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THE magazine of railroading

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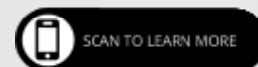
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From the Editor



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The Alaska Railroad celebrates two anniversaries in 2023.

One hundred years ago, then-President Warren Harding marked its completion with the driving of a golden spike.

Federal representation at the event was appropriate. While other railroads had been built in Alaska, connecting Seward and Fairbanks through rugged terrain required government financing.

The Washington connection would come into play again, 50 years ago, when the ARR was called on to support construction of the Alaska Pipeline. The massive project stirred political infighting and tested the railroad's limits.

Bill Anderson was closely involved in the battle to secure funding for the railroad. His story starts on page 20.

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Key questions remain after NTSB hearing on East Palestine

Decision to burn chemicals, car-inspection practices scrutinized in two-day event

▲ The massive cleanup effort in East Palestine, Ohio, as it looked on Feb. 8, 2023. A two-day NTSB hearing addressed key issues from the Norfolk Southern derailment and hazmat event. Sol Tucker

NORFOLK SOUTHERN found its car inspection practices under scrutiny, as well as its role in the decision to burn off hazardous chemicals and the transmission of hazardous-material information to first responders, during a National Transportation Safety Board hearing on the Feb. 3, 2023, NS derailment in East Palestine, Ohio.

The two-day hearing at East Palestine High School also examined wayside detector standards, tank car safety, and first-responder preparedness. It provided information for the NTSB's final report on the derailment and burn-off of highly toxic vinyl chloride.

Jason Cox, national representative for the Brotherhood of Railroad Carmen, told the board NS is skirting car inspection rules. Instead of having carmen perform inspections that look at 90 to 105 points on each side of a freight car, NS is increasingly relying on train crews to perform inspections that ex-

amine just a dozen points.

Cox said a more thorough inspection may have identified the suspect wheel bearing on a hopper car that the NTSB has said caused the derailment. But several other witnesses and industry experts said wheel bearing problems rarely show up on a visual inspection because their components are sealed.

The NTSB heard conflicting testimony on venting and burning the contents of five tank cars of vinyl chloride. Representatives of OxyVinyls, producer of the chemical, said they told NS multiple times that they doubted the contents of the cars were undergoing the chemical reaction that would lead to an explosion. NS didn't pass on this information to first responders.

But Robert Wood, NS' director of hazardous materials, said those on site believed they saw "multiple signs" of the reaction. East Palestine Fire Chief Keith Drabick, who made the call to vent and burn, said the

OxyVinyls information would not likely have produced a different decision.

NTSB chair Jennifer Homendy clearly was concerned with the time it took NS to get information on the chemicals in the train consist to first responders. The train derailed about 8:54 p.m.; Homendy laid out a timeline in which various agencies received information between 10:23 p.m. and 2:30 a.m. — then displayed an email showing an NS contractor involved in cleanup efforts received the information just 12 minutes after the accident. Scott Deutsch, NS' regional hazardous materials manager, said he could not explain that timeline.

NTSB members questioned the lack of regulations covering wayside defect detectors and the different temperature thresholds that railroads set for critical hot bearing alerts that require crews to stop and inspect their trains. — *Bill Stephens and David Lassen*

Brightline celebrates end of construction

'Bright Spike' event marks readiness of Orlando route

WITH A DISPLAY OF CIVIC SUPPORT from mayors along its route, Brightline on June 21 celebrated completion of construction on its route to Orlando, as well as the contribution its employees have made in forging a unique passenger rail operation.

The event at Brightline's Orlando International Airport station came as crew qualification runs and train-control testing continued in advance of the start of Orlando-Miami service. A date for the service launch has not yet been set.

It also came on the same day the U.S. Coast Guard implemented a drawbridge schedule at the single-track St. Lucie River bridge at Stuart, Fla., that has the potential to pose major issues for Brightline's operating plans (see below).

"This bridge issue isn't the first and won't be the last challenge we're going to encounter," Brightline President and CEO Patrick

Goddard says, "and that's part of our culture. We understand that this is not going to be easy, that there isn't a blueprint, that we have to figure out things as we go along."

"The type of individuals we've hired to take on this task are not the faint of heart and are passionate about delivering this ultimate experience," Goddard says. "This is not a difficult thing to support — a great example of what is possible for intercity passenger rail in North America."

One notable aspect of the event was the enthusiasm of Brightline employees when they lined up for a group picture with their yellow "bright spikes" after first posing with the mayors and Brightline executives. Many of these people came to the company with the promise they would be a part of something special, and it was clear they



Brightline executives and employees are joined by several Florida mayors for a photo marking the completion of construction for expansion of service to Orlando. Bob Johnston

have not been disappointed.

How did it happen? Goddard didn't hesitate with his response.

"Wes Edens, our founder," Goddard says. "He had a vision for this thing way back — it wasn't just about the commodity of transportation. This is about creating a brand experience that guests would appreciate, and allow us to develop a team-mate culture around values and to do something transformative to the state. It's been a real honor and pleasure to help that manifest itself." — *Bob Johnston*

Bridge ruling could disrupt rail service

Drawbridge plan disregards Brightline schedules

A U.S. COAST GUARD ORDER changing operating rules for Florida East Coast Railway's single-track drawbridge over the St. Lucie River at Stuart, Fla., could seriously disrupt Brightline's plans for hourly service between Miami and Orlando.

The change could also result in FEC freight trains blocking six highway crossings in Stuart for extended periods.

The "temporary deviation" order, which the Coast Guard says is to test the new plan, began June 21 and is set to run through Dec. 17. It dictates that the bridge must open at 15 and 45 minutes past each hour and stay open for up to 15 minutes to allow boats to pass. An approaching train could delay the opening no more than 5 minutes.

The bridge had previously remained open for marine traffic, closing for trains after boaters received an 8-minute advance

notice. News reports said Brightline sought to keep the bridge closed for up to 45 minutes per hour from 5 a.m. to 9:45 p.m.

The order says the rule "allows the drawbridge to operate on a more predictable schedule and allow for the reasonable usage of competing modes of transportation." In fact, the time it would take Brightline trains to cross would only keep the waterway blocked for no more than 15 minutes in each instance — just not necessarily at 15 and 45 minutes past the hour.

According to the *Palm Beach Post*, Brightline and Florida East Coast said in a statement that they are prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to reverse the decision and cannot comply with the Coast Guard directive. Brightline said the decision "will also impact freight and commerce throughout the entire state of Florida," and



A Florida East Coast train crosses the St. Lucie River bridge at Stuart, Fla. Bob Johnston

that it expected to lose more than 50% of its customers, which would threaten its ability to pay off private activity bond stockholders.

The ruling differs from how rail and marine traffic interact at Fort Lauderdale's New River drawbridge. There, an electronic message board with a countdown clock and a smartphone app keep mariners informed.

The Fort Lauderdale bridge is shorter and is double track. Realistically, the single-track St. Lucie River span will require longer closure times, especially if a freight train is involved. But coexistence of boats and fast, scheduled passenger trains is on display daily in South Florida. — *Bob Johnston*



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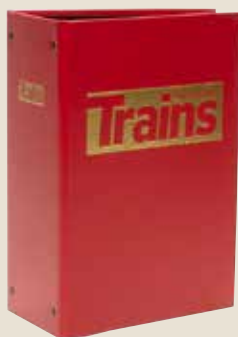
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A Family Railroad Fun Guide

Chicago-St. Louis Amtrak trains begin 110-mph operation

Long-awaited higher speeds cut 30 minutes from original Lincoln Service schedules

THE LONG PROCESS of bringing 110-mph operation to Amtrak's *Lincoln Service* route between Chicago and St. Louis reached its payoff on June 26, with new schedules that shave about 15 minutes off the prior 90-mph operation and a half-hour off the timetable when top speeds were 79 mph.

At a Chicago Union Station press conference, Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker said, "With this vital piece of the transition to high speed, we've cut down on the travel times and improved reliability, safety, and convenience along the way." He thanked Amtrak for "carrying this project to the finish line."

The infrastructure upgrades required for 110-mph running cost some \$1.96 billion and took more than 20 years, struggling to achieve the final goal because of challenges in developing the necessary train control system. Trains actually began 110-mph operation in May, but schedule

changes were held back to ensure the system was operating properly and to allow monitoring of actual travel times.

Trains first reached 100 mph north of Springfield, Ill., during a 2002 media demonstration, and 110 mph over a short stretch of track between Dwight and Pontiac, Ill., beginning in 2015. Neither system involved proved to be reliable.

The route now uses Wabtec's Interoperable Electronic Train Management System. More than three years of testing on Union Pacific between Joliet and Alton, Ill., were required to achieve Federal Railroad Administration certification at 110 mph. A unique component is an overlay of Alstom's Incremental Train Control System, which monitors grade crossings for obstructions.

Along with the development of the train control system, Illinois required installation of four-quadrant gates and loop detectors



A southbound *Lincoln Service* train passes a Union Pacific stack train at Elkhart, Ill., near Springfield, on March 11, 2023, prior to the start of 110-mph operation. Steve Smedley

at grade crossings; closure of 39 crossings deemed at risk; installation of pedestrian gates and fencing; complete rehabilitation of what had been a deteriorating roadbed; and construction of additional passing sidings with high-speed turnouts.

Though travel times have been shortened, the faster schedules continue to reflect slower running on the route's Chicago-Joliet and Alton-St. Louis segments. About 10 minutes of inbound recovery time, or padding, has been added to improve arrival reliability should *Lincoln Service* trains encounter unpredictable freight train interference. — David Lassen and Bob Johnston

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THE CAT RETURNS CSX has unveiled the second in its new series of heritage locomotives, honoring predecessor Chessie System. The ES44AH locomotive unveiled in June was painted at the railroad's shop in Waycross, Ga. It joins the B&O heritage unit released in May. CSX Transportation

NEWS BRIEFS

Industry groups sue over California locomotive emission rules

The rail industry's major trade groups, the **ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN RAILROADS** and the **AMERICAN SHORT LINE AND REGIONAL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION**, filed suit June 16 over **CALIFORNIA AIR RESOURCES BOARD** regulations that would require zero-emission locomotives within the state by 2035. Among other arguments, the AAR and ASLRRRA say the rule is dependent on technology that has not been sufficiently tested and is not commercially available, and threatens the financial viability of many short lines.

With its service once again disrupted by a landslide in San Clemente, Calif., Amtrak's **PACIFIC SURFLINER** announced service reductions between Los Angeles and San Diego from five to three round trips daily, as well as a halt to checked baggage and a pause to business-class service south of Irvine, Calif. Operations through San Clemente were halted June 5 because of additional debris from a slide near the Casa Romantica Cultural Center. It's the third such interruption since September 2022;



in that time, the *Surfliners* have offered through service just 41 days and have seen ridership slip from 75% of pre-pandemic levels to just 40%. **METROLINK** service to Oceanside has also been suspended.

Surfliner at Chatsworth Rocks, David Lassen

CPKC and **CSX TRANSPORTATION** announced they would create a direct corridor linking the Southeast with Texas and Mexico by acquiring 168-mile short line **MERIDIAN &**

BIGBEE from **GENESEE & WYOMING**. That railroad interchanges with CPKC at Meridian, Miss., and with CSX near Montgomery, Ala. Each Class I line would acquire or operate a portion of the Meridian & Bigbee, creating an interchange at or near Myrtlewood, Ala.

CPKC and **CSX** also announced a joint venture to develop and deploy kits to convert locomotives from diesel to hydrogen fuel-cell power. The project will begin with CSX converting a locomotive at its shop in Huntington, W.Va., using a kit developed by CPKC. CSX said the first unit is expected to be operational in the first quarter of 2024, and that the project will concentrate on low-horsepower units.

The federal **PIPELINE AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SAFETY ADMINISTRATION** has proposed a requirement that railroads maintain electronic information on hazardous material in train consists, and transmit that information to first responders as soon as an incident occurs. Responder agencies in a 10-mile radius would receive the information.

Regulations threaten California's short lines

Locomotive tax and looming ban on older power will be a large burden for small railroads



Bill Stephens

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🐦 @bybillstephens

Analysis: Trains.com

Rob Himoto's Santa Maria Valley Railroad is the quintessential short line success story. His family bought the struggling 13.72-mile independent short line in 2006. Through hard work, they've been able to quadruple annual carloadings, diversify the railroad's traffic base, and improve its track.

Himoto is proud of the turnaround and the role the railroad plays in taking long-haul freight off the highway in California and beyond. But now the California Air Resources Board has come along with new locomotive emissions regulations that could bankrupt the Santa Maria Valley and threaten the viability of many of the state's 24 other short lines.

The regulations, approved April 27, pack a one-two punch. The first amounts to an excise tax on locomotives that goes into effect in 2024. The second prohibits locomotives older than 23 years from operating in California beginning in 2030. CARB's wacky idea is that the excise tax proceeds would go into individual spending accounts that will help Class I and shortline railroads pay for new clean-burning or zero-emissions locomotives.

But the yearly excise tax will be a knockout blow for some short lines. In Santa Maria Valley's case, the tax bills on its active fleet — a GP7, GP9, and GP35 — will exceed the railroad's annual revenue. What's the Santa Maria Valley going to do when the tax goes into effect next year? "I don't know," Himoto shrugs. "We're at a loss."

Santa Maria Valley rosters a pair of GE 70-tonners that are exempt from the excise tax because they produce less than 1,006 horsepower. Could they take over for the Geeps? "No," Himoto laughs, shaking his head. "Not with our traffic." The 70-tonners can't handle the railroad's typical 35- to 40-car train.

Even if there were a way to avoid or afford the excise tax, there's still the looming 2030 deadline to replace older power. In 2020, the average age of a California short line locomotive was 43 years.

Buying new is for the big boys. Union Pacific has ordered 20 battery electric locomotives to test in yard work, including in West Colton, Calif. The tab: More than \$100 million for the locomotives and related yard infrastructure improvements. That works out to \$5 million per unit, which is out of the question for a short line. A new locomotive that would meet Tier 4 emissions standards also would be a shortline budget-buster. They cost nearly as much as a new \$3 million Tier 4 road locomotive.

What about state or federal grants?

"Even if there's a grant for it, there was a grant in California that covers 75%," Himoto says. "But what's 25% of \$5 million? It's still too much for us."

Short lines don't argue the need for cleaner air and reduced carbon emissions. But CARB's heavy-handed approach — all stick

and no carrot — is going about it the wrong way. It's not offering grants, incentives, meaningful exceptions, or much wiggle room. Just air-tight rules that will force short lines to choose between spending on emissions compliance or funding normal safety and maintenance projects. They can't do both. And if they passed costs along to their customers, they would no longer be competitive with trucks.

So Himoto worries about the future of his railroad, its 10 employees, and its two dozen customers.

"This is a total threat. The revenue isn't there to convert that quickly. And then the technology isn't really there yet," Himoto says.

He's right: Battery electric or hydrogen fuel cell locomotives are still in the prototype stage, a fact that CARB fails to grasp. No short line wants to be a proving ground. "We can't afford down time," Himoto says.

CARB admits its rules may put some short lines out of business. This would send freight to the highway, increasing air pollution and congestion while reducing safety. In all, California short lines handle 260,500 carloads per year, or the equivalent of 781,500 truckloads.

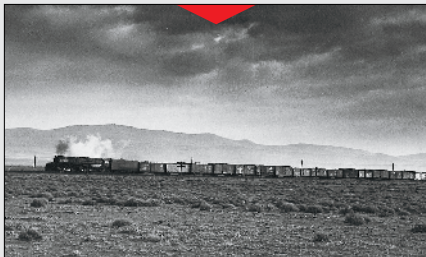
The railroads have pointed this out to CARB repeatedly. "They don't even care," Himoto says. "They're saying, 'No, you're the problem. You're the polluter.'"

The Association of American Railroads and the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association are challenging the regulations in court. Meanwhile a frustrated Himoto can't do much but worry and wait.

"We're holding our breath on this thing," he says. **I**



Santa Maria Valley Railroad No. 1801, a GP9 built in June 1959, works at the short line's interchange with Union Pacific at Guadalupe, Calif., in 2012. Tom Murray



This unidentified Union Pacific Big Boy heads westbound through tough territory — the Wasatch Mountains — which is the reason Jeffers and Jabelmann developed the 4-8-8-4s. Robert Hale

Historical features: Travel back in time to learn more about railroading

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Go to Trains.com, click on the "Railroads & Locomotives" section under the *Trains* tab and select "History." This "time machine," or website, has so much content stored and waiting for you, including great features like "Big Boy Men: the genius behind a steam legend."

Trains Associate Editor Bob Lettenberger resurrects Big Boy's past, giving recognition to the notable characters behind this monster machine. Just like the locomotives they developed, these men were giants of railroading. Jeffers the czar and Jabelmann the mechanical genius both played key roles in the development of the Big Boy — a steam engine wonder.

Without giving too much away, both men were known for their tempers. They believed that the only way to get a job done right was to do it themselves. Can you imagine how that turned out? Visit the "History" section on Trains.com and find out for yourself. — *Nastassia Putz*

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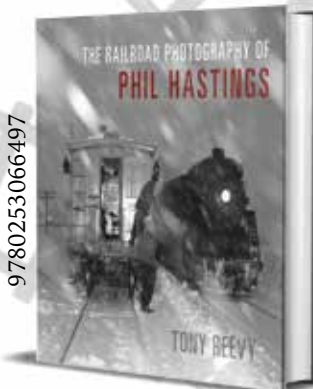
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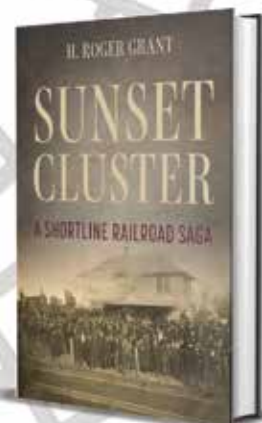
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THIS ONE'S FOR JDI

I **WHENEVER I THINK OF THE WABASH,** I think of former *Trains* Editor J. David Ingles.

