

Taking the High Road

Wayne Johnson, the 2010 NITL Logistics Executive of the Year, remains on the cutting edge of legislative reform. As he enters the next stage of his distinguished career, Johnson chairs the NITL's Highway Committee and continues to share his knowledge with a new generation of shippers.

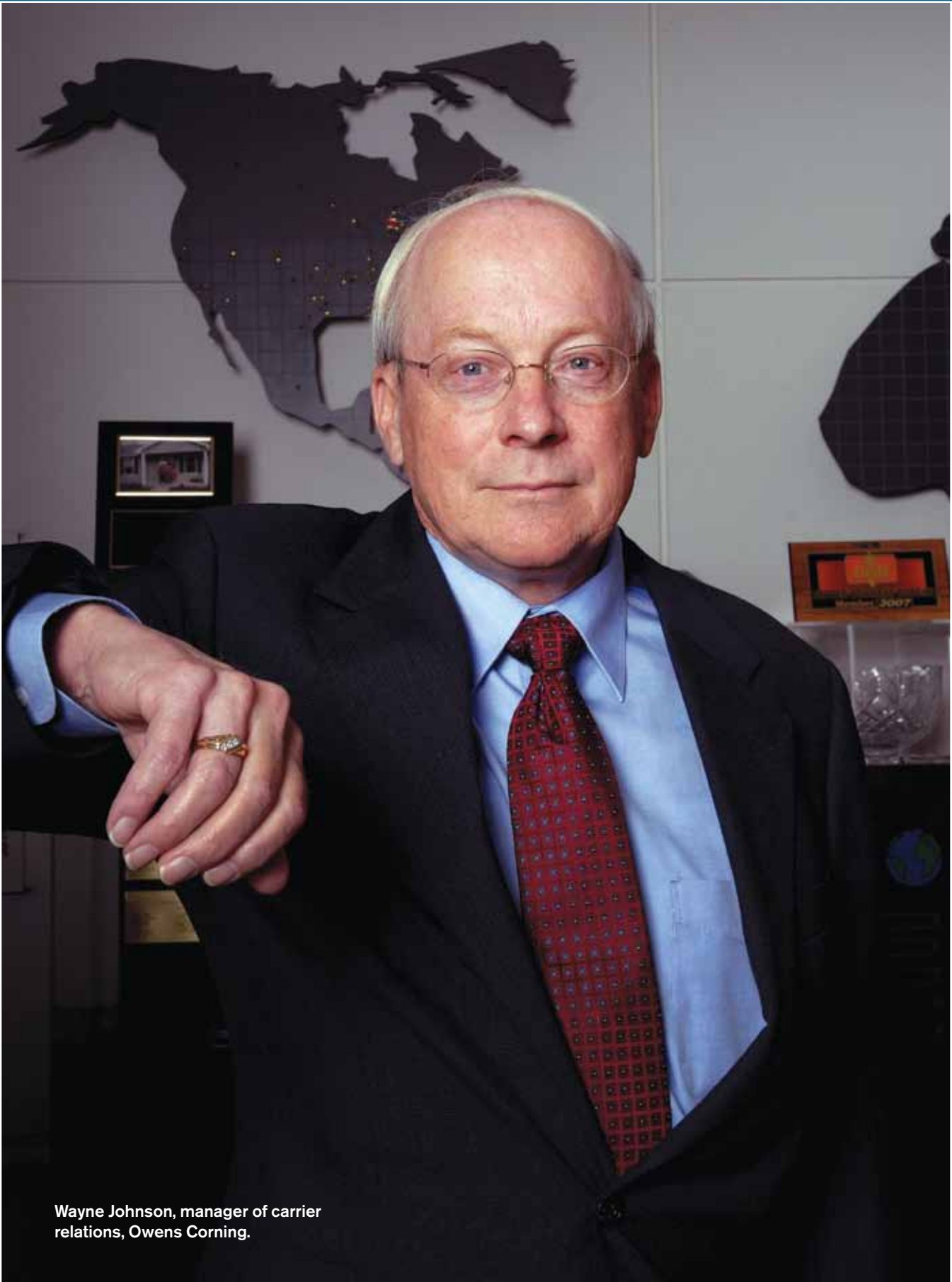
BY PATRICK BURNSON, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

The first thing one notices about Wayne Johnson is that he's still a man on the move. Given the number of professional responsibilities he has been charged with over the course of his career, this should hardly come as a surprise. But perhaps his most distinguished feature, say his colleagues, is that he always takes the high road in any task or negotiation—a noble characteristic that has earned him the respect of the industry at large.

Johnson is presently the manager of carrier relations for Owens Corning, headquartered in Toledo, Ohio. For over 34 years he has worked in the field of logistics and transportation as a shipper, a carrier executive, and an educator. He has over 29 years of management responsibility with *Fortune 100* companies in the United States and Mexico and worked with Landstar in Philadelphia for five years. Johnson also brings eight years of teaching experience in transportation and accounting to the table.

