

Spirit letter



Spirit® Brand Marketer and Dealer News

Spirit® Welcomes Hodges to PMOCO Management Committee

Spirit® Petroleum welcomes Benny Hodges as the newest member of the Management Committee of the Petroleum Marketers Oil Company, LLC. Hodges, who is the immediate past chairman of the Petroleum Marketers Association of America (PMAA), began his official duties on the committee as of January 1, 2014.

Hodges is currently CEO of Hodges Oil Company, based in Belen, New Mexico. Founded in 1923

by Hodges' grandfather, the company currently operates as a traditional wholesale petroleum distributor, with two bulk plants serving around 750 accounts throughout central New Mexico and the Rio Grande corridor.

"My grandfather started the company as a commissioned agency for Continental Oil," Hodges remembers. "My dad took the reins in 1946 when he came back from World War II."

Hodges stepped in following his dad's untimely death in 1969 becoming, at the age of 22, likely the youngest commissioned agent for Continental. "I probably had more confidence than I should have," Hodges muses with a chuckle. "Continental didn't share my confidence, I'm guessing, but it all worked out." Hodges is now beginning his 45th year as the company's CEO.

Hodges looks back fondly at his year as PMAA chairman. "It was just an outstanding experience," he says. "I was very honored by being selected to serve in that capacity, and appreciated the opportunity to meet and work with people all around the country. We have so many wonderful people in our industry and getting to know them, to see them in their own areas at meetings, to see how state organizations operate was not only a pleasure, but very helpful to me in chairing PMAA."

Hodges is eager to continue his PMAA service through participation on the PMOCO Management Committee. "I'm very familiar with the history of PMOCO and how Spirit® operates," he states. "I think the Spirit® brand provides a great member service for PMAA. The Management Committee has done an outstanding job with the resources it has, and I am looking forward to participating in this effort to serve PMAA marketers."



Benny Hodges and daughter Alex stop by the Spirit Petroleum booth at WPMMA 2014.

State Executive Profile

Philip Chamblee – Mississippi Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Stores Association

The path from growing up on a rural Mississippi farm to directing a large professional association in the state capital would seem long and unlikely. But that's exactly the route taken by Philip Chamblee, Executive Director of the Mississippi Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Stores Association. Chamblee's boyhood days doing farmwork alongside his seven siblings left him with a work ethic that has served him well throughout his career. And the time he spent at his grandfather's service station seems to have foreshadowed his current position advocating for today's generation of petroleum marketers and convenience store operators.

A lifelong resident of Mississippi, Chamblee graduated from Mississippi State University, majoring in Management. He began his career in sales and later plant management at companies in central Mississippi, followed

by a long stint managing a Carthage-based insurance company. After that, he joined the Mississippi Funeral Directors Association as its director and lobbyist for two years prior to coming aboard at MPMCSA in 2010. The association was formed by the 2002 merger of the Mississippi Petroleum Marketers Association (which was founded in 1953) and the Mississippi Association of Convenience Stores (founded in 1981). Today MPMCSA represents the business interests of about 100 marketer members and approximately 300 associate members representing the majority of convenience stores in the state of Mississippi.

"For me, the mechanics of association management and advocacy work are very similar to my previous position," Chamblee states. "I'm always working on developing our array of benefits, and helping members take full advantage of the value of their membership investments. And I've enjoyed the opportunity to learn about the issues specific to the petroleum marketing industry in our state, and to lobby on behalf of all of our members so as to maintain and enhance their ability to make a living."

Among those issues is the complex and challenging regulatory environment faced by marketers not only in Mississippi but also across the nation. Chamblee believes that the E15 mandate is an especially critical and concerning development. "It's a huge issue for our members," he says, "particularly due to the fact that Underwriters Laboratories have not actually certified existing dispensers, piping or underground storage tanks for use with E15. It creates a liability problem for our members, and we are very focused on directing our efforts in Washington as well as helping members navigate the situation at home. Overall I'm very proud of the work we're doing."



