



OMWC celebrates 100 years of quality water at lowest cost

Oildale Mutual Water Company (OMWC), one of the largest and most successful mutual water companies was born October 19, 1919. The private, not-for-profit corporation has reached an incredible milestone: a century of providing its customers the best quality water available at the lowest cost.

Founded by the residents of Oildale a hundred years ago, OMWC continues to build its legacy of a developed provisioned water system that meets the demands of a growing community. While that community – as stockholders – regulates OMWC, its success is greatly due to the care and oversight of dedicated staff and members of the board of directors.

For half of OMWC’s current lifespan, OMWC Board Vice President Don Wattenbarger has looked over OMWC with a strong dedication to its mission.

In 1981, Wattenbarger and the other OMWC board of directors questioned a 685% increase in operations and

maintenance expenses from North of the River Municipal Water District (NORMWD) regarding wholesale water deliveries to OMWC.

Such disputes with NORMWD would continue through to the 21st century.

In 2012, OMWC asked its customers to vote for a more responsible NORMWD board of directors.

“While we have always been willing to pay our fair share of expenses,” OMWC wrote in its March 2012 newsletter, “we must protect our customers from over-charging and lack of financial accountability by our water wholesaler, NORMWD.”

A call-to-action by the OMWC board of directors secured them a win in the November 2012 elections. Three new directors were elected to serve on the NORMWD board and a stronger fiscal position was secured for every taxpayer in the Oildale community.

“The message I got out of the whole

thing,” Wattenbarger said, “is that our customers own a piece of this company, and don’t think they’re not watching.”

“To me,” OMWC General Manager Doug Nunneley said, “one of the things about mutual water companies is that their customers have the ability to interact with the staff and board. It’s their water company. They are shareholders.”

OMWC and NORMWD would go on to successfully consolidate, securing OMWC’s customers lower water bills.

“I think the most significant changes to OMWC have occurred in the last five or six years,” OMWC Board President Lonny Boller said. “The merger/consolidation with NORMWD and new billing options are probably the most significant.”

As OMWC enters its next century of service, the board promises to stay committed to serving the community, a characteristic Wattenbarger has seen in every board member.

“I think the success of OMWC is that the board has always looked out for the interest of all the customers,” Nunneley said.

“I have had the privilege of working with some great board members over my years of service on the board,” Wattenbarger agreed. “We’re all community-minded.”

After a hundred years of service to this community, Boller said OMWC offers one of the lowest water rates in the area and, possibly, the state.

“We are looking to the future,” Boller said, “and replacing retiring personnel with younger people to keep the ball rolling.”

Since the staff and leadership of OMWC are themselves parents and grandparents, they have always had an eye toward responsible management in order to ensure this vital water supply for generations to come. After one hundred years, it appears they have succeeded.

Cheers to the next one hundred years of OMWC!

OMWC AT A GLANCE *A brief timeline of major events*

1909: Oildale, California is founded



1969: North of the River Municipal Water District is formed

1977: Oildale receives treated, imported California State Water Project water from the Kern County Water Agency

1999: The new McCray Street



1909 1919 1950 1969 1977 1999



October 19, 1919: OMWC is founded by area citizens to develop a water system to meet the demands of a growing community



1950: OMWC is relocated to 222 Minner Ave.



January 25, 1999: Snow on Oildale and OMWC

Follow us

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for updates on OMWC, Oildale and, of course, WATER! You will also have the opportunity to join us in the occasional game of "Find The Drop," a favorite of all our current followers!



Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/OildaleWaterCo>



Twitter:
<https://twitter.com/OildaleWaterCo>

Water drop gets new name

This summer, we asked you to help us name our beloved mascot. We waited patiently as many of you submitted your suggestions. One of our favorite entries came from one of our Facebook followers, Jeff Lewis.

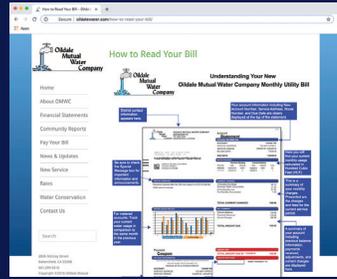
"Dewy Drop sounds kind of catchy," Lewis wrote, "and can be interpreted various ways. He could teach the Dew's & Don'ts of Water Conservation."

We love it and hope you dew, too!



TM

OMWC office, located at 2836
is constructed on a four-acre site



2017: OMWC's online system goes live

1999 2009 2017 2019



2009: A remote meter reading system is implemented, requiring the replacement of existing meters

low falls



October 19, 2019: OMWC turns 100!

New website

Have you visited our website lately? We recently made some changes to help make it easier for you to navigate!



Home

Buttons for the following pages can be found at our Home page and will make it easy for you to visit those pages with just a click of a button:

- ACH Payment Processing Application
- Pay Your Bill Online
- Water Conservation
- Emergency Service



Pay Your Bill

Our payment options (ACH, Recurring and Quick Pay) are listed on our Pay Your Bill page. Each option includes a brief description of how it works. Simply click the button of the payment option you're interested in and you'll be redirected right to it!



How to Read Your Bill

Having trouble reading your bill? Visit our website and scroll over to our menu on the left-hand side. There, you'll find our How to Read Your Bill page under "Rates."



