional clubs. If it ran on rails, he was fascinated. He joined several organizations over his lifetime. He was a member of the Electric Railfan's Association in Chicago; the Shoreline Interurban Historical Society of Chicago; the Iowa Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, and the Midwest Electric Railway Association. Peter volunteered at the Midwest Old Threshers Reunion for many years as a streetcar motorman and conductor.

Peter is survived by his wife, Sandra Weller of Washington, Iowa; son, Tom (Staci) Weller and their children Alexander, Dharma, and Maya of Bellingham, Washington; and son, Paul (Matthew Blackburn) Weller of Carmichael, California.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Carl and Kathryn Weller; and his sister, Caroline Weller.

Memorials have been established for the Immanuel Lutheran Church or Midwest Old Threshers.

### Timothy Frame

Timothy R. Frame 71, of DeWitt, passed away December 2, 2024, at Genesis- DeWitt.

Timothy Ross Frame was born on December 31, 1952, in Clinton, the son of James and Velma (Jessen) Frame. He was a 1971 graduate of Clinton High School. He married Debra Sloan on January 27, 2001, in DeWitt.

Tim was employed with the Clinton County Secondary Roads Department for 42 years retiring in 2019. He was active with the Jehovah's Witness volunteering many hours on community projects and Bible education work. He enjoyed camping and fishing. For over 55 Years he loved attending the Midwest Old Threshers Reunion in Mt. Pleasant. He also loved living out in the country spending time cutting and splitting wood.

Tim is survived by his wife: Debra of DeWitt; his son: Christopher (Brittney) Frame of Grand Mound, a step-daughter: Elisabeth (David) Norman of Knoxville, Tennessee, a step-son: Lauren Reed of Davenport; two grandchildren: Mackenzie and Madeline Frame; two step-grandchildren: Casey and Peter Norman; his brother: David (Rena) Frame of Clinton; nephews: Andrew (Sarah) Drury, Aaron (Ariel) Frame, James (Ashley) Frame, and David (Sabrina) Frame; and many great-nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents.

Memorials can be made to the family.

### Answers to What is it? Where is it? From page 19

A) Ticket booth at the Main Walk-in Gate on Walnut Street B) Reynolds General Store & Merchantile in the North Village. C) Pads of paper for sale at Printers' Hall in Heritage Museum B E) Chisels at the M. Dodds Woodshop in the Log Village. F) Flag on the canopy of the Smile Machine.



## 2025 Calendar of Events

January 6—Campgrounds letters mailed out.  
 February 10—Campground reservations open to the public.  
 March 12—Country Music Announcement  
 April 23—School Tours Begin  
 April 26-27—Steam School #1  
 May 17-18—Steam School #2  
 May 23-24—Swap Meet  
 May 23-25—Gun Show  
 May 27—Heritage Museums and OT Gift Shop open 7 days a week  
 June 21—Trolley School  
 July 15-21—Henry County Fair  
 August 1-3—Western Illinois Threshers  
 August 7-17—Iowa State Fair  
 August 13—OT Briefing Meeting  
 August 16—OT Campground Opens  
 August 27—Harvest Day Parade & Horse Pull  
 August 28-September 1—2025 Midwest Old Threshers Reunion  
 September 11-13—Printers' Fair  
 October 2-4, 9-11, 16-18, 23-25, 30-31—Thrashers House of Terror  
 October 10-11, 17-18, 24-25—Haunted Rails  
 November 8—Old Threshers Annual Meeting | Foundation Annual Meeting  
 November 22-23—Walk-thru Nights Festival of Lights  
 November 26-December 31—Festival of Lights



# Old Threshers Reunion

**EST. 1950**

**Aug. 28 - Sept. 1, 2025 \* Mount Pleasant, Iowa**



## RESTORATION STORIES WANTED

Are you currently restoring a tractor, gas engine, steam engine or other piece of equipment? We'd love to hear your story and publish your progress in *The Chaff*.

Restoration projects aren't just limited to machinery. Cars, buildings, quilts, tools, the list goes on. Send a photo and a description of your project to [otchaff@oldthreshers.org](mailto:otchaff@oldthreshers.org) or mail to The Chaff, 405 E. Thresher Rd, Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641