



After More Than Seven Million Miles, Veteran Owner-Operator Continues the Long Haul in His Western Star

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Ralph Wittren is no stranger to the open road, in fact, he's traveled more than seven million miles of it. In his 43 years of being an owner-operator, the Springfield, Mo., resident and his wife Betty continue to drive more than 235 days out of the year.

Longevity is a way of life...

With an accident-free driving record hauling anything from explosives to sensitive and classified equipment to supplies for the military during the Persian Gulf War, Wittren has driven trucks from virtually every manufacturer in the industry.

In his current venture with Saturn Transportation, hauling slot machines coast to coast for the largest slot machine manufacturer in the country, Wittren chose a 2004 Western Star 4900 FA with an 82-inch Stratosphere sleeper and an MBE4000 engine. According to Wittren, the choice was based on longevity, fuel efficiency, and comfort. He now boasts an impressive average of seven miles per gallon: the best mileage he's ever received from a truck.

"Western Star is the owner-operator's truck," said Wittren. "We log more than 200,000 miles every year and want something that will keep our costs down and keep us on the road." In the few short months since they bought their Western Star, the Wittrens have driven more than 115,000 miles and love their truck.

Service with Western Star has been great, too. Wittren is thrilled with his local Western Star dealer, Jenkins Diesel Power in Springfield, Mo. "Even though I didn't buy my truck there, they have treated me beautifully. I'll bring my truck in for maintenance and service checks or to

order new accessories, and they are a class act.”

Unique styling for the veteran owner-operator...

Since they are almost always on the road, the Wittrens have continued improving their truck to make it uniquely theirs. So far, they’ve added more than 130 LED lights, chrome plating, and diamond plates. They’ve also decked out the interior with chrome-trimmed gauges and heating controls, satellite TV and radio, and a microwave. “When we pull into a rest stop, there are people all over this truck,” Wittren said.

Fellow truckers aren’t the only ones to take notice. This year, Wittren’s sleeper was featured twice in a popular owner-operator publication: first for the unique exhaust system and chrome detailing on the truck’s RigMaster Generator, and then for Wittren’s second place finish in the Bobtail First Show category of this year’s fourth annual Stars & Stripes Paul K. Young Memorial Truck Beauty Championships, held at the Mid-America Trucking Show in Louisville, Ky.

New to truck beauty contests, Wittren has many plans for his Western Star, including entering photos into the BFGoodrich 2005 Cool Rigs calendar contest and participating in next year’s annual Stars & Stripes competition at the Mid-America show.

With all of those miles, it must be in the genes...

Wittren’s love of the road is certainly something that runs in the family. His wife, three children, and nephew also are in the business. Betty Wittren has been an owner-operator in her own right for more than 25 years.

Wittren’s youngest son and nephew drive for Saturn Transportation, his oldest son drives for Badger Transportation in Wausau, Wis., and his daughter drives refrigerated trucks along with her husband.

Next year, Wittren’s nephew will enter his Western Star truck into the competition at Mid-America as well. “We keep adding new things and plan to change the concept of the truck for next year’s competition. We’d like to enter into the overall Bobtail category – I love to show off this truck.” Wittren said.

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