Long before JDI and I became friends, I got to know the Wabash through his defining photographs in the pages of *Trains* Magazine during the 1960s. From snow-packed FAs in a raging blizzard to views from the interlocking tower at Jacksonville, Ill., to a long-ago news photo of a Lima switcher receiving an Alco 12-244 heart transplant in the road's Decatur, Ill., shops, JDI gave soul to the railroad, that by its own proclamation, served the heart of America.

Through our years of friendship, JDI provided back stories to those photographs and so many more. (The gas-gauge was on empty and the speedometer the opposite on the October 1964 day he chased KB6 making 55 mph with an epic U25B, GP35, C424, H24-66 lashup; miraculously the car didn't run out of gas, the

sheriff was nowhere around, and the resulting photograph got a two-page spread in April 1965 *Trains*).

By the light of a DAK500 projector bulb we sat in a darkened basement on a memorable evening and watched his Wabash program. JDI's encyclopedic wealth of history and perspective came at no extra charge. I learned more about the Wabash that night than I ever had (or would) from any book or magazine.

So I had JDI on my mind as I drove to Cajon Pass on Thursday morning, prompted by word from David Styffe that west-bound BNSF intermodal train Q NYCLAC6 01A had a Norfolk Southern heritage locomotive in the lead. Mind you, not just any Norfolk Southern heritage locomotive but NS No. 1070, the Wabash heritage locomotive. The JDI heritage locomotive — in my book, at least.

An emotional ride: pacing the Wabash on Route 66 with the spirit of JDI riding shotgun. Cajon Boulevard, San Bernardino, Calif., April 6, 2023.



I picked up Q NYCLAC6 01A at Summit and followed it down the hill on Main 3. Styffe, meanwhile, had OS'ed ZLACNYC1 06U — with yesterday's NYCLAC leader, New York Central-painted NS No. 1066 trailing — by Fullerton at 0940. By all indications the wandering NS heritage locomotives were going to pass on the hill.

I pulled in at Cajon station and rolled the dice. ZLACNYC1 06U showed up first, just a few minutes ahead of its westbound counterpart. No matter. I set up for what I hoped would be a definitive photograph of the Wabash on Cajon. As the tail end of the LACNYC cleared, I caught sight of a northbound UP freight trudging uphill on the Palmdale Cutoff.

Maybe. Just maybe.

Easing down the 3% grade on Main 3, the NYCLAC rounded the top of the S-curve on the approach to Cajon. The Wabash EMD emerged from the lush spring greens along the edge of Cajon Creek. Polished steel rails shimmered in the headlights' glow and the heat waves of a glorious April morning. Dynamics howled as Wabash closed in on the Cajon Creek bridge at MP 62. The UP northbound kept coming. It was gonna be close.

The Armour yellow cab of a UP ES44AC edged into the viewfinder at the last possible second and the two trains performed a perfectly choreographed over/under meet.

Mission accomplished. I walked back to the car intent on breaking away from the Wabash and catching up to the LACNYC further up the hill, but something stopped me from making the turn to the east. The Wabash was pointed straight at Cajon Boulevard and JDI's beloved Route 66. There was just one thing to do. I put down the windows, hit the accelerator, and paced the blue and gray SD70ACe down the hill.

This one's for JDI.

Windows down, taking in the spring air and the sound of 16-710s, I cruised west on Cajon Boulevard. It was an emotional ride. Pacing the Wabash on Route 66 — in 2023! Just as JDI had enriched my appreciation of and affinity for the Wabash of old, his spirit was riding shotgun on old 66, elevating this modern day Wabash encounter to a rich and memorable experience.

Fully absorbed in the moment I followed No. 1070 all the way into San Bernardino. Thanks, Dave. — *Greg McDonnell*



BEHIND THE BADGE





On patrol with Amtrak's canine law-enforcement officers

by Nastassia Putz

More than 50 police dogs serve and protect Amtrak's trains and stations throughout the United States. From birth to adulthood, these canines are trained to work with their human counterparts, protecting them from threats such as bombs. A few of the dogs are solely trained to detect narcotics.

In fact, when Amtrak's canine program began in the 1980s, it started with narcotics detection dogs. By 1996 the Explosive Detection Canine program was born, with then-officer Captain Kevin O'Connell and his yellow lab Charlie as the first EDC team.

With a sense of smell estimated to be anywhere from 10,000 to 100,000 times more sensitive than a human's, these dogs are the next level in policing airports, malls, schools, and in this case, Amtrak stations. Their main job is to keep us safe, and as a bonus, they look cute doing it — but don't pet them. These dogs patrol for a reason and distraction won't up their pay grade.

So, what is it like working around big, noisy trains and brilliant, law enforcement canines? Robert Smith, K-9 unit police captain for the Amtrak Police Department in New York, explains their vital importance. From having his own K-9 partners as a handler to now managing other K-9 teams, Smith has 40 years of police experience — approximately 16 with Amtrak. He started from the ground up as an Amtrak police officer who was promoted to sergeant, then administrative captain, and now oversees the explosive and narcotics detection K-9 teams across the country.

K-9 UNITS: A PUBLIC SERVICE ROLE

According to Smith, Amtrak's K-9 explosive detection teams are deployed nationwide to detect potential explosives threats and to act as a highly visible deterrent. However, they are non-intrusive to the public. They are one of many tools used to deter crime and terrorism for Amtrak. Their added benefit is positive customer relations. These dogs fill a unique role.

Canine teams throughout the U.S. work at various security levels. This includes the Department of Homeland Security, the Transportation Security Administration, other federal, state, and local law enforcement, and emergency management agencies — all part of a collaborative interagency initiative to keep the public safe.

Amtrak's K-9 explosives detection teams are divided between standard EDC teams and those with Person Screening Capability (PSC) detection dogs. An EDC with PSC is a dog specifically trained to react to explosives on the move. So, rather than sniffing out an explosive device that is stationary, like in an abandoned piece

Officer Bobby Williams' canine partner Diesel is one of many dogs protecting New York Penn Station and Moynihan Train Hall. APD/Emily Moser



Officer Shawn Blakely and his K-9 partner Winston screen a line of passengers boarding an Amtrak train at Moynihan Train Hall in New York. APD/Marc Glucksman

of luggage, these dogs can track a device that is on a moving body by targeting the odor still lingering in the air. As a private vendor, Global K9 Protection Group works with Auburn University to procure both EDC and EDC with PSC dogs for Amtrak.

The Transportation Security Administration's National Explosive Detection Canine Team Program provides Amtrak with dogs, training, and certifications. As a partner, Amtrak complies with the requirements of the NEDCTP and receives explosives used for training, called Canine Explosive Training Aids and the "magazines," the term for the building, storehouse, or structure where the aids are stored for training purposes. Amtrak also provides space on some of their properties to house TSA explosive magazines used to store training materials for TSA's airport dogs, according to Smith.

Amtrak currently has the most K-9 teams with person-screening capabilities in the railroad industry. The railroad additionally has two working K-9 narcotics detection teams. At a glance, the dogs look quite similar, and telling them apart is impossible for the average rail passenger.

Again, the dogs aren't deterrents, but rather a customer-relations tool with the function of being an explosive (or narcotics) detection dog, confirms Smith.

When the program was revamped in 2007 under the direction of then-Amtrak Chief of Police John O'Connor, the explosive detection program expanded from a dozen dogs nationwide to more than 50.

If the railroad has a situation, like an unattended bag, the dogs are trained to detect and alert their handler to a potential threat. However, the canines are not

permitted to search an item that has been deemed suspicious.

It's not ideal for Amtrak to shut the railroad down unnecessarily. That is why these dogs are essential for daily operation. Since bomb threats and criminal activity are frequent, a shutdown because of a threat may be imminent.

SINK OR SWIM

Looking at the depth of the involvement in training helps to shed light on these dogs' expertise.

According to Smith, canine training builds proficiency in both the handler and the dog. Amtrak's contracted dog trainers build upon the basic handling and detection skills taught in canine school to help create a stronger team. "If deficiencies in the team are observed, the trainer can quickly provide corrective actions to facilitate improvement," notes Smith. "We're fortunate because a lot of our training takes place operationally."

Amtrak's unique operational environment cannot be replicated in a classroom. Each real-life scenario presents its own challenges that daily training helps to overcome. Thus, operational training takes place in locations such as crowded stations, on board moving trains, in occupied office space, and in large, open vehicle lots. Running a successful canine program requires increased training time for canine teams, Smith says, and officers can expect to see this nationwide.

"A mall or stadium doesn't compare to being at New York Penn Station or Chicago Union Station," Smith says. "The volume of people that come through, the noise, the sounds, the trains, the elevators, the escalators — there's so much going on and the thousands of people that traverse through

AMTRAK'S NO. 1 CUSTOMER-FRIENDLY CHOICE...

MANY DOG BREEDS can be used for this job. Amtrak prefers the floppy-eared, sporting breeds. Roughly 90% of its dogs are Labradors or German Short-haired Pointers.

Captain Robert Smith says because of the train environment (with the narrow pathways), and because some people are naturally afraid of all dogs, these breeds are chosen because they are generally perceived as less intimidating. They tend to invoke a warm affection in people, Smith says.

Pointy-eared dogs can be seen as being more intimidating. Amtrak's approach is customer friendly. Again, the policy is that you cannot pet them. Amtrak doesn't want the dogs distracted from their jobs. Petting them is also a liability issue, because dogs have teeth and are capable of biting (whether provoked or accidentally).

Amtrak wants people to feel comfortable interacting with the officers. So, the officers may hand out canine baseball cards (seen at right), featuring them with their dogs, in lieu of someone's desire to pet their four-legged partner. Or you may ask to take a picture with the officer and their dog, as they are photogenic, notes Smith.

"In law enforcement and in the military, canines are very important, and we carry on the tradition," says Smith. "I expect that when you see the dog it usually invokes a smile and sense of security, and also a willingness to approach that police officer." — *Nastassia Putz*



and across the area where our dogs are working — that can't be replicated.”

Within six weeks or less, the officers can typically see if their dogs are getting acclimated to the environment.

For Amtrak passengers, it's not unusual to see a police dog on a train searching for explosives while in transit, or to see a dog in the station as they travel.

In 2015, Officer John Petrosky felt fortunate enough to join Amtrak's K-9 unit. He has been stationed in Wilmington, Del., since. Petrosky and Jewel — his canine partner — patrol territory that extends as far west as Pittsburgh. “It's been a blessing,” says Petrosky.

Petrosky left a small-town police force, which had a dog, to join the Amtrak K-9 unit. He favors this job, and after patrolling the Mid-Atlantic metropolitan area for as long as he has, Petrosky can't help but notice that Jewel's training is far superior to other agencies' dogs. Jewel receives training Monday through Friday, and Petrosky says it shows in her performance.

Officer Jonathan Kalnicki is still relatively new to Amtrak. He joined the K-9 unit three years ago; it was exactly what he always wanted to do. He grew up with dogs in his home and, of course, is no stranger to the TV series *Cops* from the late 1980s. He says his first canine partner, Ash, is by far his best friend. They spend countless hours together. Ash even has an Instagram page ([k_9_ash](#)) with approximately 1,300 followers.

After patrolling the Washington metro area, he agrees with Petrosky on the expertise of the Amtrak dogs due to the extent of their training. Trainers will work on specific things with each dog and handler based on the different needs of each station.

Conventional EDC teams and EDC with PSC teams also have different training methods. “They utilize each team to maximize the benefit of the dog and the handler,” says Kalnicki.

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Although the dogs play a vital role in a passenger's safety, they are also valued family members to their handlers. The police officers are with their canine companion 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. This becomes a seven- to 10-year-long bond.

At the beginning of a dog's Amtrak service life, it is typically 2 to 3 years old. A dog comes out of basic training with a high-calorie diet and routine that is immediately tweaked to Amtrak's standards. This new recommended diet comes from the first vet appointment. Dogs are assessed right away, as weight affects their overall health.

On the home front, when the police officer is not working, the dog is resting and



Fairly new to Amtrak, Officer Jonathan Kalnicki takes pride in his canine partner Ash and photographs him working for friends and fans to see. APD/Officer Jonathan Kalnicki

eating. The excitement of doing their job is play and fun for the animals. Smith shares that his dogs knowingly take on the posture of, “Hey I'm off duty now, I am going to go in my crate, I'm going to eat my dinner, I'm going to play a little, and then I'm going to go to bed.” He continues, “It's phenomenal how smart these dogs are.”

The typical Amtrak career for a dog is roughly five to six years. Amtrak's dog trainers begin watching the dogs more closely around age 8, assessing them medically and operationally. “We've had dogs literally just stop working and get sick one day,” says Smith. The dog is then taken out of service and retired.

Police dogs vary in their peak performance age. At 8 to 10 years old, on average, they are reaching retirement. It's a very small window when the dog can perform at its best, according to Smith. “It's hard,” he says. “The hard part is having to make that consideration.” These dogs are at least a seven-year investment and bond closely with their handlers. The hope for retirement is that the dog gets to live for a few years just as a dog — running in the yard, eating what it wants, lounging, and not having to get up for work every day.

“The goal is that they live a full life with their families [handlers],” says Smith. “My dog Jake has changed a great deal after retirement.”

On-the-job injuries or sicknesses are also something to be aware of, and happen

PERSON SCREENING DOGS

IN 2008, then-Police Officer Robert Smith was selected for a class at Auburn University and was paired with one of the very first person-screening dogs. These dogs are trained to detect explosives on the move. The concept is that when the person-borne explosive is carried on an individual who is moving, it creates a plume or wake of odor behind or in front of them depending on air flow.

The dog is trained to show a change in behavior and the handler is trained to follow the dog and track the person. Ideally, the goal is to make the individual stop so the officer can disarm them.

“But in the real world, you just don't know what someone stopped is going to do,” cautions Smith. — *Nastassia Putz*

Officer Jonathan Kalnicki is on duty with Ash, his canine partner, by his side.
Courtesy of Officer Jonathan Kalnicki/APD



Officer John Petrosky with canine partner Jewel outside of Amtrak station in Wilmington, Del.
Courtesy of Officer John Petrosky/APD

Opposite: Officer Giorgio LaCorte and K-9 Kenny working on board an Acela trainset. APD/Captain Robert Smith

more than you may think. Each officer is equipped with a police K-9 vehicle that has some type of kennel in it — in fact, the newest vehicles come with cages installed. If a dog is injured on the job, the handler, alongside another officer, will get it into the vehicle and rush it to the nearest emergency vet. Cruisers in the Washington, D.C., area, Kalnicki says, are equipped with devices that alert the handlers if the temperature inside the vehicle rises too high or drops too low for the dog's safety. There are also policies for how long a dog can be left alone inside a vehicle.

Smith's dog Jake, for instance, accidentally ingested a paper bag full of turkey on Thanksgiving Day and by evening was in distress. All handlers are trained in first aid and emergency vehicle operation to get to the nearest hospital, Smith says. If the dog is shot or intentionally injured, each state has

different laws regarding animal cruelty — ultimately resulting in either a misdemeanor or a felony for the offending party. Police dogs are becoming widely viewed and accepted as police officers by the legal system, which leads to harsher punishments more reflective of the crime.

Smith notes Amtrak recently reinvigorated the K-9 Badge Project that began in 1996. The dogs now have a badge similar to those worn by Amtrak police officers, placed in a leather holder. It's something to look for next time you see one of these canines in a station or on a train.

CRYSTAL CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Besides aging out of the program, some dogs are unable to acclimate to Amtrak's unique operational environment. There are instances when dogs successfully complete basic training, yet underperform once on

the job. These dogs are returned to the provider — as stated in the contracts — so that other dogs can be sent in as replacements.

One of Smith's dogs that was previously trained in airports and subway stations came to Amtrak, and lo and behold, needed to work through certain issues. The dog would get startled, Smith says, and if a dog gets frightened it can become permanently skittish in that environment.

Another expectation of duty is canine deployment. This is subject to change on a case-by-case basis. As the Chief expands the coverage area, passengers may begin seeing more dogs and police officers in areas that don't normally have them. For instance, if there is a specific need in one part of the country because of an event, dogs may be redeployed from their normal territory.

From the Northeast Corridor to the Midwest to California, each one of these canines is a real-life hero. "They come out every day, and we put them through the rigors ... a dog's life is very different than the life we put them through," says Smith. He believes that if these dogs knew what they were really doing, they probably wouldn't do it. Imagine the officers; their hearts are beating; their blood pressure goes up ... With humor, Smith says most dogs would probably just choose to go lie down in their crates and take a nap.

However, what is amazing and truly special to understand is "we are putting them in harm's way, yet they do it with love and joy," says Smith. During training he has witnessed these dogs excited, jumping up and down when they find a bomb. "That's what they live for ... Their No. 1 job is to find that bomb, find those drugs, etc.," he says.

The next time you visit an Amtrak station, consider acknowledging the K-9 team for their rigorous service on the rails. **I**

A GLIMPSE INTO THE TSA'S NATIONAL EXPLOSIVES DETECTION CANINE PROGRAM

■ Seventeen indoor facilities mimic a variety of transportation sites and modes, including a cargo facility, an airport gate area, a checkpoint, a baggage claim area, the interior of an aircraft, a vehicle parking lot, a light rail station, a light rail car, an air cargo facility, two mock terminals, and open-area search venues for air scenting.

■ The canine training center utilizes specific venues in and around San Antonio, Texas, such as the San Antonio International Airport, the AT&T Center arena, and the VIA bus terminal.

■ An average of 325 canines complete the training each year.

■ An average of 160 dogs are in training at any given time.

■ Seven breeds are in the program: German Shepherds, Labrador Retrievers, German Short-haired Pointers, Wirehaired Pointers, Vizslas, Belgian Malinois, and Golden Retrievers.

■ An estimated 83% of canines graduate from the training program annually.





GREASING THE SKIDS FOR ALASKA OIL

A young bureaucrat learns how Washington really works as he fights to ensure the Alaska Railroad can support pipeline construction

by Bill Anderson

The year 2023 marks two notable events for the Alaska Railroad: the 100th anniversary of the railroad's completion and the 50th anniversary of the Arab oil embargo.

The latter event added urgency to realize commercial production in the 1968 discovery of oil from Alaska's Prudhoe Bay area. Members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries had curtailed production, causing crude oil prices to quickly increase by 300% in late 1973.

