

Wearcheck celebrates 20 years in business

WHEN WEARCHECK started in 1974 it had three staff members and the first monthly sample count was a grand 69 samples - every one taken by Gary Brown. Today Wearcheck is a R7 million operation with a state-of-the-art laboratory processing more than 20 000 samples a month.

"We would like to thank all of our customers for their loyalty and support over the years," says Gary who joined forces with Lesley Crawford to form what was then known as McCraw Laboratories 20 years ago.

Turnover rises

They were assisted from the start by Zeph Ndlovu (now the company driver) and, a year later, by typist Vigie Manikum (now senior laboratory assistant), by which time turnover had increased seven-fold.

"What is particularly gratifying is that our first three cus-

tomers are still valued clients," says Gary.

"Hilton Devenish of Natal United Transport (now Unitrans) gave us our first contract in September 1974. This was a one-off survey and it was another two years before we were awarded an on-going contract, but Unitrans remains one of our biggest customers today."

First customers

Morris Wilby of Sappi became the second client to try out Wearcheck's oil analysis programme in October 1974, with Mike Bellis of Corobrik signing on shortly afterwards.

The company changed its name to Wearcheck in 1976 following a visit to Wearcheck USA and, as the company grew, Wally Crawford came aboard as managing director.

An important milestone in the company's history was the purchase of the "Spark", a sophisticated spark emission



Vigie Manikum, Zeph Ndlovu, Lesley Crawford and Gary Brown have reason to smile as they celebrate 20 years with Wearcheck.

spectrometer which measured for 17 different elements simultaneously.

"The Spark cost R167 000 at a time when our turnover was about R30 000 a month. It was an enormous step for us that really moved us into the big league," says Gary. "However, as technology changes so fast, we have since replaced it with a more

advanced instrument."

Other high points were the year that Barlows Tractor Company/Caterpillar stopped doing their own oil analysis and gave all their work to Wearcheck, the computerisation of the entire operation, and the company's recent move to their new custom-built headquarters and laboratory in Westmead.

Survey shows increase in customer satisfaction

A THIRD national survey conducted for Wearcheck by the Dorrian Consulting Group during September this year once again showed an increase in customer satisfaction compared with the results of last year's survey.

In the past surveys were conducted telephonically using a small sample of customers. This year the survey

was conducted via mail in an effort to include more customers, and respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire.

On a scale of 1 to 6, Wearcheck customers rated the company above 5 for:

- ◆ Technology
- ◆ Professionalism

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SEASON'S GREETINGS

WE WOULD LIKE to wish all our customers a very happy Christmas and a prosperous 1995.

Instead of sending out Christmas cards this year, we have decided to donate the equivalent cost to READ Educational Trust, a national charity whose mission is to enable all South Africans to read, speak and write with greater competency.

Thank you for your understanding and for sharing in our support of this worthy cause.



Unitrans endorses oil analysis

LESS THAN 1 % of oil samples from Unitrans Reef's considerable heavy vehicle fleet currently show critical readings in comparison with 20 % 18 years ago when the company started on the Wearcheck programme.

According to Unitrans Reef's technical manager, Norman Wood, this is the result of a successful interactive relationship between the two companies which has been built up over the years.

"Good communication and a symbiotic working relationship between the laboratory and the client are imperative to achieve the best results from a preventive maintenance programme centring around oil analysis," Mr Wood maintains.

Maintenance

"The problems experienced by technical managers have not changed dramatically over

the years ... we are now handling them better as we streamline our maintenance systems."

When asked whether Wearcheck is an integral part of Unitrans Reef's maintenance programme, Mr Wood replies, "Wearcheck is my maintenance programme."

Prevention

"Our philosophy is to prevent unit failure before it happens which not only minimises the cost of spares but, more importantly, reduces costly downtime. Through the Wearcheck programme we can analyse, diagnose and rectify any problems in our normal preventive maintenance programme."

He cites a new batch of V10 engines which were mysteriously experiencing low oil pressure as an example of the effectiveness of oil analysis.

"We found the root of the



Norman Wood, technical manager of Unitrans Reef, runs a successful maintenance programme centred around oil analysis.

problem immediately after receiving the oil sample reports. The suppliers were spray-painting the engines after they had fitted the oil separators, clogging the separators with paint and starving the engines of air. This in turn caused the oil to push out through the air cleaner system. Through oil analysis we were able to rectify the fault before it developed into a major problem."

Experiment

He is also proud of an experiment conducted with Mobil and Wearcheck in 1979

when Mobil brought out their 15W40 Multigrade oil. Using oil analysis they were able to take the oil to 90 000 km with oil filter changes at normal intervals under extreme test conditions.