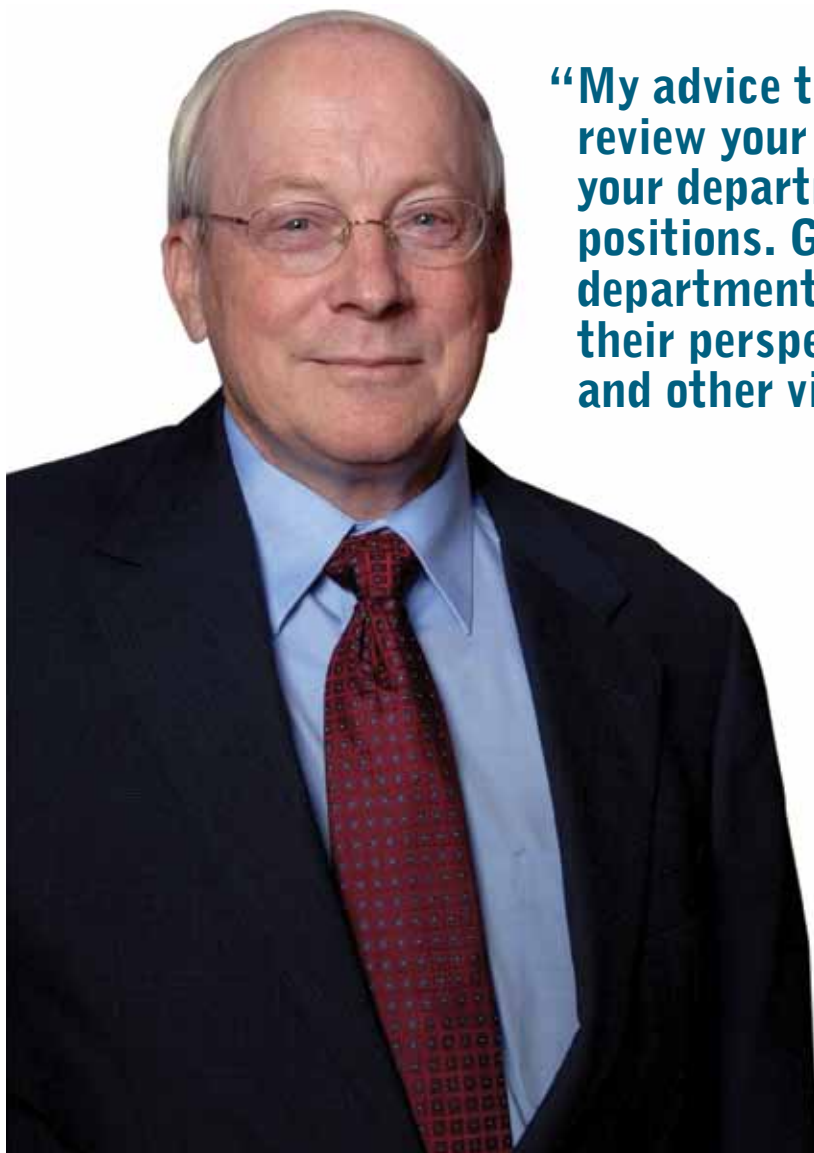
On top of his daily commitments over the years, he's found time to be the Chairman of the National Industrial Transportation League's (NITL) Highway Committee, serve on the League's Board of Directors, and remain an active member of its Rail Committee.

In recognition of his remarkable energy, level-headedness, and ethical nature, the NITL and *Logistics Management (LM)* have chosen to present Wayne Johnson with the 2010 NITL Logistics Executive



Wayne Johnson, manager of carrier relations, Owens Corning.

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a CPA and instead aimed toward a career in transportation with a major in accounting and transportation. After I graduated, I came back and taught that same class at Wesleyan.

LM: Who were your mentors, and how did they help shape your values and work ethic?

Johnson: The very first mentor was definitely that Transportation Law and Management professor I had in college. Then there was the Milwaukee Railroad rate clerk in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, who challenged me on each and every rate interpretation that came along. As a new traffic analyst, I would call and ask how to interpret various provisions in the old 28300 rail tariffs and how to apply the standing rate increases.

Though I didn't necessarily agree with what she was saying, her interpretation seemed responsible. It wasn't until I began to study for the ICC Practitioners examine that I found the shippers reasoning for not paying the "legal rate," which was called the "lawful rate." This newfound knowledge gave me reason to take our discussions to a new level. Her challenges helped me, as I would continue to scramble for answers to questions she would raise or I would develop during our conversations.