The Prudhoe Bay oil field fronts the Beaufort Sea, a southern section of the Arctic Ocean. This far northern exposure limited the lowest-cost transportation option,



barging, to delivery of drilling and construction supplies. Except for a narrow summer window, ice constrained key parts of the water route; the urgency to complete a pipeline made a barge-only strategy unattractive.

The optimum option, then, was to barge the majority of the supplies to year-round ports such as Seward, Whittier, and Valdez; the latter would be the southern end of the 800-mile Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline [see page 23]. From Seward and Whittier, the Alaska Railroad could move this material to an area near Fairbanks for transloading and staging toward Prudhoe Bay and Valdez.

This looked great on paper, but expecting the ARR to transport well over half of



The Alaska Railroad's passenger flagship, the *AuRoRa*, arrives at the McKinley Park station (now Denali Park) in 1986. Inset, the hospitality aboard the coffee shop-lounge, shown in 1975, definitely reflects the era. That service was contracted out by the railroad. Two photos, Bill Anderson



Seward, as seen circa 1962, is the Alaska Railroad's southernmost terminal. The first effort to build a railroad north from here was launched in 1903; a link to Fairbanks would not be completed until 1923. Steve McCutcheon, Mac's Foto Anchorage

the pipeline material challenged the railroad's resources and its capacity to double its normal annual freight tonnage.

Moreover, a higher proportion of the increase would be north of Anchorage. This, in turn, would require more locomotives and disproportionately higher levels of equipment, track, and right-of-way improvements compared to traditional requirements.

MAKING SOMETHING FROM BARELY ENOUGH

Sparse resources and improvisation were nothing new for the ARR, one of the youngest major U.S. railroads. Its earliest

roots date to 1903 when the Alaska Central Railway began construction northward from Seward. The only other surviving Alaska-based railroad, the White Pass & Yukon, is nearly five years older, based on initial construction dates.

The reality of building a railroad through rugged wilderness to connect Seward with Fairbanks was beyond the level of funding any private-sector source was willing to risk. This led to the political path that in 1914 produced federal legislation for \$35 million to fund construction of a railroad between the communities.

The final route for the ARR utilized two existing railroads: The Alaska Northern Railway beginning at the southern (Seward) end and the Tanana Valley Railroad at the northern (Fairbanks) end. As with the majority of railroad projects based more on dreams of transportation windfalls than hard economic reality, both railroads were in bankruptcy when purchased by the government through the Alaska Engineering Commission. The commission had been appointed by President Woodrow Wilson to build the railroad.

The Alaska Northern was a reorganization of the Alaska Central, which began building north from Seward in 1903 and survived seven years after building 50 miles. It was then reorganized into the Alaska Northern Railway, which had an even shorter life, going into bankruptcy in 1914 after adding 21 miles.

In the Fairbanks area, the Tanana Valley built a network of 3-foot gauge lines to tap various mining operations. Although this railroad lasted longer than the southern operations, as the mines played out, so did the Tanana Valley's viability. This

The Alaska Railroad in Valdez

WHILE THERE WAS NO PHYSICAL CONNECTION between the Port of Valdez and the rest of the Alaska Railroad, the ARR also played a key role at the port.

The railroad built yard tracks in Valdez to facilitate the transfer of pipeline supplies. Two Army-surplus, 30-year-old GE 45-ton locomotives were acquired for this isolated operation. Pipe was received from Japan in Valdez, loaded on railcars and further barged to Whittier for movement to the Fairbanks area. This temporary arrangement lasted during the years the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline was under construction. — *Bill Anderson*



Mixed train No. 21 leaves Palmer, Alaska, in March 1948. The ARR usually struggled to make ends meet. Two photos, W.A.R. Edgecomb

railroad was purchased out of bankruptcy primarily for its Fairbanks-area facilities. The narrow gauge line was extended to Nenana on the Yukon River, then standard gauged once construction from the south reached Nenana. Interestingly, until 1930, the first 7 miles west of Fairbanks were dual gauge to facilitate the movement of narrow gauge trains serving the mining areas north of Fairbanks.

The construction required nearly nine years to achieve a continuous line extending 470 miles. In addition to the logistics of building through rugged wilderness, World War I created supply and other constraints for the first four years (1915–1919).

During construction, the AEC operated the railroad. Upon completion in 1923, the commission turned the railroad over to the U.S. Department of Interior. At this juncture, the Alaska Railroad was formed and became the operator. Seward and Fairbanks were joined as a through route on Feb. 10, 1923, but much backing and filling work remained, and a formal ceremony marking the completion awaited a visit from U.S. President Warren G. Harding.

Harding, the first President to visit Alaska, drove a ceremonial gold spike on July 15, 1923. On this trip, he was also the first sitting U.S. President to visit Canada. Only a few weeks later, as Harding was on his trip back to Washington, D.C., he died of a heart attack at age 57.

While the construction goals were realized at a cost of \$56 million, an over-



Spring is still a rumor at the ARR's outpost in Whittier, Alaska, in March 1948. Whittier's passenger station is in the background.

PREPARING FOR THE PIPELINE



Portage Junction, shown on May 30, 1954, is where the ARR's branch to Whittier departs from the main line between Seward and Anchorage. That's the 12-mile-long branch heading off at upper left. The yard here was rebuilt after the 1964 earthquake. Steve McCutcheon, Mac's Foto Anchorage



The southbound *AuRoRa* passes under the Nenana River bridge at Moody, just south of McKinley (now Denali) Park along Alaska Route 3, in September 1974. That road, the Parks Highway, parallels the railroad for much of its route between Anchorage and Fairbanks. Three photos, Bill Anderson

run from the originally authorized \$35 million, the railroad's ability to generate an operating profit did not materialize until 1938. However, with World War II, the ARR was utilized to haul military and other war-related supplies that generated record profits.

A key element for the railroad began in 1941, with the development of the port at Whittier as the primary point for military supplies being shipped into Alaska. That port created a shorter route from the lower 48 states and reduced exposure to enemy submarines. For the ARR, it required construction of a long-planned, 12-mile spur, including two lengthy tunnels. One is almost a mile long and the other is 2½ miles.

After World War II, the ARR's financial situation generally followed the trend of many other U.S. railroads. Revenue momentum from the war years provided a significant boost to capital improvements that postwar business levels could not sus-

tain. Furthermore, there was little appetite from its owner, the U.S. government, to fund continued improvements. Transferring the railroad from the Department of the Interior to the newly created Department of Transportation in 1967 did not change the railroad's fortunes.

Federal funding was largely limited to emergency situations such as the March 27, 1964, magnitude 9.2 earthquake with its epicenter near Whittier. Still the strongest earthquake recorded in North America, it caused \$30 million in damage to the ARR, or about \$300 million in 2023 inflation-adjusted dollars.

So as crunch time approached to build the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, a key transportation link risked falling short of expectations.

NORTH TO ALASKA ... SORT OF

As summer 1974 was drifting towards fall, I was fed up with the dithering surrounding my position as passenger analyst

with the Federal Railroad Administration. After being the first to hold this position, created to deal primarily with the trials and tribulations brought by Amtrak, it was time to find something else. Nearby, in another part of Washington, the United States Railway Association was gearing up to determine whether the collection of northeastern bankrupt railroads had a viable core. The USRA's unofficial personnel recruiter, Jim Hagen, was ready to sign me up when a different offer fell out of the sky.

It just so happened that the liaison officer position for the Alaska Railroad was open. This position was headquartered in Washington, as one of the direct reports to the FRA administrator. It was traditionally a retirement job for someone in a senior position who had put in loyal service. While I was more than skeptical and, as a 20-something, the anthesis of "senior," I was offered a trip to Alaska to check out the railroad.

Alaska, the economy, and the railroad: then and now

TODAY'S RELATIVELY ROBUST, albeit seasonally influenced, Alaska economy, and significant capital infusions have benefited the now state-owned ARR. But the railroad and state were different prior to the oil boom, as the statistics at right illustrate.

It should be noted that 2020 and 2021 were not great years for ARR's freight and passenger business due to pandemic-related shutdowns. However, even in these depressed years, the annual freight tonnage was 85% higher, and revenue passengers carried in 2021 were more than double the annual number of the early 1970s. — Bill Anderson

ALASKA POPULATION

1975	386,000	
2020	733,391	+90%

Sources: 1975, ARR annual report; 2020, U.S. census

ALASKA RAILROAD ANNUAL REVENUE FREIGHT

(Fiscal-year averages)

1970-74	1.4 million tons	
2015-19	3.9 million tons	+278%

ALASKA RAILROAD ANNUAL PASSENGERS

(Revenue riders, fiscal-year averages)

1970-1974	85,000	
2015-2019	506,00	+595%



During the period the author was trying to obtain ARR funding, the railroad's newest engines were four GP35s purchased with emergency funds following a 1964 earthquake. Curt Fortenberry, Louis A. Marre collection



The winter mixed-train version of the *AuRoRa* departs Anchorage in January 1975. The unusual rendering of the train name capitalizes the railroad's reporting marks.

After riding the Fairbanks-Anchorage train and meeting with the general manager, Walker Johnston, I was hooked. Over the next nine months, that first trip led to second and third Alaskan trips, and an offer to move permanently to the 49th State.

What I was only starting to understand as the summer ended were the various political nuances that embroiled what was perhaps the most obscure U.S. railroad, at least from the perspective of its owner, four time zones away in Washington. Among the various challenges confronting ARR management, the fast approaching pipeline construction was the major storm cloud.

NO CREDIT? YOU HAVE A PROBLEM

Except for unusual and emergency-related events, such as the 1964 earthquake and World War II, the ARR was expected to be and had been self-supporting — barely. This had come at the expense of deferring needed capital projects. In the 10 years leading up to 1974, the railroad had been profitable in only three years. When depreciation, a non-cash expense, was removed, there had been positive cash flows. But by not covering depreciation, it meant the railroad was consuming itself, and along with it, the ability to handle a sudden business increase.

This environment forced the railroad to develop creative ways to scrimp and cut expenses to the bone to survive in the rough Alaskan operating environment. Such a strategy had its limits, however, and the positive cash flows were falling short of needed upgrading and adequate maintenance. By 1974 the deferred maintenance and capital deficiencies were estimated to be nearly \$20 million (about \$120 million in today's inflation-adjusted dollars).

Just a look at the 50-unit locomotive fleet, mostly decades-old EMD F units and Army-Navy surplus, revealed the symptoms of the ARR's physical condition. The most recently acquired, newly built locomotives were four GP35s. These came about from that emergency appropriation

to address the damage from the 1964 earthquake. With the heavier tonnage projected for the Fairbanks area, there was also a need for right-of-way improvements north of Anchorage.

A private-sector railroad, recognizing a huge increase in business, would likely arrange capital leases for major improvements such as new locomotives. However, as a federal government-owned railroad, the ARR fell under the Antideficiency Act. This act essentially requires that as a practical matter, purchases could only be made if the railroad had funds in its bank account (the U.S. Treasury). In other words, unlike private-sector railroads that could commit to a long-term payback for capital projects, the ARR could only make major expenditures if it had cash up front.

So when major capital funding is necessary, it takes an appropriation from Congress, signed into law by the President. Given the "energy price shock" environment in 1974, gaining funding for critical pipeline construction would seem like a no-brainer. However, as with many issues in Washington, there was disagreement be-

tween the Legislative and Executive branches of the federal government. But this is getting ahead of the story.

JUST RETOUCH THE X-RAYS

It had been determined that for starters, the railroad needed about \$7 million for new locomotives, other equipment, and improvements such as reopening the Port of Seward as a major port of call. The ARR dock in Seward had been closed since the 1964 earthquake.

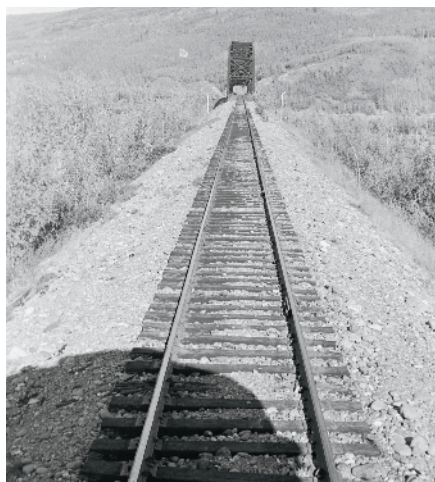
My inexperience suggested that putting this in the FRA/DOT budget request to Congress for the upcoming year would be the commonsense, easy solution. Not quite.

The Alaska Railroad request was not only trimmed, but completely removed from the Office of Management and Budget's budget proposal. This was announced at one of the FRA administrator's weekly staff meetings, and caused me to state in no uncertain terms that this was a travesty. It also got me excluded from future staff meetings.

Afterward I brought this up with the director to whom I reported. After making my pitch about the need for the appropriation to support the pipeline project, he said, in so many words, "Bill, if the patient (meaning the ARR) cannot afford the treatment, we need to retouch the X-rays."

While I was gobsmacked by that comment, it was an eye opener and teachable moment. It brought the federal government's administrative state into focus. In understanding what words really meant later, both in my public and private-industry experience, framing an issue from the standpoint of "retouching the x-rays" made sense, even if it was still totally wrongheaded.

I was soon not only unwelcome at the administrator's weekly staff meetings, but also exiled to Buzzard Point. This was an industrial area of Washington between the Anacostia and Potomac rivers, far removed from DOT headquarters. However, far from being purgatory, it was also where USRA was doing its planning, and friends such as



The view approaching the 704-foot Mears Memorial Bridge spanning the Yukon River. In a harsh environment, the ARR often deferred maintenance to make ends meet.



A tourism boom that will bring an almost 600% increase in passenger traffic is still years in the future as the *AuRoRa*, the longtime flagship of ARR passenger service, stops at a railroad-owned-and-operated hotel in Curry, Alaska, in the late 1970s. Jerome Shelton

Jim McClellan, Jim Hagen, Gerald Davies and others were nearby. In fact, from time to time, I was helping them with their Northeast railroad reorganization work.

It also took me out of the visibility of having a high-profile office in the FRA administrator's suite right next to John W. Barriger III, the legendary and brilliant fixer of sick railroads and other notable accomplishments. In turn, this facilitated jumping the chain of command to deal with the ARR's need for funding. My first target was Office of Management and Budget.

Meeting with the OMB manager who recommended deep-sixing the ARR appropriation was another star-chamber experience. He clearly was "political" and saw the world according to reality from inside the Capital Beltway, not acting for "Main Street Americans." His reasoning for no funding for the ARR followed these guidelines:

- The USA (Lower 48 states) was experiencing a recession, so the budget could not be splurging on something like the Alaska Railroad. In so many words, the ARR did not have political pull with the administration running the White House.
- We (OMB) do not want another Amtrak, i.e., a bottomless pit of subsidy requirements.
- The ARR had proven it could "make do," and so could continue without funding help from the feds.

So reason did not work there, either.

AND NOW THE NEWS

Interestingly, about this time in early 1975, the *Washington Star*, the evening newspaper counterpart to the morning *Washington Post*, ran an article that largely summarized the ARR debacle. The next morning I was called from my Buzzard Point exile to report to DOT headquarters.

When I arrived at the designated office, I was shown the *Star* article with an obtuse curiosity about how the newspaper found

out about the intrigue surrounding the ARR. I feigned total mystification. Fortunately, Washington was and is well known for information leaks to the media, and any further investigation was dropped.

People around town with an interest in the Alaska Railroad included the transportation counsel to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Tom Allison. This committee included railroad jurisdiction, and its chairman, Sen. Warren Magnuson, was a "Lion of the Senate," as senior and powerful members are unofficially known. Magnuson was from the Seattle area, where ship-

ping interests associated with the barging of railcars to Alaska had a strong pull with the Senator. These interests were more than adequate to get Magnuson's attention.

In relatively short order there was a \$6 million appropriation for the ARR in the upcoming budget year. Walker Johnston seemed pleased and impressed.

This also seemed to increase attention on the ARR's importance, and the following year a \$9 million ARR appropriation was in the DOT budget. These two appropriations addressed a large part of the short-term deferred maintenance and capital needs.

AND THE NEWEST WILL BE THE OLDEST

With part of that \$15 million, the AAR purchased 11 GP40-2 locomotives delivered in 1975-76. There is little doubt these not only made it possible to successfully transport the surge in pipeline material, but also provided a longer-term boost still in evidence today. Approaching 50 years later, these locomotives are now the oldest in the ARR fleet.

Whether or not the success in obtaining that funding was influential, in the spring, I was offered a position in Anchorage to do strategic planning. For those of an outdoors bent for hunting, fishing, hiking, etc., this would be a dream come true. However, that has never been among my characteristics, so I had only a little hesitation before turning that offer down.

▼ Appropriations in 1974 and 1975 allowed the ARR to address deferred maintenance and capital needs, including purchasing a group of GP40-2 locomotives. No. 3003 leads three of the units at Congress Park, Ill., on May 1, 1975, as they begin their trip from EMD. J. David Ingles

► More than 33 years later, GP40-2 No. 3003 — still in its as-delivered paint scheme — was still serving the Alaska Railroad, handling a work train at Healy, Alaska, on Sept. 6, 2008. The GP40-2s are now the oldest purchased-new power on the ARR roster. Frank Keller



Shortly thereafter, I was offered a position at FRA involving work required by what became the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act (4R Act). This was the enabling legislation for what became Conrail, and for Amtrak to take over most of the Northeast Corridor. It was also an important, initial step that led to the Staggers Act. Five years later, Staggers drastically reduced commercial regulation on the railroads and is credited as the key foundational change that moved the railroad industry from bankruptcies to financial strength.

ONE MORE TRIP NORTH

In July 1975, a little over a month after resigning from the ARR, I received a note from Tom Allison that he and other congressional staffers would be going to Alaska to actually see what they were supporting. After a bit of arm-twisting of my former boss, he approved covering the travel costs.

While I sensed some unhappiness from Walker when we met in Anchorage, any concern was short lived. A short time later, he sent me a personal note indicating he was leaving Alaska to take the regional vice president's position in Minneapolis with Burlington Northern. It was one of those cases where he would have been a fool not to make this career move.