One million km

The Unitrans/Wearcheck combination also resulted in the first ever Mercedes Benz truck in South Africa to reach the one million km mark.

Wearcheck and Unitrans have come a long way together since the day Gary Brown first approached Norman Wood in 1976. Although the oil companies were doing Unitrans's oil analysis at the time, the two men convinced management that Wearcheck was the route to go, a move that was justified immediately because premature engine failures decreased dramatically after Unitrans joined the programme.

Wearcheck wins Comrades shield

WEARCHECK was honoured to be awarded the first ever Waste-Tech Floating Shield for innovative waste management during the Comrades Marathon this year. The competition, sponsored by Waste-Tech, was organised by the Keep Durban Beautiful Association (KDBA) to encourage companies responsible for refreshment stations to keep the Comrades route tidy.

"All of the stations do a good job cleaning up after the race but some do that little bit extra and we wanted to recognise their efforts," explained Comrades official, Tony Morrison.

Stations were judged on an audit system which examined how successfully waste



Alain Sauvage of Waste-Tech presents Lesley Crawford with the Waste-Tech floating shield.

management facilities provided by the Comrades Marathon Association were used.

Said Sara Freeman of KDBA, "While most of the stations tagged waste management on to their other duties, Wearcheck went above the call of duty. They supplied their own waste containers and used

their own vehicle during the race to retrieve waste that had been strewn along the route."

At a prize-giving ceremony in September, Waste-Tech's marketing and sales manager, Alain Sauvage, said that it was a pleasure to present the new shield to Wearcheck, particularly as Waste-Tech was one of Wearcheck's oldest customers.

Survey results

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- ◆ Service efficiency
- ◆ Knowledge
- ◆ Reliability
- ◆ Trustworthiness
- ◆ Caring
- ◆ Friendliness

Wearcheck managing director Wally Crawford said that the company would continue to strive to provide customers with superior service and to meet customer expectations.

New instrument is state-of-the-art

A NEW AUTOMATIC Particle Quantifier (PQ) which measures magnetic debris in oil has replaced Wearthcheck's manual system, dramatically increasing speed of analysis and improving productivity in the laboratory.

The new PQ90A ferrous debris monitor - the only one in South Africa - was manufactured at the Swansea Tribology Centre in Wales which laboratory manager Alistair Geach visited in March this year.

More accurate

"The new instrument is both faster and more accurate," he said. "The old PQ2000 - which was the best technology available when we bought it - required individual samples to be loaded manually and was susceptible to variations in operator techniques.



This procedure was also relatively time-consuming, taking up to one minute to test each sample.

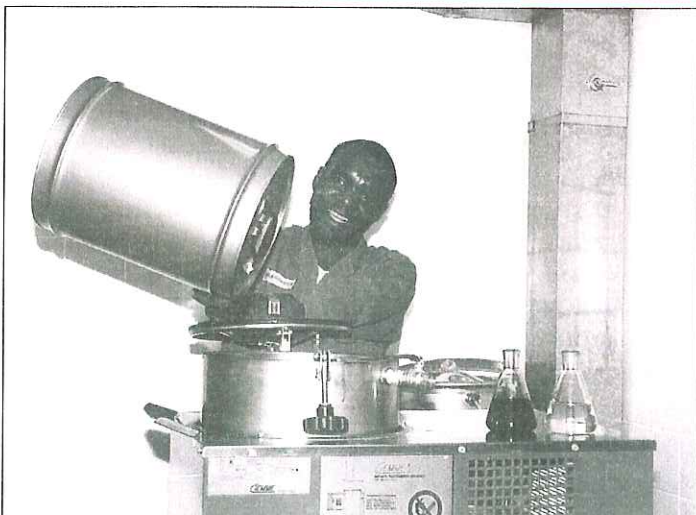
"With the new PQ, samples are loaded on to a circular carousel and fed automatically past the sensor. It reads 20 samples in less than four minutes and does an automatic cal-

ibration check between samples."

Minor modifications to the instrument have been completed and it is now fully operational and linked to the computer network, enabling sample readings to be assimilated directly into Wearthcheck's computerised system.

Lab assistant, Prinda Narasi, operates the latest addition to the Wearthcheck laboratory - the PQ90A, a state-of-the-art automatic ferrous debris monitor.

Wearthcheck introduces solvent recycling



Store room assistant Sizwe Ndlovu prepares to pour a quantity of used solvent into Wearthcheck's new solvent recycling plant.