Philip Chamblee

Chamblee is a believer in the Spirit® brand as a useful tool for marketers in need of branding options. "It's a pleasure working with Vera, and the brand is a great vehicle for our members to access. It's well worth exploring, to see if the Spirit® brand is a fit for a marketer's business plan."

Licensee Profile

St. Romain Oil Company, Inc. – Mansura, LA

St. Romain Oil is a small-sized company, and owners Todd and Sondra St. Romain prefer to keep it that way. “We’re just enjoying making a living here and making it so our clients can make a living in their communities too,” St. Romain offers.

The company was founded in 1970 by St. Romain’s father Edmond, and services 26 sites in east-central Louisiana. “When Dad started it, it was basically a traditional wholesaler with fuels and lubricant products. He had retail clients but also some commercial accounts, like farms, construction companies, logging operations, that sort of thing.” The company expanded with the purchase of several other wholesale distributors, but in 2008 decided to divest its commercial fuels division to focus on direct retail fuel, convenience store and fast food sites. St. Romain Oil is a Shell brand supplier in addition to licensing the Spirit® brand; the company owns thirteen of its sites, while the remaining thirteen are independently owned.

“I started working for the business pretty young,” recalls St. Romain. “I was making deliveries as soon as I got my drivers license. It was part-time, weekend work and I was just doing it to make spending money but kind of without realizing it I was learning the business and that became my career path. I came on full time in 1981, Dad retired in 1993 and Sondra and I acquired my siblings’ shares



Todd St. Romain

to become the sole owners.” St. Romain’s daughter and two sons work at the company as well, making it a three-generation family business. The company actively invests in the local community; its Corporate Works of Mercy program, which entails partnerships with four local charitable organizations, recently won the CS News Spirit Award for Community Outreach.

St. Romain Oil was an early licensee of Spirit®, applying the brand to five of its rural and small-town sites when the investment to comply with Shell re-imaging programs proved too costly. “We valued our business relationship

with those independent retailers; they were mid-volume locations doing a good business for the size of their communities but it just didn’t justify spending the money to keep up with Shell’s new image programs.” St. Romain found that in almost every case the volume at those re-branded Spirit® sites went up, likely because he was able to be more price-competitive. “I use Shell for my refiner brand offer and Spirit® for my price-competitive, unbranded offer. The image is so sharp, and it fit really well with the post-9/11 patriotism sweeping the country. The brand has allowed me to be in the same market twice, and that’s a help to the business.”

Partner Spotlight

Federated Insurance

In February, Spirit® partner Federated Insurance announced its newest program, the Federated Employment Practices NetworkSM (FEPN). Available to Federated clients, the program offers various tools and resources to help employers manage human resource issues, government regulations and employment law changes, all of which carry the potential for exposure to lawsuits. In addition, clients who carry Federated’s Employment-Related Practices Liability coverage receive unlimited access to independent employment law attorneys.

Spirit® Petroleum’s preferred provider of business insurance products, Federated offers a lengthy menu of coverage plans, educational seminars and tools to help licensees make the decisions that best protect their businesses from both the expected and the unexpected. More than 400 trade associations recommend Federated programs. In business since 1904, the company continually develops new



products to address specific concerns of the petroleum industry, including its specialized PetroShieldSM commercial property and casualty program.

Spirit® is also delighted to introduce Jerry J. Leemkuil as Spirit®’s point person at Federated Insurance. A 24-year veteran at Federated (nine of those years working with associations and buying groups), Leemkuil brings a wealth of industry experience to his new role serving the insurance and risk management needs of PMAA marketers and Spirit® licensees. Leemkuil replaces longtime Spirit® account executive Nathan S. Oland, who has taken new responsibilities within the Federated organization.

For more information about the FEPN or any of Federated’s products, please contact:

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