Working for Walker Johnston would have been a key attraction of the AAR. It



On the author's final trip to the Alaska Railroad — an inspection trip with congressional staff members in July 1975 — the *AuRoRa* was delayed at Healy, giving those on board a chance to detrain and stretch their legs. Bill Anderson

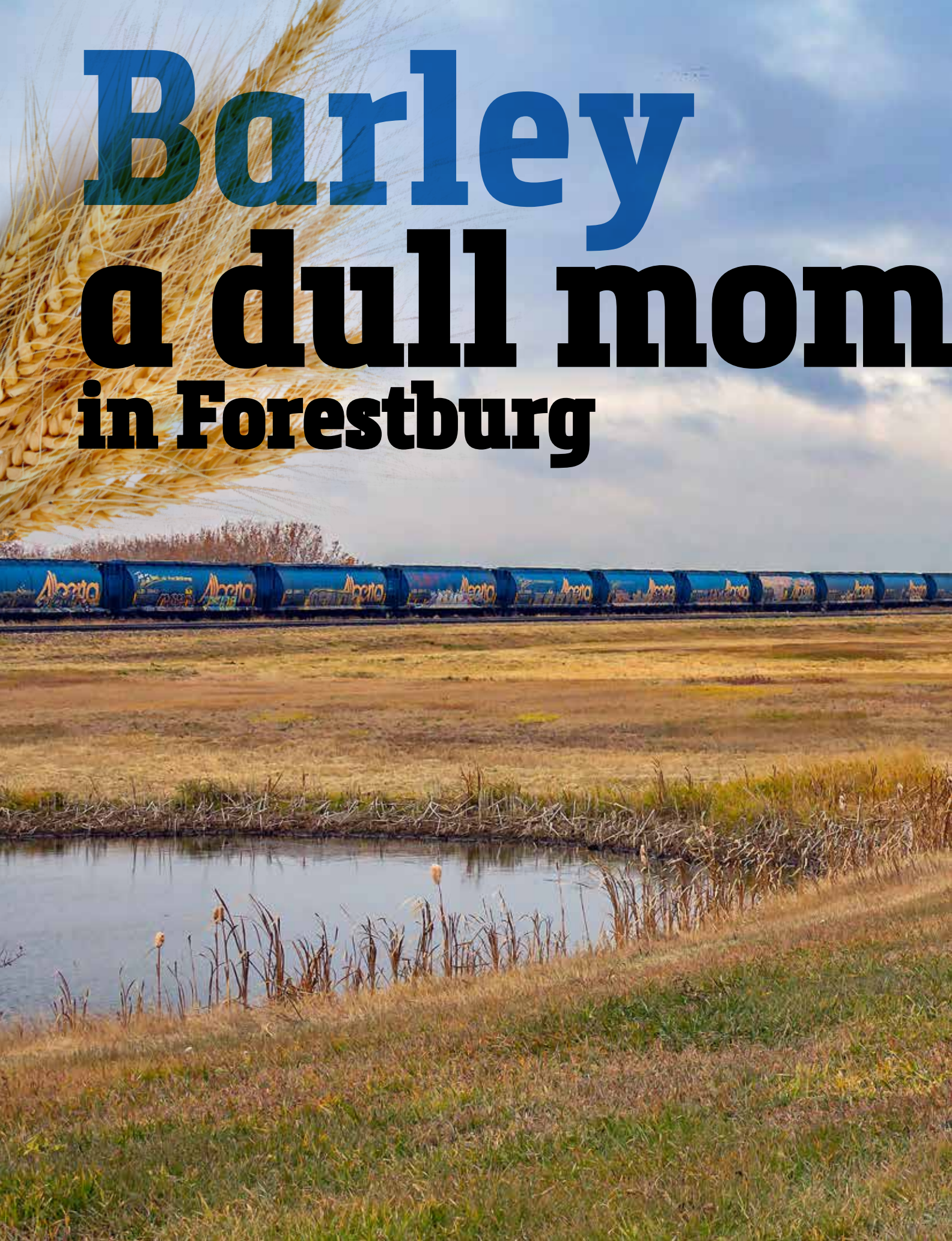
would have been a real kick in the pants to move way up there and have him leave only a few months later. With his departure, any lingering regrets for not moving north evaporated completely.

Two years later, during my management training program with the Milwaukee Road, I stopped in to “make manners” at Johnston's Burlington Northern office in Minneapolis. He was the warm and cordial man I remembered in my work with the ARR and was clearly pleased that I had chosen to become a railroad operating officer. This meeting also closed the

circle that had begun three years earlier on a positive note. **I**

Bill Anderson is a 51-year railroad and insurance industry veteran. He held management positions with three railroad and consulting companies including responsibilities for operations, fleet management, transportation economics and asset performance, and administration. He would like to acknowledge the significant assistance of Michele Drummond with the Alaska Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums, who researched key documents for this article.





Barley

a dull mom

in Forestburg

ent

A Cargill high-throughput grain terminal looms large on the Alberta prairie as a Battle River Railway export barley train rolls through Kiron on Canadian National's Alliance Spur on Oct. 18, 2021. The train is comprised mainly of well-worn "Alberta" covered hoppers, which are the backbone of the BRR fleet.



The story of grain, a small town, and its railroad

Story and photos by A.J. Shewan

THE CANADIAN PRAIRIE PROVINCE

of Alberta is known globally for its oil and gas resources. The extraction of this oil and gas and the subsequent production of the related value-added byproducts makes up the largest percentage of Alberta's gross domestic product at 14.4%. Though easily missed at only 2.5% of the provincial GDP, agriculture production and exports play an important role in Alberta's economy. In 2019, the agriculture industry accounted for \$9.17 billion, third among Canadian provinces behind only Quebec and Ontario.

Improvements in crop science, and favorable growing

conditions, are significant factors leading to increased crop yields across Alberta. The past decade, however, has not been without its challenges. Moisture was excessive in 2020. A drought fell on the province in 2021.

These increased crop yields are welcome news to the agricultural industry, but a viable transportation network is required to move the crops from producers to consumers. In the village of Forestburg, located in east central Alberta, a new-generation cooperative, shortline railway, the Battle River Railway, has been meeting this transportation challenge for more than a decade.

The BRR's story begins much like many other Canadian prairie short lines. In 1916, Canadian National Railway's predecessor, Canadian Northern, built the 60-mile Alliance Subdivision, linking Camrose, Alberta, to the west with Alliance, Alberta, to the east. Towns sprang up along the line at places like Kelsey, Rosalind, Heisler, Forestburg, Galahad, and Alliance. The Alliance Subdivision holds the unique characteristic of the longest section of straight track in the province at 52 miles, from just outside Camrose southeast to Alliance. Camrose is where the BRR has a connection with CN's Camrose Subdivision.

Beginning in the 1970s and continuing through the 1980s, the Canadian government began a Branchline Rehabilitation Program with the intention of upgrading prairie branches to heavier steel and improved ballast to handle increasing grain traffic and heavier loaded cars. In 1987, as part of this program, the Alliance Subdivision was rebuilt with 132-pound continuous welded rail and had additional ballast work done.

These plentiful branch lines once crisscrossed much of western Canada's prairie provinces, providing essential transportation for people and goods. As road networks improved, the once vital branch



For the Battle River Railway, most carloads are related to local agriculture. After dropping off inbound empties on Oct. 8, 2021, BRR SD40-2Ws Nos. 5353 and 5251 have picked up four loaded fertilizer cars bound for Kelsey.

lines became less of a staple and increasingly a cost burden for the major railways to maintain. By the 1990s, Canadian National was encouraging grain shippers to build larger, high-throughput elevators capable of loading unit trains along its main lines or major secondary lines. Producers were now trucking their crops longer distances to these high-throughput elevators.



As CN slowly closed and abandoned feeder branch lines in central Alberta, smaller, primarily wooden, elevators, also closed their doors. Producers became increasingly concerned about the rising cost of transporting their crops to the larger, centralized elevators. A group of farmers and producers formed the Battle River Railway Producer Car Group in 2003. Its primary goal was to maintain access to the CN Alliance Subdivision and continue loading smaller groups of producer cars.

In 2009, CN notified the Battle River Railway Producer Car Group that it would de-

commission the line between Camrose and Alliance. The group would need to purchase the Alliance Sub if it wanted to continue rail service. The 175-member group met in April 2009 and, with unanimous consent, decided to purchase the line. The group formed a cooperative named the Battle River Railway NGC Inc. and raised the necessary money in share sales.

In June 2010, an agreement was signed with CN and the Battle River Railway was born. At startup CN No. 5353, an SD40-2W, was purchased. The BRR pulled its first 50-car train in December 2010. As business increased, BRR went back to CN in 2012 and purchased locomotive No. 5251, another SD40-2W, with both units retaining their numbers. Along with the locomotives, the BRR also owns other ex-CN rolling stock, including a caboose, a coach, and a few

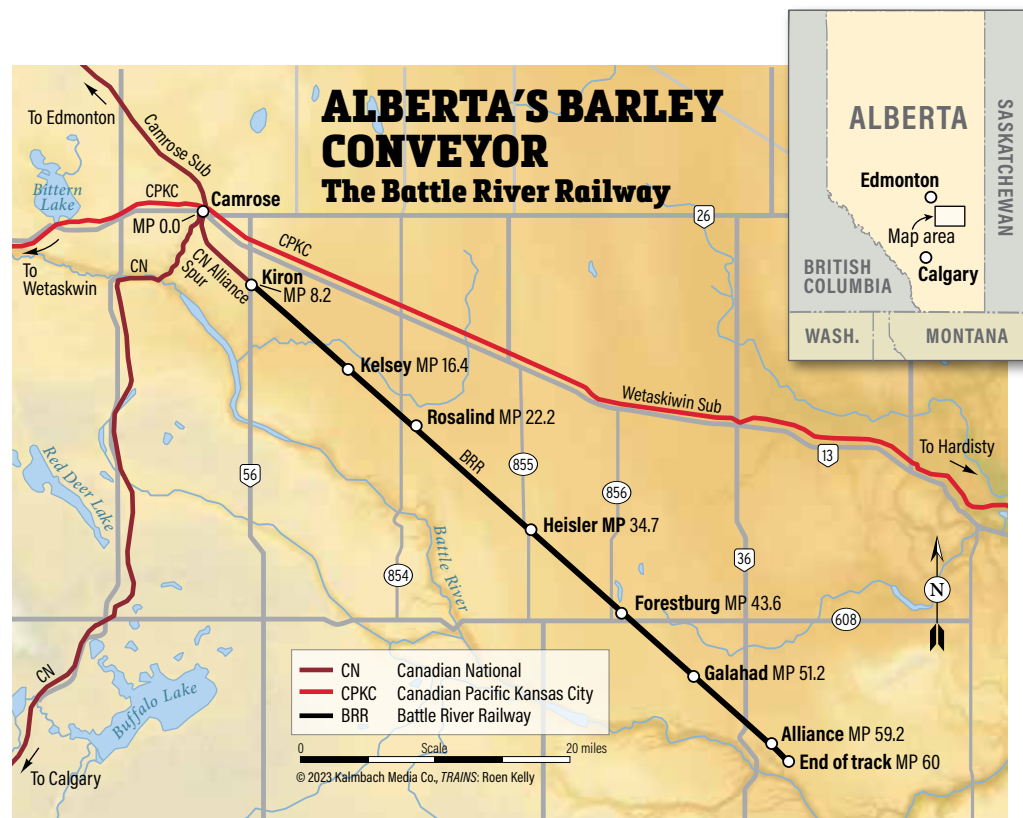
Having interchanged their unit train of barley to CN at Camrose, Alberta, BRR's entire locomotive fleet waits for permission to pick up inbound cars.

pieces of freight equipment converted to passenger service for excursions run by the Friends of the Battle River Railway Society along the Alliance Sub.

The railway began loading producer cars at Kelsey, Rosalind, Heisler, Forestburg, Galahad, and Alliance. Smaller independent producers handle the loading at Forestburg and Galahad, the Forestburg site being owned by a family who are BRR shareholders. Kelsey also receives inbound loads of fertilizer for area farmers, the fertilizer customer having been a shareholder since relatively early in the railway's operation.

In 2012, two area energy companies approached the railroad about finding transportation solutions to get their locally produced crude oil to North American markets. When the crude shipments subsided, then ceased in 2015, due to changing market conditions, a new revenue stream was realized.

Many North American short lines enjoy considerable revenue from railcar storage and handling. The BRR is no



exception. Matthew Enright, the railway's general manager, explains, "We have, on average, eight customers storing cars." The railway has considerable storage capacity east of Forestburg toward the end of track at Alliance and often sees between 2,000 and 3,000 cars a year. Averaging it out, during peak demand there are about 1,200 cars stored. "During COVID shutdowns, we peaked at 1,800 cars. We were absolutely stuffed," Enright says.

The summer months are noticeably busier for storage than winter, with the winter lull due mostly to challenges the Class I railways face moving cars efficiently. This leads to customer demand to have more cars in service, compensating for the increased fleet transit times. Car storage provides more than half of railway's revenue. With increased storage capacity coming on-line near Edmonton, home to many shippers of oil and gas commodities, the future of the storage business on the BRR is unclear, however.

While car storage is lucrative, producer loading was the

driving factor in the Alliance Sub purchase and is an essential part of the railway. The BRR has an exclusive marketing agreement with Purely Canada Foods. It purchases, markets, and sells the crops in conjunction with the BRR, which loads and ships the products from its elevators and the privately owned sites. The BRR loads barley, spring wheat, canola, and peas, which represent a large share of the crops shipped. In 2021, an export program would prove to be a boon for barley, leading to the BRR loading a unit train for an export terminal on British Columbia's west coast. The unit train was the railway's first.

The BRR ships to a large variety of customers. Among them is Rogers Foods, notable to Canadian consumers as a prominent producer of flour and cereals found on store shelves across the country. The company has been milling flour and cereal products for more than 60 years, and has two mills in British Columbia for which BRR loads cars. Enright says, "We have a really good relationship with [Rog-



At Forestburg, the BRR's excursion train basks in the warm sunlight after a brief summer storm. The Friends of the Battle River Railway Society run passenger trips along the line.

ers]." November through March is a busy shipping period for wheat on the BRR, depending heavily on when farmers want to sell and ship their products. Wheat has historically represented 50% of commodities shipped by the railway.

To meet the demand for loading producer cars, the evolving car storage business, and the various other commodities the BRR handles, its crews work a flexible weekly schedule. "The schedule is based on expected demand. Lately, during the winter, it's been slower so we're down to one day a week," says Enright. During the summer the schedule increases to three days a week and sometimes up to five days during peak demand.



1

Fill 'er up. Barley, please

1 From the cab of SD40-2W No. 5353, locomotive engineer Michael Tabachniuk responds to a radio call: “BRR 5353 back 10 feet to the next spot.” He is part of the coordinated dance working to load a barley train. **2** With Tabachniuk’s locomotive move, the next empty car is spotted ready for loading with export barley in Rosalind, Alberta, at the BRR’s terminal. **3** The loadout operator keeps a close eye on the loading process as barley flows into another empty hopper. The hoppers have four bays, each holding 21 metric tons (23.1 U.S. tons). **4** Another truckload of barley arrives in Rosalind as a sea of Alberta cars await shipment to port. Trucking is still the first-mile means of transporting barley from field to end user. **5** When BRR General Manager Matt Enright isn’t running the railroad, you’ll find him on the farm. Here he is driving the combine, harvesting wheat outside of Rosalind.

Every year presents new challenges for producers and farmers in the region. “Weather is an ever-present challenge,” says Enright. “Lately, supply chain concerns, like inputs, the cost of fertilizer and its supply, have been new challenges.”

The last decade has seen a significant increase for crop potential, with 2013 heralding the first substantial growth in harvest yield. Thanks to innovations in genetics, farming practices, better utilization of fertilizer, greater investment in seed technology, and more drought-tolerant crops, Western Canada has enjoyed healthy growth in soil productivity. One of the main drivers for the change in farming practices has been a practice called “no till.” Instead

of tilling the soil once a crop has been harvested, farmers are seeing increased benefits from leaving the field in its natural state until the next planting season. Cultivating a field can lead to moisture loss, loss of soil structure, and the inability of the soil to absorb and hold moisture. Additionally, leaving the left-over plant structure to decompose adds nutrients to the soil that may otherwise be lost.

Doug Yuha, a farmer in east central Alberta, has been farming in the province for more than 40 years. “I wish we had a little more rain this year, or a little less heat. But it hasn’t been a terrible year for us,” he says. A perfect year with the right combination of moisture and heat will yield 115 bushels of barley



2

an acre. Yuha surmises that 12-14 inches of rain throughout the growing season and the right amount of warm weather would yield the ideal crop.

“We can get away with as little as 4 inches of rain, but then not too much heat,” Yuha adds. With the hot and dry conditions faced by much of Western Canada in 2021, most farmers in east central Alberta expect to see anywhere from 75-100 bushels of barley per acre.

With the increase in crop yields came an increase in the railroad business. The two former CN SD40-2Ws, acquired at start-up, had their work cut out for them. Owing to the challenges the BRR faced from this increased business, the railway went locomotive shopping and acquired ex-Canadian Pacific SD40-2 No. 5951, and more recently former Tri-City Railway SD40-2 No. 3434. Additionally, it leased an ex-Iowa, Chicago & Eastern GP40-2 until late 2021.

BRR engineer Michael Tabachniuk spent 40 years with CN, retiring as a locomotive engineer. Now he splits his time between a part-time, as-needed

job at the BRR and a sunny vacation home in Arizona. He welcomes the opportunity to work for the BRR. “Matt is a fantastic boss,” Tabachniuk says. “He wouldn’t last at CN, he’s too good to the crews. They wouldn’t let him go that easy [on them].”

The radio crackles to life in the locomotive cab: “Okay BRR 5353, back up 10 feet to the next spot.”

Tabachniuk responds, “BRR 5353, back 10 feet to the next spot.” He releases the independent brake and moves the throttle to notch one, the trusted SD40-2W shudders to life and starts to move backward.

“Five feet, BRR stop there. Good spot BRR.”