Search

We understand that even after our website renovations, you may still have a hard time finding what you're looking for. That's why we added a Search button to every single page! Simply type in a topic or keyword and you'll be guided to your destination.

The Dew's & Don'ts of Winter Water Conservation

DON'T waste cold running water in the mornings.

DEW collect the cold running water while you wait for it to grow hot. Use the water you collected to water your plants!



DON'T increase your energy costs waiting for your cold running water to heat up.

DEW install an instant water heater near your kitchen sink to reduce wasting water and energy costs.



DON'T water your lawn regularly during the winter.

DEW cut down on the times you water your lawn every week during the winter, especially when it rains.



Board of Directors

- Lonny Boller, President
- Don Wattenbarger, Vice President
- Ross Johnson, Director
- Jason Wattenbarger, Director
- Staci Allison, Director
- Doug Nunneley, General Manager

A man of few words

The powerful story of Hugh Pearson

It is with deep sorrow that we inform you of the death of Oildale Mutual Water Company Board Member Hugh John Pearson. Pearson passed away on September 6, 2019 after battling issues caused by the chemical Agent Orange contracted while fighting in the Vietnam War.

Carla Pearson, Hugh's wife, said Hugh first experienced complications more than 20 years ago, long before she first met him. As soon as Hugh returned from combat, he experienced skin rashes and difficulty walking. When Hugh attempted to receive any type of compensation, he was denied by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

Hugh did not disclose to anyone, not even to Carla, that he was a veteran for years. According to Carla, when Hugh went on a Kern County Honor Flight to see his monument, his life changed.

For two years prior to Hugh's death, Carla said KBAK Eyewitness News Reporter Jeff Platt followed Hugh and his story. When Carla realized how important it was for Hugh to tell his story, she reached out to Platt.

"[Platt] was the only person who could do the story because he knew Hugh," Carla said. "The minute Hugh knew he could tell his story, he got every bit of strength he had to sit on his chair and tell his story."

"[Hugh's] bravery in the face of death was unwavering and admirable," Platt said, "but what really touched me was his compassion and concern for his brothers still fighting. The only reason he wanted to tell his story was to help those who still had hope. His unapologetic selflessness still inspires me."

For more than 30 years, Hugh held a seat on the OMWC



Hugh Pearson

board.

"Hugh showed his dedication," OMWC Vice President Don Wattenbarger said. "He was here when he was sick, when he should have been home."

"I'm going to keep doing my best to keep the water rates low," Hugh told us back in March 2012. "I want to be a good voice on the board."

According to Carla, however, Hugh's voice was often limited to a few words.

"When he did have comments or would take time to talk," Carla said, "Hugh's words were very powerful. They had a lot of meaning to them. Hugh wasn't a person who would just talk to talk. When he spoke, you needed to listen to him. There was a lesson to be

learned."

Despite not being an Oildale native, Hugh told us in 2012 he had no plans to leave the board.

"He enjoyed serving the people of Oildale," Carla said. "He was very passionate about it. When it was close for him to pass, Hugh cried about not being able to be on the board anymore. He always wanted to - and hoped - he was making Oildale better. He loved Oildale; it was everything to him."

Before serving on the board, Hugh was a fireman with the City of Bakersfield in the '70s, a home builder for 20 years and, later, a property manager.

In 1999, Hugh and Carla opened Hugh Pearson's Quick Lube, Smog and Wash on North Chester. Together, the two enjoyed traveling and visiting



Mutual Water Company Vice President Don Wattenbarger talks about Hugh Pearson's contributions to OMWC and the Oildale community at the OMWC monthly board meeting on November 19.

their adult children, stock car racing and advocating for Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) after Carla's 23-year-old stepson, Adam Pierce, was killed by a drunk driver in 2002.

Hugh's obituary in The Bakersfield Californian reads:

Hugh was preceded in death by his parents John and June Pearson of Bakersfield. He is survived by his wife Carla and his four children. Daughter Sherri Hatley and son-in-law Dennis Hatley of Clark Fork, ID, daughter Lisa Hill and son-in-law Dustin Hill of Bakersfield, CA, son Cale Pearson and daughter-in-law Meghan Pearson of Redmond, OR and son Andy Pierce of Bakersfield, CA. Grandkids Joslyn Camp, Cole Camp, Kala Hill, Callie Hill, Gracie Hill, Colin Pearson, Ian Pearson and Nolan Pierce. Siblings Denia Pearson, Tim Pearson and Gareth Pearson.

— To view Hugh Pearson's story by KBAK Eyewitness News Reporter Jeff Platt, type the following link in your web browser:

<https://www.facebook.com/JeffPlattTV/videos/vb.1508650202789932/2524450457788287/?type=2&theater>



From left to right: Ryan Nunneley, Staci Allison, Ross Johnson, Lonny Boller, Carla Pearson, Don Wattenbarger, Allan Evans, Doug Nunneley and Jason Wattenbarger. The Oildale Mutual Water Company board presented Carla Pearson, Hugh Pearson's wife, with Hugh's resolution. They thanked Carla for Hugh's service and dedication to the board and the Oildale community.