WEARCHECK's new solvent recovery plant is both cost-effective and environment-friendly. Since it was installed in September it has completely eliminated the need to dispose of used solvent and is set to save the company more than R1000 a month.

The laboratory uses solvent to dilute samples for analysis, for flushing auto sampling systems between samples and for general cleaning. Recycled solvent can be used for all of these purposes except diluting samples for the ICP fast oil analyser.

Small losses

"This means that the only new solvent required will be for the ICP instrument and this will replace the small solvent losses we experience each time we recycle," says laboratory manager, Alistair Geach.

The recycling process is simple. The dirty solvent containing used oil is distilled under vacuum at reduced temperature to prevent the undesirable breakdown of oil components. The clean, reclaimed solvent is then collected for reuse in the laboratory and the oil residue is disposed of.

Frequent recovery

"The solvent may be recovered many times over and we are investigating sending the oil residue to an external recycling plant," says Alistair.

The new plant, which can process 60 litres of solvent per day, is well able to handle Wearthcheck's current requirements as well as substantial increases in the future. It can be run unsupervised and switches itself off at the end of the process.

Rally honours for MD

MANAGING DIRECTOR Wally Crawford and rally partner, Frank Wingels, steered their Volvo 850 GLT Auto Estate into second place in their class in the 1994 Total Economy Run earlier this year ... and achieved the distinction of driving the most fuel-efficient automatic vehicle overall.

Partners

Says Wally, "Frank and I are old rally partners. We used to race Volvo's together in endurance races in the fifties and early sixties before Volvo

retired from South Africa. The 1994 Total Economy Run was Volvo's first re-entry into motor sport since the company's return to the country earlier this year."

The Total Economy Run enables car manufacturers to measure the fuel economy of their cars over a 1 100 km route which includes a true range of South African motoring conditions - dirt and tarred roads, straight and winding routes, level ground and mountain passes. It took place over three days in the OFS and Northern Cape in July.



A winning team - Frank Wingels, GM of Volvo SA, (standing) and Wearcheck MD Wally Crawford in the passenger seat of the Volvo 850 GLT which took honours in this year's Total Economy Run.

Meet Daan the new diagnostician

DAAN BURGER, who joined Wearcheck as a diagnostician at the beginning of August, brings with him a wealth of experience in aircraft and air-conditioning engineering.

After completing his apprenticeship as an aircraft electrician with SAA in Johannesburg, he remained with the company for a total of 13 years doing trouble-shooting and condition monitoring on jet engines and auxiliary power units. He then moved to Natal to work on automotive air-conditioners at Smiths Manufacturing for six years.

"There has been a resur-



gence in the use of synthetic oils for new environment-friendly refrigerants which do not deplete the ozone layer," Daan said. "Because their composition differs markedly from natural oils, they require a different diagnostic approach which adds variety to our work."

Daan does not have much time to indulge

his outdoor hobbies - underwater hockey, scuba diving and spear fishing - as he is completing his second year of datametrics at Unisa. He decided to study part-time to enable him to keep abreast of the rapid developments in computer science.

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Position.....

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Business Address

.....Phone (.....)..... Fax (.....)

Type of Business.....

I would like more information about: Wearcheck Infocheck

New outlets for Wearcheck kits

WEARCHECK customers can now obtain Wearcheck kits from more than a dozen outlets countrywide since Barlows Equipment Company started stocking them at a number of their branches and depots.

In addition to Wearcheck's Johannesburg and Pinetown offices, the kits will now be available at the following Barlows branches: Bloemfontein, Botswana, Cape Town, Isando, Middelburg, New Germany, Windhoek (Namtrac).

The kits will also be stocked at Barlows depots in

Kuruman, Nelspruit, Port Elizabeth and Springbok.

"This arrangement is far more convenient for customers who are not located near Wearcheck offices," said managing director Wally Crawford.

NB As all invoicing for kits is undertaken by Wearcheck, customers are asked to quote their Wearcheck debtor's code when collecting kits from Barlows branches or depots. Customers who have difficulty finding their debtor's code may telephone Melanie Hynd on (031) 700-5460.

New-look reporting forms

WEARCHECK HAS introduced new-look reporting forms - one bearing the new Wearcheck logo and one featuring both the Wearcheck and the Barlows logos.

The Barlows/Wearcheck form was designed for customers using Caterpillar equipment and reflects the

new working relationship between the two companies. However, Caterpillar users who wish to receive the standard Wearcheck form may choose to do so.

Customer codes have also been standardised for ease of processing.

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