Tabachniuk answers, “Good spot BRR, set and centred,” as he moves the throttle to idle and sets the independent brake. After confirming the train has stopped, Facility Manager Dustin Sroka lowers the elevator’s spout into the next empty bin on the hopper car he’s loading.

Once he’s happy with the placement, Sroka heads back down the stairs to await the

Prairie power

The Battle River Railway locomotive roster

Number	Model	Heritage
BRR 5251	SD40-2W	CN 5251
BRR 5353	SD40-2W	CN 5353
BRR 5951	SD40-2	CP 5951
BRR 34	SD40-2	TCRY 34, ex UP 3075, nee CNW 6911
HLCX 4211	GP40-2	IC&E 4201, ex-SSW 7245, nee SP 7245



5

next load of barley. Yuha arrives with his tandem axle grain truck and confirms with Sroka that he's okay to offload. Looking somewhat reminiscent of the classic prairie grain truck, Yuha's modern-day tandem axle comes equipped with all the contemporary finery. With a palm-sized remote control, he tilts the truck's box and slowly opens the back gate, allowing barley to rain down into the elevator pit. From here, the barley will be elevated into the awaiting railcar. Yuha's smaller truck will only partially fill one bay of the four-bay hopper. His truck carries 14 metric tons (1 metric ton = 2,205 pounds), while one bay of a hopper holds 21 metric tons. This is only one of many trips Yuha will make this day. He has 1,000 tons of

barley on contract to the BRR, representing 67 trips. This simple choreography between the driver delivering the barley, the elevator operator, and the locomotive engineer will be repeated throughout the day as trucks come and go, offloading their crop direct from the elevator to the railcar.

A unique group of covered hoppers makes up the backbone of BRR's railcar fleet. Beginning in 1981, the Government of Alberta started to take delivery of a grain-car fleet that would eventually number 1,000, split evenly for service between CP and CN. These stunning cars, painted an attractive blue and initially decorated for Alberta's Heritage Fund, would be redecorated with the catchy slogan "Take an Alberta break

— visit," followed by the name of one of the many rural or urban provincial communities, and the numerous municipal districts that were served by both railways. Seen across Canada and the U.S., these rolling billboards introduced Alberta to both countries, enticing would-be visitors to explore the vast prairie province. When CP and CN were transitioning to newer, larger covered hopper cars to ship their grains, they began to store and eventually shed the smaller capacity fleets, like the one owned by the Alberta government.

The Alberta government found a new operator for the fleet when the BRR took over the lease and subsequently subleased the cars to Purely Canada Foods. Through its partnership with PCF, the fleet was divided between the BRR —(170 cars) and PCF's location on Saskatchewan short line

Stewart Southern Railway (the remaining 90 cars). These easily recognizable Alberta cars have less than 10 years of serviceable life left, though the BRR may keep its cars captive for rolling storage. What the future holds in terms of a replacement fleet remains fluid and the railway may transition to a CN-supplied fleet of its newer higher-capacity cars.

The future for the BRR looks bright. There is a concerted effort to attract more non-grain-related customers and a diversification of the business base to stay sustainable in a diminishing car storage world.

Matt Enright feels the railway can add a significant contribution. "We'd like to be a real driver for the local economy," he says. "We have a role to play there for our community." There is little doubt that the Battle River Railway has many successful years ahead. **I**

Countdown to
1000
ISSUES

Paul D. Schneider at Union
Avenue interlocking plant in
Chicago in 1980.

What's the problem up there, Union?

On working first trick at BN's Chicago funnel

Story and photos by Paul D. Schneider



ALMOST HALFWAY THERE! As we highlight articles leading up to *Trains'* 1,000th issue, our next choice, from the 400th through 499th issues (February 1974 to May 1982), is "What's the problem up there, Union?" from the October 1981 issue. The author, Paul D. Schneider, was a prolific railroad author, former *Trains* staff member, and award-winning video producer. He was also, as his winning story indicates, a veteran railroader, with several years of service as a Burlington Northern tower operator. His affection for BN led him to write the book *Burlington Northern Diesel Locomotives* (Kalmbach, 1993). Schneider died Feb. 15, 2019, at age 64. With his passing, "railroading has lost one of its most versatile and accomplished storytellers," said former *Trains* Editor Kevin P. Keefe. — *Trains* staff



MAINLY, IT'S A FUNNEL.

The interlocking plant at Union Avenue in Chicago, that is.

You see, between South River Street in Aurora and Union Avenue in Chicago on the Burlington Northern, there are three main tracks, numbered from the north beginning with No. 1. From Cicero east, a freight line, main track No. 4, joins the inevitable march toward milepost 2.1, the west limits of Union Avenue interlocking. After that, it's all downhill, so to speak, toward Chicago Union Station.

Because, as BN's Special Instructions so dispassionately point out, "Between Roosevelt Road, milepost 0.8, and Union Avenue interlocking, milepost 1.4, there are two main tracks, on which movement of trains in either direction will be governed by signal direction." Which means that four tracks at the west end of the plant turn into two tracks at the east end.

In other words, a funnel.

But that's not all. Union Avenue is the western end of the St. Charles Air Line, the jointly owned (Illinois Central Gulf and Chicago & North Western) line that bridges the South Branch of the Chicago River to connect the BN and the North Western with the Rock Island and ICG's Iowa Division at Clark Street interlocking. Toss in the Canal Street wye — the connecting tracks between BN and Conrail — and what you have is pandemonium. Sheer chaos.

Union Avenue is an interlocking plant that looks like it was laid out by a drunken baboon with a blunt crayon. Monday through Friday mornings, it's subjected to BN's commuter

rush, followed by practically everything possible: overloaded Conrail drags out of CR's 55th Street Yard for Cicero; underpowered BN drags headed the opposite way; entire Amtrak trains being turned on the wye; ICG-C&NW coal trains in and out of the North Western's Wood Street yard; BN wash trains; Amtrak revenue trains; North Western switch runs thrown in for good measure . . . and who knows what else.

In 1972, when I was a naive and impressionable young railfan, I rolled by Union Avenue tower on Amtrak's *San Francisco Zephyr* at a particularly frantic moment and wondered what kind of person the BN could have dragged in kicking and screaming to work that madhouse. Seven years later, as suburban train 202 stops to let off the extra operator temporarily assigned to first trick Union Avenue, I know. Me.

THERE are certain irrefutable truths about Union Avenue tower: there are 144 levers in the 60-foot-long machine; and the machine itself built by General Railway Signal, is Model 5 Form B — "similar in many respects to the Form A machine," according to the GRS service manual, "yet built on an entirely different frame." Even the notation scratched into that frame — "Wired by J R Smith 8/31 IN THE DEPTHS OF THE DEPRESSION" — ascribes a hard reality to the place.

What is harder to define is the ambience about Union Avenue. There's an intangible feeling that the tower is some stoical spectator at a giant outdoor movie, while the operator —

jumping up, pulling levers, glancing out at the numbers on passing locomotives and jotting them down — is the animating force behind the spectator's eyes, taking in the flickering montage of time and events . . . and trains.

It's 7 a.m. . . . and you can almost *feel* the place holding its breath.

YES, INDEED. I've discovered myself humming snatches of an Elvis Costello song, "Waiting for the End of the World." Not a particularly optimistic number, considering its title, and certainly not in the proper spirit of things at 4 minutes past 7, waiting for the "dinky parade," the suburban rush, that is to begin.

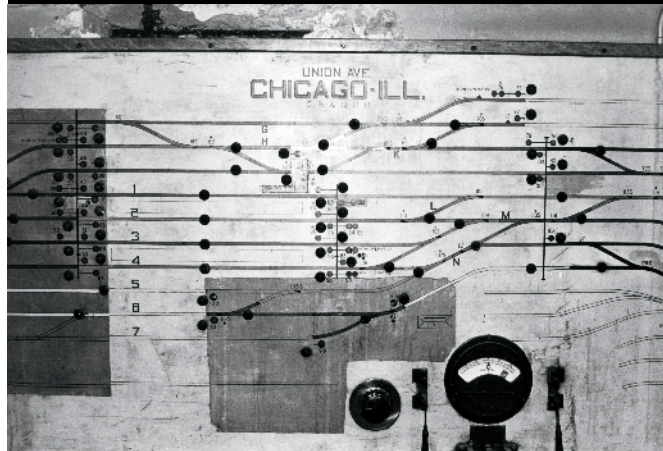
But a minute later No. 204 hits the bell at the west end of

the plant on main 2, and I'm up and pulling levers, lining up the signals for a straight shot down 2 to Union Station. It's roughly 4 minutes from the time an eastbound hits the bell at Kedzie Avenue until he pops past the tower, unless he makes a stop at Halsted Street, which 204 does. Figure him by the tower around 7:10.

"Hello Union?"

Wait a minute; what's that? Hello? I hear a voice calling me from the speaker above the desk. The odds are that it's the Chicago Union Station operator at Harrison Street, but I would not bet on it. There are seven lines tied into here through the one speaker: Union Station; the 14th Street coach yard; the outside plant phones; the BN East End dis-

A schematic of Union Avenue interlocking. At left (west), mains 1-4 are the BN high iron from Cicero, with tracks 5-7 the wash rack. Halsted Street platforms are between 1 and 2, and 3 and 4, to the west of the tower. At top, tracks G and H feed to C&NW Wood Street yard. At right (east), from top, are two tracks from the St. Charles Air Line and B&O bridge, leads from the BN coach yard, two mains from Union Station, and tracks from the Canal Street wye.





Dinkies 204 (left) and 291 pass on the curve under Canal Street. "Now I mash the CUS switch with an air of indifference."

patcher; the Baltimore & Ohio bridge on the Air Line; the BN wash rack; and the Conrail switchtender on the south end of the Canal Street wye at Lumber Street. Until you fine-tune your ears to the idiosyncratic sounds of each voice on each line, you're playing the speaker on intuition.

"Hello Union?"

Hmmm ... he sounds concerned. He's probably wondering what's happened to the BN operator. Well, then, it's time for action! I glare at the maddening array of lookalike toggle switches in front of me and, without flinching, depress the one marked CUS. "Union," I say, bracing myself.

"Ah, Union!" The Harrison Street operator sounds relieved. "Two-ninety one on track one."

Well, that's just fine. Train No. 291 is an empty equipment move that starts the day as 202. It will now flip back to Downers Grove and reoriginate as 234. CUS OSes [reports] the outbound dinkies to me, and I OS the inbounds to him.

As a matter of fact, as I line up 291 straight through on track 1 westbound, 204 is accel-

erating from its Halsted Street stop. This time I mash down the CUS switch with an air of cool indifference. "Here's two-oh-four on track two at ..." I glance at the clock "... 7:10." On the advertised.

"Two-oh-four on two at 7:10 ... all right." A pause. "Say, who is this, anyway?"

About the time I'm reaching for the switch to tell him, 204's engineer decides to wind out his power — rebuilt E9 No. 9912 — for the short sprint into Union Station. I hold back. All attempts at rational communication are wiped out by the exultant roar of 9912's twin 645s, a deafening wave of sound that shakes the tower by the throat.

The windows stop shaking. The sun catches a corner of 204's bilevels as it leans into the curve toward the depot. OK, let's try it again.

The door behind me crashes open.

"Oh, no. Not you?"

"That's right. It's me." The joker standing open-mouthed in the doorway letting the cool air out is our signal maintainer, Larry.

"And I thought there'd be an operator here this morning," he mocks.

Ignoring Larry's remark, I hit the CUS switch and introduce myself to the Harrison Street operator, who tells me

that his name is Bo and that he's the swing man, and asks if I know what's happened to the regular first-trick man up here.

Ah ... a touchy question. The first-trick operator, the guy who trained me to work this madhouse, has been bounced out of here for almost mating a westbound dinky with a track inspection car. Rather than go into the painful details, I tell Bo that I'm not sure what's going on.

"That's for sure," deadpans Larry.

7:17. No. 206 glides past on track 2 with 9911 pushing; 295 flips back toward Congress Park on track 1 with 9912 to reoriginate as 230; and Larry and I exchange insults on the relative ineptitude of our respective crafts. Then there's a new development. The East End dispatcher rings to tell me that there's an eastbound Conrail freight, designated BNEL-0, [BN-Elkhart] just out of Cicero for 55th Street. Power: 3376, 3377, 3362, and 3378, four fairly new GP40-2s.

No. 212 has already hit the bell on track 3 when the telephone rings again. This time it's one of Larry's numerous lady friends. He decides to accept the call downstairs in his "office." That's fine with me.

"Who needs the maintainer, anyway," I call after him jokingly.

SUBURBAN TRAINS Nos. 210 and 212 present a problem. No. 212 hits the plant on track 3. The only way to get him on to track 2 — the old funnel problem again — is by running him over switch 109. Which is no big deal ... except that 210, a non-stopper, hits the plant at the same time 212 does, and switch 109 has to be lined the opposite way for his straight shot down 2.

When I was breaking in here, I would foul this one up royally. Train No. 212 would hit, and I'd rush over to line him up. Then 210 would pop up on track 2 ... 212 would go by, slowing for his Halsted Street stop as 210 rocketed by ... and I'd be flying across the room to throw switch 109 for 210, whose engineer would be barking over the radio that he had a red board and would the operator at Union Avenue mind lining him up?

Now I know better. I just line up 210 first. After he's by me, I line up 212. Very simple.

It's the same thing this morning. After 210 flies past me, I walk to the middle of the interlocking machine, reach for 109's lever, and yank on it to line up 212.

But the lever doesn't budge.

Hmmm ... sometimes these old levers get stubborn. I whack it with the palm of my hand and yank again. Nothing. Sweat breaks out on my forehead. "Uh, Larry?" I call, depressing the PLANT switch, hoping that he'll hear me downstairs. No reply. Now 212's hogger is calling for the signal over the radio. "Yeah, I know you're out there," I mutter, glaring at his headlight through the window. What does he think I am, blind?

All right now, let's not get excited. I know it'll only make matters worse. I must stay cool. I must not ...

"LARRY!"

The telephone rings. I jerk the receiver from its cradle.

"Larry?"

"What is it, Schneider?"

"LARRY, SWITCH ONE-OH-NINE WON'T PULL AND TWO-TWELVE IS SITTING OUT HERE!"

"Oh, that's all right, Schneider," drawls Larry. "Who needs

the maintainer, anyway.”

A few seconds later he’s calmly surveying the levers, poking at relays, trying to ascertain the problem. I get on the radio and inform 212 that we’ve got signal trouble, which seems to pacify him for the time being. Finally, Larry announces that he has to go outside and check the switch itself.

“Here’s two-ninety-seven on one, Union,” says Bo.

Yipes! I leap to the levers and line him up westbound. Whenever a crisis hits at Union Avenue, you expect the rest of the railroad to shut down until it’s rectified. Not so. As a matter of fact, a glance at the west end of the track schematic board reveals 214 on track 2. I might as well line him up, seeing as 212 isn’t going anywhere for a while.

There is no problem when the Conrail drag shows up on 4; I just line him down to the tower and hold him until I get an OK from the Lumber Street switchtender to let him on down the wye.

At 7:35, dinky 216 hits the bell on 2 ... and I’m beginning to worry. The Burlington Northern prides itself on its superlative commuter service, and this pride is reflected in its concern over tardy trains. An operator who has delayed a dinky receives a calm, matter-of-fact telephone call from an official downtown. An operator who delays dinkies once too often will end up at Eola yard, where he’ll be allowed to clear up branch-line trains and feed waybills into a computer. I don’t want to go to Eola.

But wait ... Larry’s waving to me! He wants me to try the switch; 216 is hollering about the yellow board he’s coming up against, but to hell with him.



Amtrak 380 comes down the St. Charles Air Line, with dinky 240 and a CR freight at right. “An esthetic disappointment.”



With its E unit pushing, 242 flashes past Halsted Street platforms. “The dinky parade is pretty much over with.”

I grasp the lever. I close my eyes. I yank.

It pulls.

Aha; 212 is lined up! Fired with victory, I pull the signal for him and, with two toots of his horn, he’s moving. It’s 7:37 and he’s 7 minutes late, but still, he’s moving.

THE BEST THING about westbound dinkies is that their E units are on the point leaving the depot. The BN’s E units are an especially delightful breed anyway, with their sweeping

bands of green and white. No squat F40PHs for this operation, nothing but Es, long and lean and leggy, 100% pure. Nos. 9900 through 9908 are E8As, 9910 and up are E9As; but the distinctions end there. All are former CB&Q units, rebuilt by Morrison-Knudsen in Boise, Ida., in 1973 and 1974. EMD 645-engine com-

ponents upgraded the venerable 567 prime movers that had seen so much service on the *Zephyrs* (and dinkies), while Cummins equipment was installed to provide head-end power for the Budd gallery cars, allowing retirement of generator-coaches. No other stable of commuter locomotives in the United States can match the class of BN’s.

Larry flings the door open and, muttering about foreign material in the switches, flops on an easy chair. I walk the length of the machine, clearing signals and pulling out switches 109 and 110. Train No. 203 is the last westbound move on track 2 until 205 at 8:51, so for the next hour I can use track 1 for eastbounds. Throwing 109 and 110 effectively turns the





A rebuilt E8 in the wash rack west of Union Avenue. "I think Warren just collects wash trains."

plant into a double-barrel shotgun pumping dinkies off of tracks 3 and 2 into the depot on tracks 2 and 1.

I've already checked with Lumber Street on the feasibility of moving this BNEL-0 sometime in the near future. He had to check with 21st Street, 21st Street had to check with 55th Street, 55th Street had to check with 51st Street, 51st Street had to check with the Pope. Now, half an hour later, the switch-tender calls me. "OK, let him come, but keep him going once he gets his speed up."

Gotcha, chief. Let him come once he gets it up. I throw the signal and look out the window to see if the BNEL-0 is moving. Sure enough, a smear of dignified exhaust, hardly more than a smudge above the 3376's turbocharger stack, tells me that he is. A minute later, the four matched 645s of the new EMDs are shaking an audible fist at the Alco-loving operator, their screaming turbochargers threatening to shatter every window in the tower.

Apparently Larry's had just about enough of this hot action. Rising from his chair, he announces that he's going down to the ladder tracks at the west end of the plant to watch Jesse, the section foreman, change out a frog on switch 19. "Think you can handle things OK from up here without me?"