Besides the two I've already mentioned, there is Tom Donas, vice president of transportation at Grain Processing Corporation; Don Mayoras, president at Sun Carriers; Sam Spencer, an agent at Landstar Logistics; and Jeff Brashares, vice president

of the Year Award, also known as the McCullough Award. This honor is co-sponsored by NITL and *LM*. The award is named after John T. McCullough, a former chief editor of *Distribution* magazine, a predecessor of *LM*. Johnson will receive the award on Monday, November 15, at the opening ceremonies to NITL's 103rd Annual Meeting & TransComp Exhibition in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

"Wayne is the go-to guy when it comes to getting anything done," says NITL President Bruce Carlton. "And we always know that he's going to be fully committed to success. Right now, he's leading the way on reforming interstate trucking regulations—and as you will

learn after speaking with Wayne, he's passionate about this issue."

In an exclusive interview with *LM* on the eve of this award, Johnson did indeed share his passion for trucking regulations as well as some of the formative "lessons" he's picked up during his storied career.

Logistics Management: When did you know that a career in logistics was right for you?

Johnson: I knew it was what I wanted to do when I spoke with my Transportation Law and Management professor in my first transportation course at Iowa Wesleyan College. After that discussion, I changed my mind about being

at RES-1. All of these individuals have added positively to my career in transportation.

LM: Can you pinpoint any specific early influences that stand out more than the others?

Johnson: Well, the early experience working with the rail clerk was certainly my first lesson on keeping accurate and detailed records of all rail transactions. But I also credit my Chief in the Navy who helped me make E-5 in just two years. In my career there have been many single individuals that have coached me and headed me in the right direction.

LM: Can you tell us a little something about your first job and how it influenced your continued growth in this profession?

Johnson: My first full time logistics position wasn't called logistics at all. I was called a "traffic analyst." I came to get this position when I was transferred from a feed mill in Illinois to the corporate headquarters of the same company in Iowa. I was 23 years old and fresh out of the Navy with no college education. So, throwing feed bags, driving a forklift, and loading trucks was better than working at a retail store. At the same time, I started getting my college education by driving 56 miles one way to college three times a week.

As a traffic analyst I was responsible for applying milling-in-transit credits of inbound corn to outbound starch products. I was also responsible for filing supplements to over 300 tariffs. Terms like "exparte," "through rates," and "per diem" were introduced to me and embedded in my mind and used on a daily basis. From there I would learn how to master those terms as I

advanced in the world of transportation management and law.

LM: What do you regard as your most innovative achievement? Have there been any "best practices" you are credited with initiating?

Johnson: I guess the most notable innovative achievement I can take some credit for is the region-to-region pricing strategy for both rail and truck introduced at a paper company I worked for in Tennessee. This process allowed the company to have only 13 motor carrier rates from 13 origin regions to 13 destination regions that covered the entire United States.

It wasn't too popular with the trucking companies. The regional process also introduced the company's first origin-to-destination region rail rates, which were not too popular with the railroads. The new process challenged the trucking companies and railroads to price competitively throughout a large region of the U.S. that they had yet to reach. And remember, this was happening between 1987 and 1992, when deregulation was grabbing hold and taking its toll on railroads like the Southern Pacific Railroad and many small trucking companies.

LM: Every career has its speed bumps. Can you share some of the obstacles you have faced along the way?

Johnson: The obstacles that I encountered were created by certain individuals and the subsequent politics that were created inside the work place. In transportation, you meet all kinds of people with different goals and ambitions, and sometimes their perspectives do not match yours—so something has

to give. My advice to anyone is to always review your position as it relates to your department and/or company positions. Get to know the various departments outside your area and their perspective on transportation and other vital issues. Prepare for the future and don't underestimate the changes that may occur.

LM: Your new job at Owens Corning must be fascinating, especially because you've had to manage it during one of the worst recessions in U.S. history. What lessons have you learned recently?

Johnson: Two lessons right off the top: Relationships are key; and what goes around comes around. Get to know your company's markets and keep up with changes in those markets. Communicate to your carriers any extreme changes in movement of products that you control so that they can adjust. If they don't change to meet your needs then it's best for both parties to find other partners. Always be professional and keep personal feelings out of the shipper/carrier relationships.

LM: What do you see for the next stage in your career?

Johnson: I began that new stage a few months ago at Owens Corning. They understand that working with partners in the supply chain is vital, and I am now charged with facilitating that process.

LM: Finally, can you describe how the NITL has helped you and what's currently on your agenda?

Johnson: The NITL allows an individual to get involved and change the logistics and transportation world as we currently know it. A good example is the "size and weight" issue that Congress and the President face today. Through work on the NITL Highway Committee, the NITL Board of Directors, outside associations, and even speaking before Congress, I have not let the issue rest. Now with the help of many, many others, size is at the top of the Western States' agenda as they have asked for an exemption from the national interstate restriction on weight. □

—Patrick Burnson is Executive Editor of Logistics Management

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