WHY, OF COURSE I can. It's now my second day and, short of a few minor problems, I'm doing a bang-up job.

"NEALY?"

Ouch. That's Warren, yard-master at the 14th Street coach yard. He uses the Q line to talk to me and to Nealy, his switch-tender. Unfortunately the Q line is much louder than the other six lines, and if you turn it down you lose all volume on the others. Stand next to the speaker when Warren is on, however, and you can kiss your hearing good-bye.

"HELLO UNION?" bellows Warren. I depress the Q switch and ask him what's up.

"YOU'LL BE GETTING TWO LIGHT ENGINES DOWN THREE LEAD FOR ONE, THEN TWO DOWN FOUR FOR ONE. AFTER THAT I'VE GOT TWO-TEN'S WASH TRAIN FOR THE WASH RACK."

Wash train? What day is

this? "Are you washing trains today, Warren?" I inquire stupidly. There's a long pause at the other end of the line. ... "THAT'S RIGHT. WHO'S THIS?"

I introduce myself for the second time in two days. I'm not offended, though. I figure Warren's got a lot on his mind down there at the coach yard. Still, I'm not too enthused about the wash trains. "It'll be a while before I can get them through the dinky rush, chief." Like maybe not until second shift, after I've gone home, is what I'm thinking.

"WELL," retorts Warren, "I'VE GOT TO GET THIS GUY IN THERE. I'VE GOT THE FIVE-FORTY-THREE WITH AN EIGHT-CAR WASH BEHIND HIM, AND

LATER ON I'LL HAVE A BUNCH OF LIGHT ENGINES GOING DOWN THERE. LEMME KNOW WHEN IT OPENS UP UP THERE."

Right.

Don't get me wrong. I think clean commuter trains are great. It's simply that in the middle of the rush, wash trains can tie up this plant like a hangman's noose. And we know what happens when the operator delays a dinky.

Then again, when you hold up a wash train, you have Warren's steady barrage of questions blasting over a speaker. "WHAT'S THE PROBLEM UP THERE, UNION?"

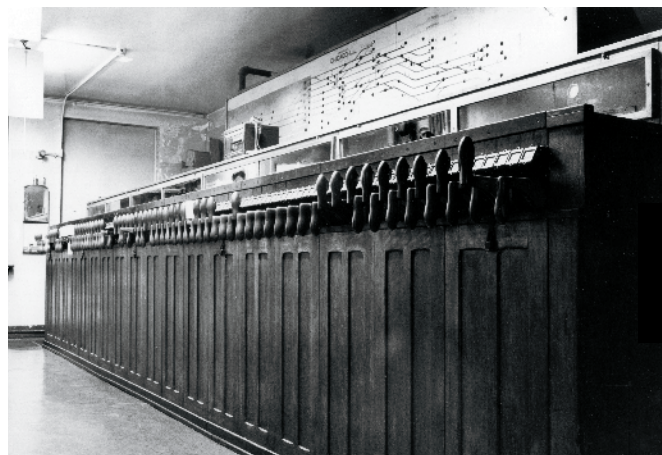
The first light engine, 9907, slips out of the coach yard on 3 lead. I pull two switches and three signals, and 9907 runs up to K track on the schematic. From where I'm standing, I can see the unit beneath the 1-94 bridge. After he stops behind the signal, I run down the previous lineup — it takes about 10 seconds — and line him back down K to lead 1, where he'll pick his way through the coach yard to the engine facility, which is known even today as the Zephyr Pit.

The dinky rush continues to move past me with the smoothness of hot butter tipped downhill. Meanwhile, back at the Light Engine Movement Department, 9910 has been tucked away by 8:20.

"UNION!" thunders Warren, "CAN YOU HANDLE THIS GUY?"

It sounds like Warren's getting anxious. Well, what the heck ... I guess I can squeeze his wash trains in; the next dinky isn't until 8:36.

This is the proverbial lull before the storm. The rush slacks off for a quarter of an hour and, while I'm taking the wash train off the north leg of the wye and down 5 track to the wash rack. Bo calls and asks if I can handle Amtrak train 56's wye move. I tell him that it's OK to send



The interlocking machine has 144 levers. "Certain irrefutable truths."

him down the north leg of the wye behind Warren's washer.

8:33 ... and I'm looking down at Conrail 8444, an ancient SWI. Every inch of its tapered black body is shaking with the effort of lugging 56's wye through the plant. Amtrak has two or three Geeps assigned to its 18th Street enginehouse, but for some curious reason, all of the wye moves by here rate these antideluvian EMDs. Which is fine by me. I like SWIs. Sure, there are zillions of them on Conrail, but now that EMD has announced it will no longer stock parts for the 6-cylinder 567, the SWI has ... how much longer do you think they have left on this road ... or on any other Class I, for that matter? Sure, I'm a diehard Alco enthusiast, but I can appreciate a survivor when I see one.

After it stops, I line the 8444 back down the south leg of the wye. From the operator in the tower it's more than just a signal. It's a salute.

THE PROBLEM with Amtrak trains Nos. 391 and 380 is, quite simply, this: they tend to be in the same place at the same time, much like suburban trains Nos. 210 and 212. Unlike the two dinkies, though, the Amtrak trains move in opposite directions: 391 is outbound to Carbondale, 380 inbound to CUS.

Bo wants to know what track he should send 391 out on. Oh, well. "Put him on one. Bo."

You see, there is no direct route into Union Station for Amtrak trains that utilize the former Illinois Central main line into Chicago. Consequently, they have to back into the depot after taking the St.

Charles Air Line over from the ICG connection at Clark Street

interlocking. It's a time-consuming move, but it's the only way to get these trains in and out of the depot. Sigh.

When the B&O bridge tender up on the Air Line rings me twice, I accept the call without enthusiasm. "Hello Union," he says brightly. "Number three-eighty comin' your way."

Rats. "What track?"
"Westbound."

Of course. Still, there's no need for me to panic. So what if there's a light engine screaming for the signal down there on 4 lead? Let him eat cake. A nervous glance to the east reveals the tail end of 391 backing toward me three Superliners and a GE P30CH. It's a losing combination esthetically, if you want to know the truth, but it sure beats an F40 and three Amcoaches. The stubby 391 rumbles past me, clears the signal, and stops. The headlight of the big GE glares at me.

So go ahead and glare, turkey. A second glance out of the window shows 380 tiptoeing down the Air Line. It's regrettable that the laws of nature allow but one train on one track at one time, cornfield meets notwithstanding. Today, 380 takes the square. I throw him the signal and stand back to watch him pass 391.

With three Amcoaches and an F40, 380 proves to be the disappointment of the hour. Nonetheless, I crank off the OS to Bo, first lining 380 back toward the depot. We'll make it at 8:55. By 8:59, 391 is on its merry way to the ICG main.

The hour between 9 and 10 a.m. is relatively calm. By 8:39, with the passing of 242, the dinky parade is pretty much over with, and once 380 and 391 are out of the way, you can



A closeup of an Amtrak P30CH from window of Union Avenue. "There is no reason to show myself to the engineer."

kick back and tear into your lunch ... with only the occasional burst of activity to intrude upon your R&R.

"Hello Union?"

Pushing aside my yogurt, I depress the PLANT switch and find a C&NW engineer on the other end. He's got an empty WEPX coal empty going back to the ICG. Can I let him go?

After checking with both the Wood Street yardmaster and the B&O bridge on the Air Line, I tell him yes. The bridge tender has informed me that there's a westbound Rock Island transfer waiting at Clark Street to use the Air Line, but that the empty "weppix" should come first. It doesn't make any difference to me, so I line up the North Western train.

He eases by a few minutes later with 115 empties behind the 879, an SD40, and — of all things — Union Pacific No. 2810, a U30C!

WASH TRAINS, wash trains, wash trains. I think that's War-

ren's hobby. He collects wash trains. Then, after he's got about 10 of them, he sends them down to me.

Between 10 a.m. and 10:40, I handle *three* additional wash trains, including two sets of three light engines. The only complication arises when Amtrak 348, the run from Quincy, rockets through the plant at 10:14, followed by dinky 246 at 10:15.

"WHAT'S THE HANG-UP UP THERE, UNION?"

"Just a couple of those pesky through trains, chief I'll have them out of your way in a jiffy."

At 10:30, a treat: the Rock Island transfer that trundles down the Air Line is in the hands of the 418, one of the Rock's rare C415s! Good Lord, I wonder ... how could the Rock, a road noted for re-engining its 244 Alcos with EMD engines while completely ignoring the application of the 251 prime mover in road freight units, have ended up with 10 C415s? You could almost as easily imagine MoPac with C628s.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm certainly not complaining



about the Rock's Alco fleet, particularly since the units are assigned to the Chicago area. I think they're great ... but to be fair, I don't have to stock parts for the little monsters.

10:36. ... Good heavens, it's the B&O bridge again, announcing the imminent arrival of Amtrak 58, the *Panama Limited*.

Well, good. Would it be that 391 and 380 were as easy to deal with as 58. Just line him off the Air Line down 2 main, wait for him to stop, and then line him back down 2 to the depot. Simple as pie.

Lumber Street phones with a call on an ELBN-3 with four units: the 2539, 2715, 2797, and 2762. Hey ... that's a pure GE lashup! Conrail's been something of a drag since it started gorging itself on pot-loads of GP and SD40-2s. The best place to find a Conrail F unit is at Joe Piolet's scrapyard out in McCook across the tracks from EMD, and as far as the Alco situation on Conrail in 1979 is concerned, well ... I'd rather not talk about it. A pure GE lashup, though — that I could handle.

"And behind him," adds the switch tender, "are these light coal engines back from the GM&O."

Boy, that floors me. It really does. Some of these old-timers talk like they're living in a corked bottle from the Fifties, a place where mergers haven't taken place, where the Burlington still takes coal trains to the GM&O instead of the BN taking them to the ICG. Eaves-dropping on the dispatcher's line, you can hear them talking about the "Nickel Plate transfer." I suppose it doesn't matter how much Cascade green or Conrail blue or NW black you slap over engines or on pay-check stubs. To the guy yanking couplers or switches or waybills out of boxes somewhere on the old system, it's still going to be the Burlington or the Pennsy or the Nickel Plate. And probably always will be.

Yes, well ... reality beckons in the form of 58. Why, if I dared to compare what I've heard about Illinois Central's

Panama Limited to this train — this Amtrak collection of two P30CHs and Amcoaches — I might get downright depressed.

It is not the function of the operator at Union Avenue, however, to pass judgment on what rolls over these switches and takes these signals. No, sir ... just line 'em up off the Air Line, wait for 'em to stop, and line 'em back into the depot.

Except that, a minute later, I'm still waiting for 'em.

To back up.

Lumber Street's call snaps my head around to the east window. "Here's that ELBN-3, Union." Ah, yes ... there they are, four shuddering GEs crawling painfully around the south wye. Still shaking my head over the *Panama*, I line the freight straight through on 4, then drift back to the desk.

"Say, Bo ... this *Panama* won't take the signal to back up. Do you have a radio up there?"

He doesn't, but he suggests the next best thing ... that I call the ICG Train Director and have him talk to 58. That's a good idea. I mean, what could be wrong with this train? Maybe he has air problems. Maybe both GEs died simultaneously. Still, the nagging suspicion remains that somehow — I'm not sure how — but somehow I've screwed up. But how? Maybe if I check the ...

"UNION, HOW ABOUT THIS WASH TRAIN OFF THE NORTH WYE?"

POOWWW!!! A double-knuckle fist of Warren the yard-smasher punches me right in the side of the head. That's it. I can't hear anything out of my right ear! I reel away from the desk speaker, holding my hand over my ear, trying to keep my balance ...

Wait ... what's that? The telephone! I can still hear! I jerk the receiver off its hook.

"Union."

"Is this the Burlington Northern Union Avenue?"

"Of course it is," I retort. I mean, why does everyone ask that? How many bloody Union Avenues could there be in this town?

"This is the ICG Train Director at Markham."



"Yeah, well, I'm glad you called, man," I burst out. "What's this stupid number fifty-eight doing here? He's got the stupid signal."

"Well, yes. Union ... but he claims that he's lined into the C&NW yard there."

I stare at the receiver for what seems to be a painfully long period of time. In front of me, through the north window, I can make out the rounded carbody lines of the 2539, a U25B still in Penn Central paint. Another part of my consciousness tells me that this is the ELBN-3 chugging past me. That's nice.

"Hello Union?"

I might as well face up to the inevitable. I raise my eyes to the track schematic. Ah, yes ... reality. If 58 had indeed been on 2 main where I had intended to send him, then the track indicator light on 2 main would be lit.

It is not.

"I, uh, think I see the problem," I mumble into the phone.

"OK, Union, great." The Train Director seems remarkably unplussed over the en-

tire incident. But then, he's not the one who has to back up the Air Line.

It takes 58 *four* moves to accomplish what two moves *should* have accomplished and, when the power stomps past the tower, I find an excuse to be elsewhere. Like in the bathroom. After all, there is no reason to show myself to the engineer of 58. He might be ... well, *distressed*.

WHAT GOES ON at Union Avenue for the rest of first trick? It varies from day to day. Some things are consistent, like the dinkies. And some are not. Freights come and go in both directions, and some of them breeze right through the interlocking, while others like this PIBN-5 here take a little longer.

There are several reasons for delays. Freights are held out of yards by irate yardmasters, or they have air problems. Some are underpowered, which means they have a hard time lifting their tonnage out of the natural bowl in which the Canal Street wye resides. Some

Amtrak E8 No. 436 on train No. 391, the *Shawnee*, at Union Avenue tower in Chicago in 1975. J. W. Schultz



are detained by other things, like this PIBN-5.

"WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH THIS CONRAIL GUY, UNION?"

I've decided that Warren can't be the 300-pound gorilla I imagine him to be. It's just the effects of the speaker, right? He's probably an OK guy with a nice wife and a bunch of swell kids. Nonetheless, at this stage of the game, I'd like to shoot him.

I don't know what the Conrail's problem is. The light engines and ELBN-3 both went down 4 track without any problems. Now, at close to 2 p.m., this train is stopped dead in the middle of the plant, effectively

blocking Warren's wash train from leaving the wash rack.

"Beats me," I reply innocently. "I think he has air problems."

There's no response to that one, but then again, I don't expect any. Then I hear something that sounds vaguely like a tape recording of Mickey Mouse being squeezed through a vegetable strainer. Wait a minute ... that's Larry! "Larry? Are you there?" I holler into the PLANT phone.

"Yeah, Schneider. ... Say, this Conrail engineer wants to talk at you." I tell Larry to put him on.

"Is this the operator?" asks an unfamiliar voice. "This is the engineer off this PIBN-5. Say,

are you sure you want to line us up this way?"

What is this, some kind of joke?

"What are you talking about? What way?"

"Why ... through the wash rack." No ... no, I didn't intend to do anything of the sort. And when Frank, the second-trick operator, arrives 40 minutes later, I refrain from telling him the whole terrible story: how PIBN-5 had to back up out of the wash rack lead, how he lost his air twice, how he blocked Warren's wash train for 30 minutes, and how the temperature in the tower dropped 20 degrees each time the yardmaster got on the speaker to ask what the problem was.

Frank has seen a lot of changes in this East End over the last 30 years. In immediate postwar years, according to Frank, there were towers at Roby Street, Kedzie Avenue, Cicero, La Vergne, Congress Park, Downers Grove, Eola itself, and West Eola. There were 250 operators on the First Subdivision seniority list alone.

That impressed me. We're lucky to have 50 now, and the only manned towers left on this end of the BN are Aurora tower and, of course, Union.

Congress Park long ago lost its manned interlocking plant to CTC, but Frank ended up as agent there when "the Park" became a COMPASS computer reporting station. When BN cut the job in 1979, Frank bumped into Union, where he'd worked years before as an extra telegrapher. He says he has pictures of the place back then ... of steam-powered Pennsy transfer drags and quicksilver Q *Twin Zephyrs* ... and one of these days he'll bring them in

to show me what it was like. I'm dying to see them.

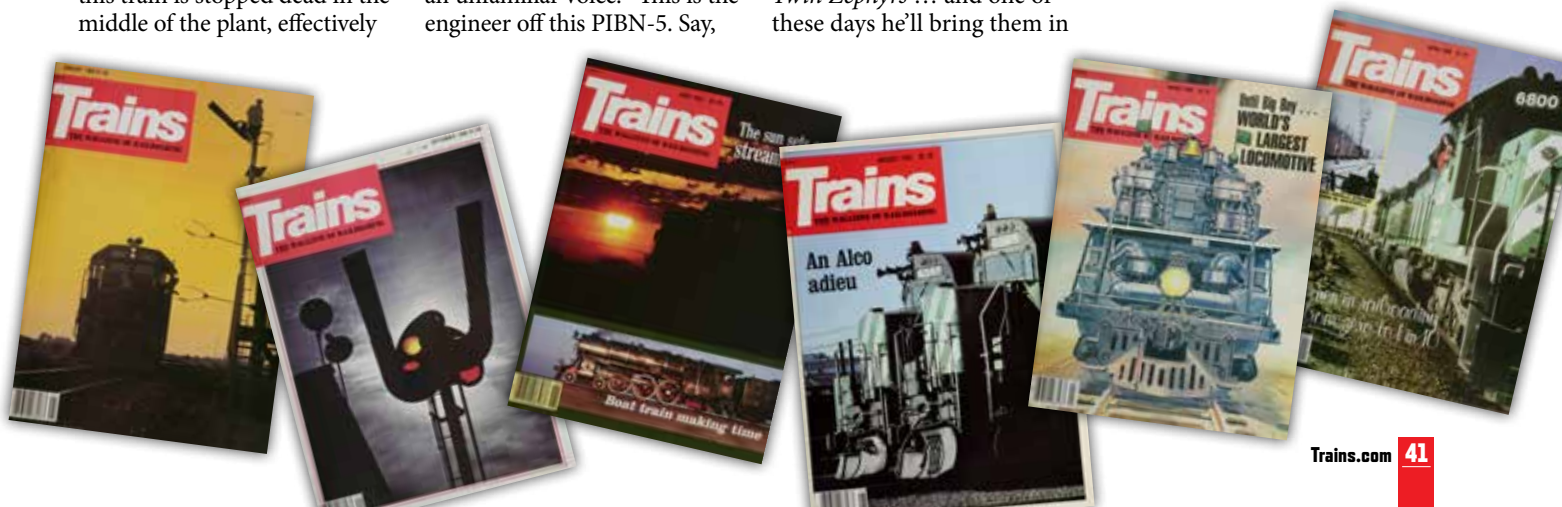
The tower itself has seen a lot of changes. Long before gallery cars and Cascade green, Union Avenue was there, dusted by coal smoke and exhaust from 8-cylinder Winton 201-A prime movers, reverberating to the sounds of the Q's De La Vergne-engined Baldwin VO switchers and matched A-B-A F3s. Frank tells me the New York Central used to handle transfer trains with four-unit covered wagon sets, handsome locomotives graced with lightning stripes. I don't doubt it.

"Are you getting the hang of the place now?" he asks. "Oh, yeah, sure," I lie cheerfully. "No problem at all." Except for when the Amtrak official called to ask why 58 was so late getting into the depot. But what the heck. "I like it here," I add impulsively. "I really do."

"Oh, jeez, yes," Frank agrees with a smile. "It's a helluva place to be, isn't it?" There's a sudden swell of engine noise outside the window, carried along by the high-pitched whine of Electro-Motive turbochargers. "That's the *Zephyr*," I tell Frank hurriedly. "I already lined him up."

The SDP40F leading Amtrak No. 6 seems to knock the air aside as it whacks past the tower. It's followed by another SDP ... a rebuilt E9B masquerading as a heater car ... then an unbroken stream of stainless steel bucking along on 2 main, headed for Union Station.

Frank's right, you know ... about this place. It's a helluva place to be. **I**



Riding a Yellowstone with new friends

They had just met, but found themselves riding a big DM&IR locomotive together

by Allen Anway



AT AGE 18, I got the chance to ride in the cab of a Yellowstone steam engine as they were making their last runs.

In 1959, I carpooled 10 miles from Cloquet to Saginaw, Minn., then east along the Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Railroad tracks, ending my journey at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. The steel union representing DM&IR employees had been on strike for months. When the strike ended in November, only a month or two remained before freeze-up stopped ore boat shipping from Duluth, so the DM&IR ran everything it had with wheels including the Baldwin 2-8-8-4 Yellowstones. Even my carpool friends were surprised to see a distant giant

plume of white steam as we sped along the highway. The railroad was running again.

YOUTH AND THE D&NE

I grew up in Cloquet. In my youth I rode my bicycle to watch the Duluth & Northeastern Railroad switching in town. The crews befriended me, borrowing my bicycle to fetch ice cream vended at the Wood Conversion factory. Later they let me ride in the locomotive cab with them. I felt they liked me because they could see I appreciated their work.

Older, driving my mother's 1956 Dodge Dart as a high school sophomore, I followed the D&NE up to Saginaw, meeting the DM&IR stationmaster. He was young and

showed me around the station. He communicated to other stations by both telegraph and carrier-current radio. Carrier current was sub-AM frequency radio that used the adjacent telegraph and phone wires as the transmission agent. Even the Yellowstone locomotives had an antenna running the length of the boiler for this. The radio operation was not reliable, with numerous dead spots along tracks.

THE CHICAGO FOUR

With the strike ended, I searched for DM&IR steam each weekend. One winter Saturday afternoon, as I chased a loaded DM&IR ore drag east along U.S. Highway 2, I spotted a station wagon with four

tough-looking guys. Stopping at a highway crossing, the four got out, each bearing a Leica or a Speed Graphic camera. My poor Aires IIIC paled beside their arsenal. Realizing I was with like-minded people, I introduced myself, and we became instant friends.

Word came to them of this rare steam operation, so they traveled about 10 hours from Chicago to see it. After taking pictures we drove as a convoy east toward Proctor, Minn., just west of Duluth, ahead of the 30-mph train.

At the scales west of Proctor it was customary to break a 180-car ore train in two, letting the road engine draw the first cars over the scale. Weighing full cars was done on the fly,

Even though steam was in its twilight, big locomotives could still be seen pounding the rails of the DM&IR in 1959. The 2-8-8-4 Yellowstones, like the one chased by our author and his friends, worked their last miles lugging iron ore to the shores of Lake Superior. In this shot of No. 230, notice the radio antenna wire stretched along the top of the boiler.

Franklin A. King



with IBM cards hand-fed adroitly into the automated weight printer inside the scale shanty. Standing on the ground, watching the engine at rest illuminated by the setting sun, the Chicago four suddenly climbed up the steps of the locomotive cab, so I ran up too. The fireman had just finished hosing down the deck, and the interior was spotless. The whirr of the generator, the cab lights, the hissing of steam, combined for a more impressive sight than the tiny D&NE consolidation cabs. I marveled at all the room we had in the vestibule cab, including four seats. There were eight people — five of us plus the head-end brakeman, fireman, and engineer. We all started talking with the crew.

The engineer, activating the noisy cylinder exhausts, pulled the throttle to start the train. Without effort, we began moving over the scale at 3 mph — a smooth ride over first-class track. Within the cab a variety of discussion groups formed. The conversations satisfied the curiosity of both sides. One topic was whether there was featherbedding (useless jobs) or not. We thought there was, but the engineer, president of the brotherhood, thought there wasn't.

LOCOMOTIVE CONVERSATIONS

The stories continued. Our crew told us the railroad sent out a time and motion management person to hide in the weeds and observe a switch crew. The crew identified him instantly and he became the subject of the crew's little drama. After they showed him their inept switching moves, he ordered out another switching crew to help. Our crew was proud to be a benefit to fellow employees.

On another topic, the engineer said derisively, "The yardmaster thinks he can train an engineer in two days and have him operating independently the third." Other crew members chimed in, feeling this was the worst idea ever.

Continuing, one of our crew was stranded at the bottom of the Duluth hill with a steam engine and a train of empties headed up the 2% grade to Proctor — 700 feet above the harbor. A piece of slate jammed the stoker and could not be dislodged. They desperately wanted to get home. Having the three people in the cab, the crew elected the brakeman to be the engineer as he had a heart condition. The other two manned coal shovels and shoveled their train up the hill at 4 mph.

We continued pulling our half train through the scale. I was surprised by the engineer's train control. After coasting for 5 or 10 minutes at a time, he would pull the throttle halfway out for 10 seconds, and then push it closed. I failed to discern the exact speed change, but it was clear he knew what he was doing.



POWER REVERSE?

Looking at the Yellowstone controls, I asked the engineer, pointing, if that was the power reverse? He replied sternly, "Power assist!" I thought it was a true power reverse, but wisely — for once — kept my mouth shut. The engineer invited me to push it forward. I was not prepared for the large force required and failed to move it. He brusquely pushed it himself.

After an hour in the deepening twilight, we got to our proper yard track, but stopped when blocked by a cut of cars. The engineer tried to have them removed by radioing for a switch crew, but the yardmaster didn't hear us from the dead spot — a typical radio failure. But Alborn, Minn., 30 miles west, heard us clearly, and offered to relay the request. I asked the engineer why he didn't move the cut himself. He said, "Extra day of pay." I thought of featherbedding, but it was really just the rules of the railroad.

A local switch crew moved the cars and we spotted ours. It had become a dark, cloudless night. Suddenly all the Chicago guys dashed from the cab to

The Yellowstone cabs were indeed roomy. There were also a myriad of controls. In this case the engineer has his left hand on the power reverse or "power assist," as our author found out. Regardless of what the lever was called, it took some brute force to move it. William D. Middleton

the ground, so I followed. I asked why we were getting out in this strange place, and they said they didn't want to get the engineer into trouble for having us aboard. The locomotive ground lights illuminated the neighborhood. We all walked west for the better part of an hour along the railroad track mostly in the dark to reach our automobiles. We said farewell and departed.

Our adventure ended quietly, oblivious to the ending of freight steam on the DM&IR. In the spring of 1960, the DM&IR ran fewer ore trains, so there was little or no call for the big Yellowstones. **I**

ALLEN ANWAY resides in Superior, Wis. For a time he taught physics at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. Later in his career he founded A2D2 Electronics, which makes grain storage bin sensors.



Down by the Seashore

Seashore Trolley Museum is 'The World's First and Largest Museum of Mass Transit'

▲ Connecticut Co. car No. 1160 passes Tower C as it arrives at Seashore's visitors center platform in Kennebunkport, Maine. In its heyday, the Connecticut Co. operated an extensive network of electric street railways in its namesake state. Brian Solomon

THE SEASHORE TROLLEY MUSEUM

is one of the world's earliest successful enthusiast-led railroad preservation efforts. Founded in 1939 as the "New England Electric Railway Historical Society" to help preserve elements of rapidly vanishing electric inter-urban railways, the organization gradually developed an operating museum for electric and urban transit vehicles.

Based in Kennebunkport, Maine on a short section of rebuilt Atlantic Shore Line Railway, today the museum boasts being "The World's First and Largest Museum of Mass Transit." It has a fascinating and diverse collection of railway and road vehicles.

My first trip to Seashore was as a child more than 50 years ago. I recall bubbling over with excitement at a trolley ride. In the 1970s and early '80s, my family and I would visit Seashore on our drives to the Maine

coast, where we visited my maternal grandparents during the summers. We loved traveling on the historic cars and walking through the car barns to discover the relics of the railway past that resided within.

This spring, my wife Kris and I visited the museum and found that great progress was being made. We took a spin on Connecticut Co. car No. 1160 to the end of the line at Talbott Park — a scaled interpretation of a classic "trolley park." During the ride, the conductor provided a running narrative about the history of the line, the car, and electric railways in New England. At Talbott Park, we paused on the turnback loop for a second car to arrive. The motorman, dressed in his classic uniform, asked passengers if they had any questions. The only comment was, "We don't even know what to ask," and I realized the museum

faced an interpretive challenge. The age of the trolley car is beyond living memory for most modern visitors.

Museum Executive Director Katie Orlando explained to me that many first-time visitors think of trolleys as rubber-tired bus wanna-bes. She said the most effective way of interpreting electric railway history is simply by operating the trolleys while showcasing how electric railways created suburbs. Orlando was hired by Seashore in 2018 and has set out to transform the collection and preservation through development of a master plan. Working with the museum's stakeholders, she spearheaded a two-year project to establish a grand vision to best allocate resources.

"We needed to catch up on strategic planning and deferred maintenance, while establishing clear short-term and long-term goals," she says. The



plan included narrowing the museum's expansive collection of pieces awaiting restoration to just those pieces most relevant to the museum's vision. Restoring equipment can be costly, she notes: "We picked 10 pieces for public fund raising."

Among the most significant is the *Narcissus*, estimated to cost half a million dollars to fully restore. This deluxe wood-body interurban electric was built in Laconia, N.H., in 1912. It's now on the National Register of Historic Places and notably carried former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt in 1914. Today, it's the last surviving car from the long-defunct Portland-Lewiston Interurban railway company.

Among the museum's most popular cars is Montreal Traction No. 2, an open-air "sightseeing car" that requires about \$100,000 in truck work.

The museum also aims to put all of its cars under cover and out of the elements; to help reach this goal, it is now completing its new James D. Schantz Highwood Carhouse. Another new building is being erected across the parking lot from the visitors center to house an enormous model railroad display. This is being funded by a generous multimillion dollar grant from the Wyss Medical Foundation. Once

completed it will allow the museum to be open to the public year round.

WHAT TO SEE

Seashore's visitor center hosts a ticket office, a gift shop with an extensive selection of electric railway and transit books, and exhibits describing the role and history of electric railways in the region. Trolleys are boarded from the platform outside, with a handicap lift, if required. Seashore has six cars operating in regular rotation, with up to four cars running on busy days.

In addition to cars operated in regular service, Seashore also maintains another 20 or so 'special fleet' cars that are only operated occasionally, typically during special events. This includes the world's first preserved trolley car, the Biddeford & Saco No. 31, a classic bench-style open car acquired by the museum in 1939.

Guests are encouraged to take a self-guided walking tour of the restoration shop and car houses where many of the best preserved vehicles are displayed.

WHERE TO GO AND WHEN TO VISIT

The museum is located at 195 Log Cabin Road in Kennebunkport, Maine. It's open 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. select days May to October — weekends in May, and

The conductor aboard No. 1160 offered a historical narrative about electric railways in Maine and New England, explaining that the old Atlantic Shore Line Railway once carried both freight and passengers. The museum has rebuilt a short section of an ASL Railway branch that had been abandoned in 1927.

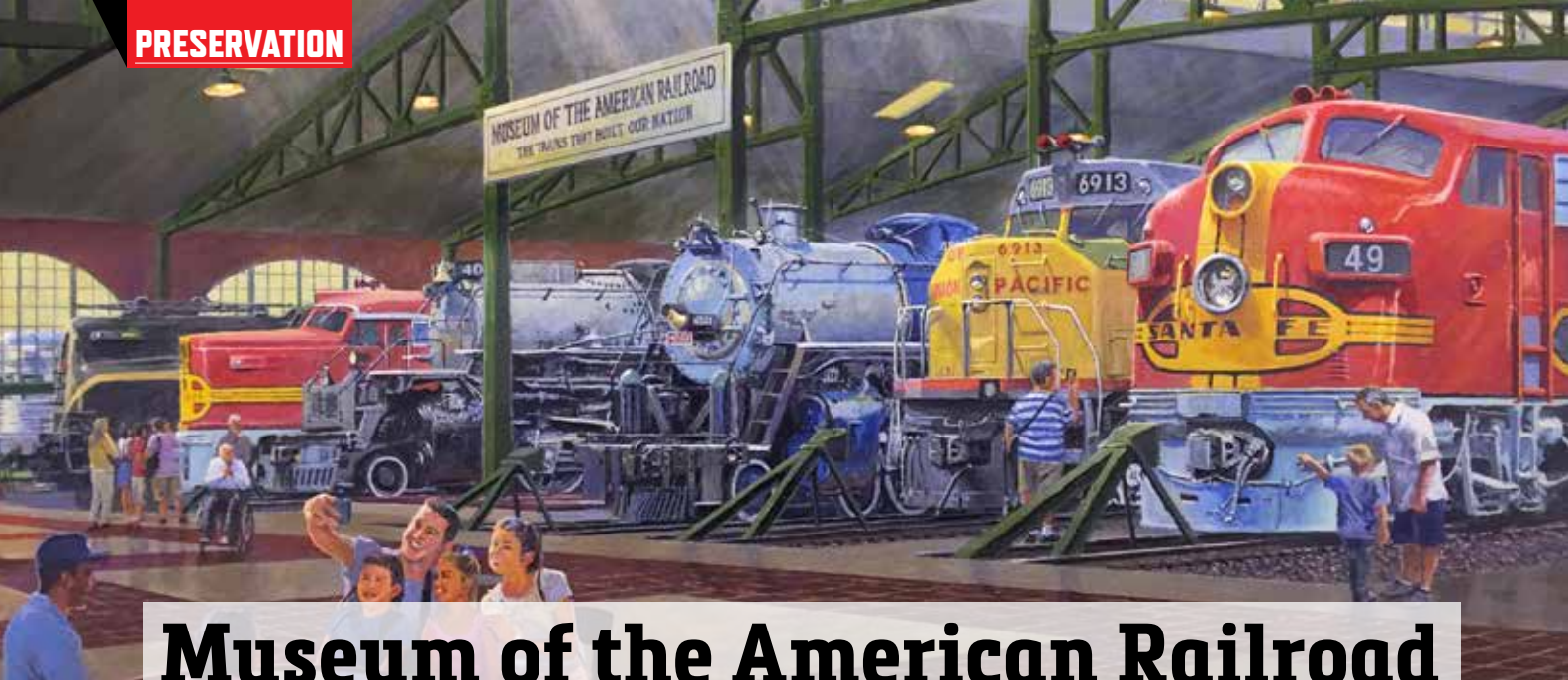
Brian Solomon

Wednesday through Sunday from June to October, plus select December weekends.

Popular events such as Crazy Hat Day (July 15, 2023) and Pumpkin Patch (fall weekends) are aimed at the general public as means of generating excitement and increasing ridership and awareness of the museum. Railroad enthusiasts may find the best times to visit are during the shoulder seasons (quieter times in the spring and fall before and after peak summer visitation).

Enthusiast events that showcase special fleet cars include the annual Boston Day (Aug. 5, 2023), featuring Boston transit vehicles and a behind-the-scenes tour. Also, Members Day and Open House (Aug. 19, 2023). Orlando says if visiting railfans are interested in seeing specific equipment, to call in advance at: 207-967-2800 or visit trolleymuseum.org. — Brian Solomon

Thanks to Dan Howard for his assistance with this article.



Museum of the American Railroad focusing on mission fulfillment

A new train pavilion is the next phase of the plan for Frisco, Texas, facility

▲ Noted railroad artist John Winfield was commissioned by the museum to create an image of the planned train pavilion. "I paint mostly historical scenes," Winfield said of the forward-looking work. "It took some imagination to create what the building would look like. But the museum had the details organized ..."

Museum of the American Railroad

DUCK BEHIND THE FRISCO (TEXAS) PUBLIC LIBRARY and you have stepped into a different world. Located here is the Museum of the American Railroad and its 65-piece rolling stock collection. Spotted on the 12-acre site are notables such as Pennsylvania Railroad GG1 No. 4906; an Alco PA4 of Delaware & Hudson and Santa Fe heritage; Union Pacific DDA40X No. 6913; and Big Boy No. 4018. A combination of passenger and freight cars fill out the collection to tell the story of railroading in Texas and the U.S.

The museum is on a mission with the goal of an impressive interpretive facility. This includes a 100,000-square-foot train pavilion, and a multi-story main building for exhibits, offices, and events.

Between 2010 and 2013, the museum moved from Fair Park in Dallas. This, says Bob LaPrelle, museum president and CEO, opened the opportunity to "basically realize this museum's full potential ... you know, it was kind of a quiet little remote part of Fair Park for many years, but we knew that there was so much history in the collection and such opportunity to grow this collection and get more exposure that, at the invi-

tation of Frisco, we decided to come up here and really build it out like it should be."

To "build it out," the museum developed a master site plan prior to the Frisco relocation. In 2022, work was completed on 10 display tracks totalling more than 12,000 feet. This includes the tracks that will be under the exhibit pavilion. With the display tracks completed, the rolling stock collection has been reorganized and moved into more interpretive positions that will better tell the railroad story. The next phase, now underway, is to in-

stall concrete walkways among the display tracks. The individual walks, along with a 12,000 square foot concourse at the head end of the display tracks, will dramatically increase visitor access and provide additional space for educational programs and events.

Next will be the train pavilion, which LaPrelle says will "be a fantastic public space. The trains will almost serve as a backdrop, if you will, where you can have some great civic and outdoor and indoor activities."

A capital campaign will be launched later this year in support of the pavilion.

Beyond the physical vision, a large part of MAR's success has come from its community role. With nearly 40% of patrons visiting from outside Texas, the museum makes a solid contribution to area tourism. Additionally, a strong relationship has been established with the local school district. The museum provides programming for all grade levels including a class tailored to high school students in the district's African American studies course.

Visit historictains.org for more information on the Museum of the American Railroad. — Bob Lettenberger

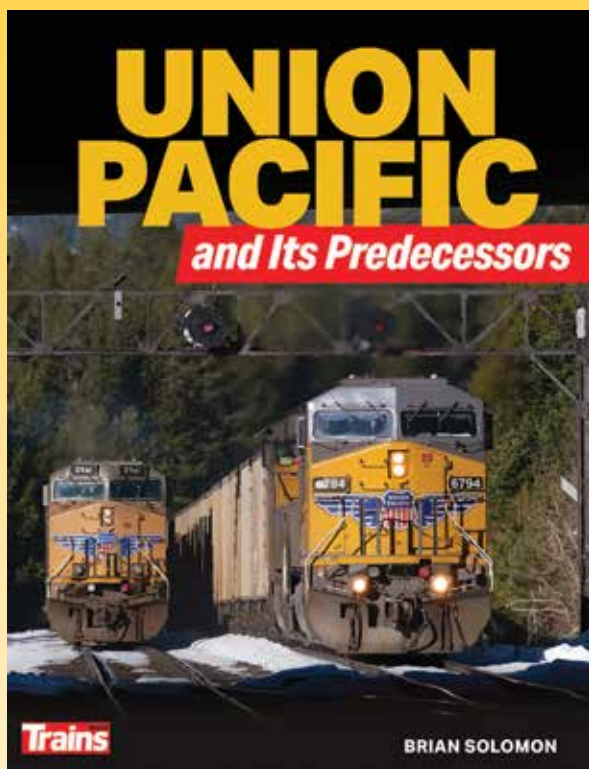
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It was a decade when names like Bradshaw, Bleier, and Swann dominated Steeler football, and a 1949 PCC car gave a city hope during tough economic times. Pennsylvania Trolley Museum collection

The 'Terrible Trolley' comes home to Pennsylvania

PCC car will be restored to Steelers football team colors

AN ICON OF PITTSBURGH TRANSIT and sports history, the "Terrible Trolley," has arrived at the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum after 25 years in Ohio, with plans for an operational restoration.

The museum, located in Washington, Pa., acquired former Pittsburgh Railways Co. Presidents' Conference Committee (PCC) car No. 1713, a 1949 product of the St. Louis Car Co., and plans to restore its Pittsburgh Steelers paint scheme. From 1980 to 1985, the car carried black and gold colors honoring the then-four-time Super Bowl champions.

The Steelers won championships in 1975, 1976, 1979, and 1980. A 9-year-old girl, Kim Severs, wrote to Pittsburgh Mayor Richard Caliguiri to propose painting a trolley in the team's colors to celebrate. He passed her note to Port Authority Transit of Allegheny County, the system's operating agency. Within weeks, PAT had repainted No. 1713 with the Steelers logo and colors, as well as, the jersey numbers of the team's stars.

It was termed the "Terrible Trolley," an allusion to the "Terrible Towel," a pep rally gimmick cooked up by local sportscaster Myron Cope, who urged fans to bring gold-colored dish towels to home games and twirl them during crucial plays. The Steelers then licensed and sold thousands of Terrible Towel-branded items. It seemed that the team always managed to pull off critical plays when fans waved the towels.

CITY'S ATTACHMENT TO NO. 1713

In all, the museum owns 51 cars, including nine PCCs, several of which are from Pittsburgh, as well as Philadelphia and Cleveland. But because of the emotional attachment, the importance of this car can't be overstated.

"This is more than just a trolley," said Scott Becker, PTM executive director. "In the 1970s, Pittsburgh went through a lot of rough times." The city's steel industry faltered, mills closed, and the area lost thousands of high-paying jobs, he explained.

"But the Steelers were doing well and gave [the public] hope," Becker said. "When [No. 1713] went down the street, people looked at it, and it got a lot of attention. We want to bring history to life. Why is [this car] relevant? It's important because of what it symbolized to people."



Wearing PAT's later white paint, the "Terrible Trolley" is pulled from the shed in Ohio where it had been stored since 1998. Scott Becker

Starting in 1936, PRCo. bought 666 of the streamlined cars, the third-largest fleet in North America. Only Toronto, with 745, and Chicago, with 683, had more. By the time the Port Authority took over in 1964, the PCC fleet had shrunk to 283 cars. PAT soon converted most routes to buses, whittling the streetcar lines to just three — the number that remains today with 26 miles of light-rail service, now rebranded as Pittsburgh Regional Transit.

As PAT ordered new light-rail vehicles, it rebuilt some of the remaining PCCs, and sold or scrapped the rest. No. 1713 was upgraded with a pantograph for use in PAT's downtown subway and was repainted in the system's white scheme. Upon retirement about 1998, the car found its way to trolley collector Ed Miller in Ashley, Ohio.

"He had the foresight to put it indoors [in a pole barn with tracks] and that's what saved it," said Becker. "He also obtained the correct seats that would have been used in the early 1980s [original 1949 style] and even repaired and repainted the seat frames. I think you could say that he was the steward of this car for 25 years."

RESCUE FROM OHIO

Earlier this year, PTM was researching the interactions between Pittsburgh's trolleys and its sports teams. Someone remembered that the former Terrible Trolley had escaped scrapping. Becker contacted Miller, who had just sold the building and was seeking a new home for No. 1713.

"We're working with a local body shop, Prime Collision Center, which has offered to paint the car, and PPG Paints (a Pittsburgh-based company) is donating the paints for it," said Becker.

PTM has contacted the National Football League, the Steelers, and its owners, the Rooney family. All support the project.

Like the majority of cars in the collection, No. 1713 is a broad-gauge vehicle. For reasons that have been lost to history, most traction companies in Pennsylvania used a 5-foot, 2½-inch gauge.

Another reason for acquiring the car, Becker said, is that Pittsburgh has an extensive history with specially painted trolleys, from World War II patriotic designs to advertising for auto dealers, Budweiser beer, the city's planetarium, Mohawk Airlines, and the Allegheny County Fair. In the 1970s, PAT painted a PCC in psychedelic colors (No. 1730, named "Mod Desire"), and another (No. 1742) to resemble the orange-and-blue wrapper of a Clark candy bar, which were made in Pittsburgh.

For more information on the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum visit: pa-trolley.org — Dan Cupper

PRESERVATION BRIEFS

N&W No. 611 heads home; first all-female engine crew on Durango & Silverton



NORFOLK & WESTERN STEAM LOCOMOTIVE NO. 611 returned to its hometown of Roanoke for the first time since 2019. The J-class 4-8-4 steamed into the yard of the **VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF TRANSPORTATION** on June 2. No. 611 had extended stays at both the **STRASBURG RAIL ROAD** in Ronks, Pa., and the **NORTH CAROLINA TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM** in Spencer. Mitch Goldman

The **WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD MUSEUM** in Portola, Calif., has received a \$1 million grant from the **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE** Rural Development Fund for phase one construction of its Frederick Whitman Multi-Purpose Building. The grant will help fund construction of a 100-foot by

200-foot, climate-controlled building capable of storing 10 to 16 pieces of equipment, hosting community events, and functioning as a disaster evacuation center. Frederick Whitman, for whom the building will be named, was Western Pacific Railroad president during its most successful years.

Western Pacific Railroad Museum

On June 9, the **DURANGO & SILVERTON NARROW GAUGE RAILROAD** witnessed a first for the railroad. Throughout the 142-year history of the line, it was the first time an all-female engine crew operated a train. Engineer Kyla Breedan and fireman Elizabeth



Duncan made the trip between Durango and Silverton, Colo., with locomotive No. 473, a 1923 Alco K28 2-8-2 Mikado. J. Leigh Mestas

THE TEXAS STATE RAILROAD, a heritage railway in Palestine, Texas, will receive \$10 million under the budget passed last month by the state legislature. The Palestine *Herald-Press* indicates funding will go toward capital projects that could include tie and ballast work, replacement of 100-year-old rails, railcar maintenance, safety improvements, and other projects. Texas State Railroad via Facebook



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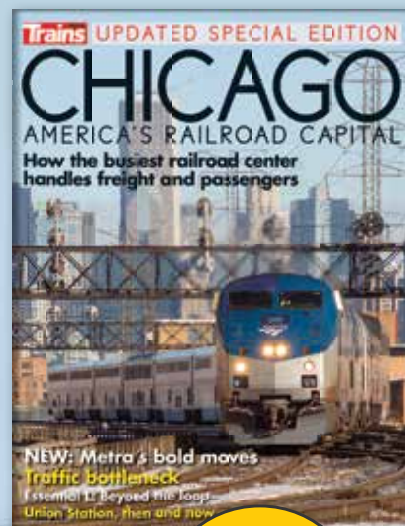
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ColoradoRailroadMuseum.org

303-279-4591

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www.oklahomarailwaymuseum.org 405-424-8222

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www.greenwoodrrmuseum.com

864-229-7093

TEXAS

Rosenberg

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1921 Avenue F, Rosenberg, TX 77471

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www.RosenbergRRMuseum.org (281)633-2846

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2285 South Broadway



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www.nationalrrmuseum.org

920-437-7623

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www.midcontinent.org

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All Copy: Set in standard 6 point type. First several words only set in bold face. If possible, ads should be sent typewritten and categorized to ensure accuracy.

CLOSING DATES: September 2023 closes June 19, October closes July 26, November closes August 22, December close September 27.

For TRAINS' private records, please furnish: a telephone number and when using a P.O. Box in your ad, a street address.

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Fax: (262) 796-0126 E-mail: classads@kalmbach.com

RAIL SHOWS AND EVENTS

AUGUST 20, 2023: 11th Annual Elkader Model Train Show-Swap Meet. Sunday, 10:00am-3:30pm. Johnson's Reception Hall, 910 High Street, Elkader, IA 52043. Adults \$5, children 6-12 \$2, under 5 FREE. Free parking, lunch stand available. Information: Larry Lerch, 563-880-2066 or 563-245-3345

OCTOBER 15, 2023: 32nd Annual Chicago Railroadiana and Model Train Show. Sunday, 10:00am-3:00pm. Kane County Fairgrounds, 525 South Randall Rd., St. Charles, IL. Admission: \$6.00 w/tax. Tables starting at \$65.00. Information: 847-358-1185, RussFierce@aol.com or www.RRShows.com

All listed events were confirmed as active at the time of press. Please contact event sponsor for current status of the event.

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In the October issue



War in the West

Intermodal competition between BNSF and Union Pacific is **HEATING UP** and the stakes couldn't be higher. Freight operations are a rarely seen aspect of the **STRASBURG RAIL ROAD**. In the mid-1970s, a Penn Central worker experienced a **BRUSH WITH DEATH** from a fast-moving GG1. Count down to the 1,000th issue with a classic **BEST OF TRAINS** article. **PLUS** Photo Gallery, Travel, News, and Preservation in every issue.

On sale September 12, 2023



Still standing after all these years

An old Chesapeake & Ohio Railway cantilevered signal, at what was WD Cabin near Burnaugh, Ky., marks the passing of yet another train. On March 19, 2023, it's CSX train C515 that rumbles by with GE AC44CW No. 78 on the point. The C515, a coal hauler, runs from Martin, Ky., to Toledo, Ohio.





Welcome to West Virginia

On the far western edge of West Virginia, the town of Kenova is sandwiched between Ohio and Kentucky at the confluence of the Big Sandy and Ohio rivers. Norfolk Southern mixed freight train 18M is crossing from Ohio into West Virginia on a bridge dating to Norfolk & Western time. On Feb. 14, 2023, NS No. 8004, a GE ES44AC, leads the way in the late-day sun.





Up 'round the bend

Through time, nature carved the hills and valleys that today's roads and railroad tracks follow. The twists, turns, climbs, and descents make for railroading challenges. The sun is low in the sky on this cold day in January 2023, outside Catlettsburg, Ky., as CSX AC44CW No. 78 is full throttle lugging coal train C515 up one of those grades.

Window rattler

In Louisa, Ky., just a couple of blocks beyond downtown, the CSX tracks run smack through the middle of an older residential neighborhood. Here there is little differentiation between front yard and railroad right-of-way. Ethanol train B651 is shaking houses and rattling windows on Jan. 31, 2023. The train usually runs with foreign power, like BNSF Railway No. 5758, a GE ES44AC.





Rear guard

Ducking under the signal bridge, Canadian National ES44AC No. 3906, acting as the rear DPU, has the back of CSX train B628 on May 27, 2023. This is Catlettsburg, Ky., on CSX's Big Sandy Subdivision.

There's a parking spot

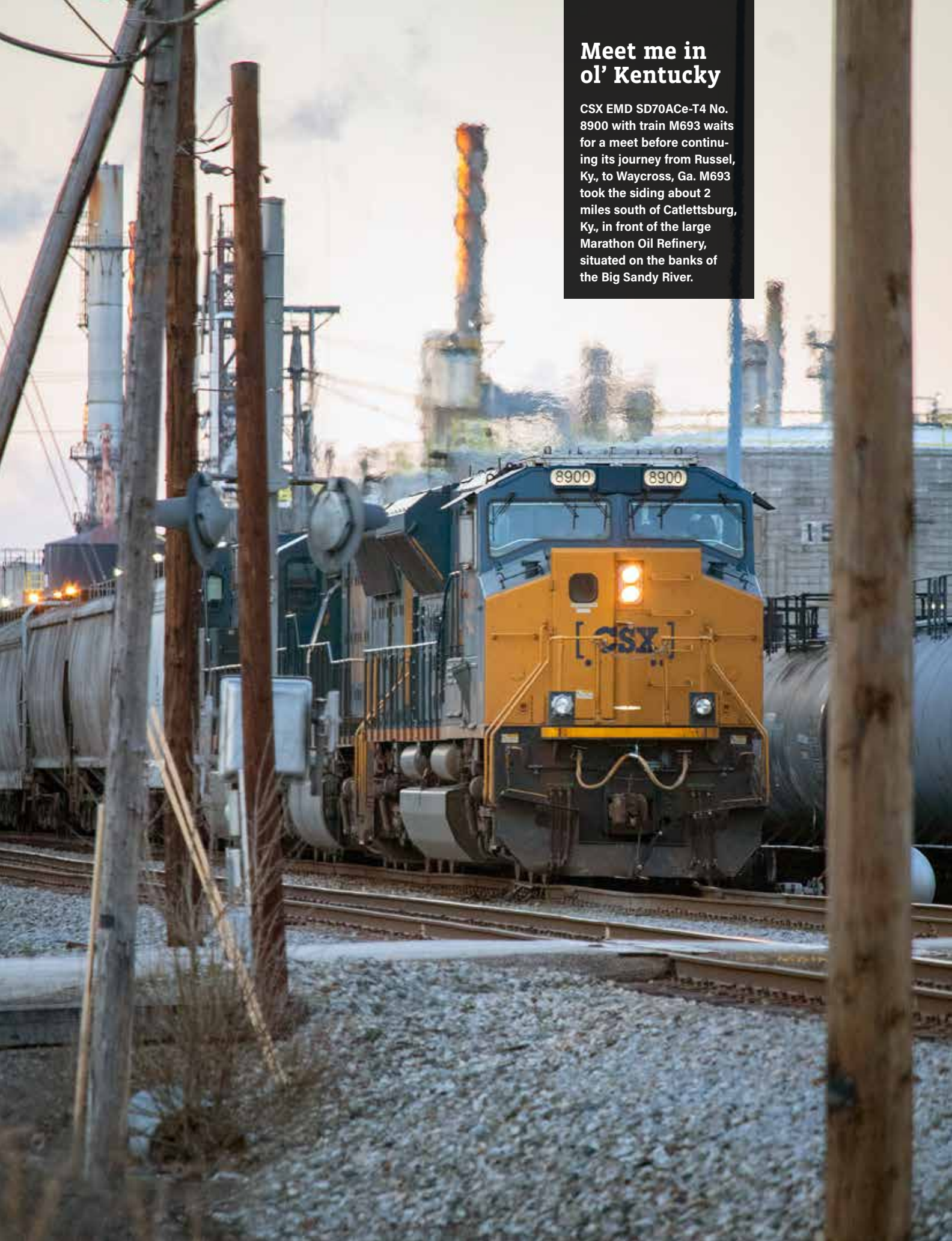
The crew on CSX local R207 is done for the day. It's time to move GP38-2 No. 2813 into the siding and tie it down until the next crew is called. This parking spot looks good. We are working on the Kanawha Sub in Huntington, W.Va. It's May 27, 2023.



Waylon Moore enjoys everything about trains! He is 16 and a sophomore at Lawrence County High School near his home in Louisa, a small community in eastern Kentucky. Once he picked up a camera, Waylon found a second hobby he liked and combined photography with his passion for trains. After high school, he aspires to a railroad career, ideally as a conductor for Norfolk Southern.

Meet me in ol' Kentucky

CSX EMD SD70ACe-T4 No. 8900 with train M693 waits for a meet before continuing its journey from Russel, Ky., to Waycross, Ga. M693 took the siding about 2 miles south of Catlettsburg, Ky., in front of the large Marathon Oil Refinery, situated on the banks of the Big Sandy River.



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