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Celebrating the railroader

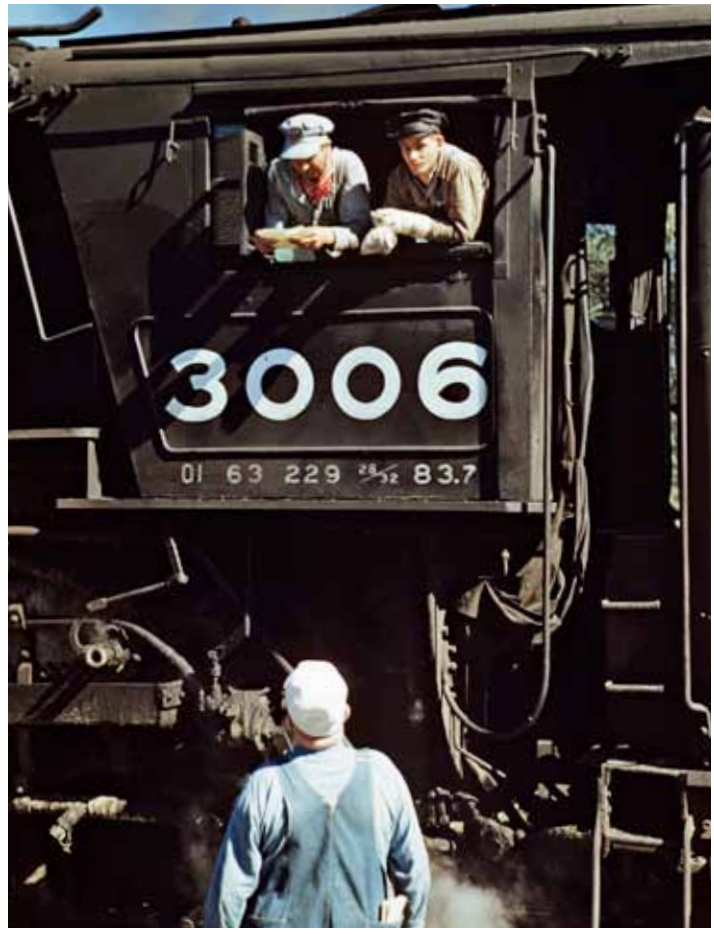
In this, the ninth annual CLASSIC TRAINS Special Edition, we celebrate a special breed of American worker: the railroader. The millions of men and women who have worked for railroads over the past 180-plus years have helped build the nation and maintain its prosperity, making life better for us all.

Those who kept the wheels turning in the steam and early diesel eras are in a unique position to give us insight into that pivotal time, and their first-hand accounts of life on the rails constitute the bulk of the articles in this edition. Although we couldn't include stories representing every type of railroad job, we tried for as diverse an assortment at possible.

Interspersed among the feature stories are nine short pieces under the collective heading "On the Job." Each installment is a photographic look at some aspect of railroad work.

Thanks for taking the call and marking up for WORKING ON THE RAILROAD. Now, climb aboard, stow your grip, and let's go!

Robert S. McGonigal



LINN H. WESTCOTT

Great Northern crewmen confer at Fergus Falls, Minn., around 1950. These men were not simply employees of a big industrial company; they were part of a special clan: *railroaders*.

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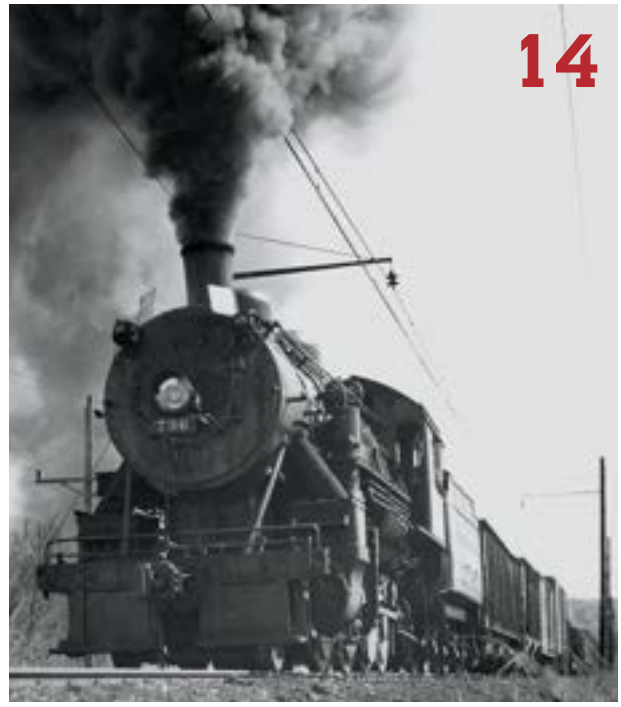
ON THE JOB Photos of railroaders at work



On the cover: Ernest R. Whitney, a Boston & Maine test engineer with 40 years of service, cleans the headlight of Pacific 3711 in the 1940s. *B&M photo*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CONTRIBUTORS

HARRY J. BRUCE ["The Summer of My Content," pages 14–21] retired in 1990 as chairman and CEO of Illinois Central Railroad. His 38-year transportation career included stints at U.S. Steel, Spector Motor Freight, Schlitz Brewing, and WP, plus university teaching positions. Harry divides his time among Chicago, Florida, and traveling with his wife Jeri; he's pictured on a steam engine in Australia. His one previous article with us [Spring 2003 CLASSIC TRAINS] concerned a mysterious NY&LB timetable notation.

FRANK CARRARO ["A Cold and Snowy Night at Western Avenue," pages 24–27], of Seneca, Ill., was born and raised on Chicago's north side and studied electrical engineering at Illinois Institute of Technology. In summer 1954 he'd worked in B&OCT towers filling vacations, so he returned full-time and "hung around the railroad" for 34 years. On Friday nights, he and some IIT pals would invade a tower bearing pizza: "I have friends who were operators on C&NW, Milwaukee, CB&Q, Rock Island, C&WI, and PRR, and I think I had midnight pizza in more than 20 Chicago towers." This is Frank's first byline in a CT publication.

L. GRAHAM "GRAY" DALES ["I Was a Teenage Iceman," pages 102–105] grew up in a railroad family and remains a railfan. Despite this, he found an airline career in the U.S. and Canada and, after retirement, became a board member for the Hudson River environmental vessel *Clearwater*. Gray and his wife, Elsa, now live in Frederick County, Md. This is his first byline with us.

RON FLANARY ["Dead Reckoning on the Southern," pages 78–81] is a widely published rail author, photographer, and artist who has contributed to TRAINS since 1968, and to CLASSIC TRAINS since its inception. Retired from a career in regional planning in his native southwestern Virginia, he still lives there, with his wife Wilma.

CHARLES H. "CHUCK" GELETZKE JR. ["Last Mud Run," pages 94–99] is in his 44th year of a career that began on CN's Grand Trunk Western, for whom he still works as a locomotive engineer. He's also worked for Detroit & Toledo Shore Line, Delray Connecting, and MoPac. A graduate of Central Michigan University, he served in the Marines and the Army Reserve's 226th Railway Battalion. Chuck and his wife Leslie live in Temperance, Mich. A a model railroader and woodworker, he is also working on a D&TSL book. This is his fourth story in a CLASSIC TRAINS publication.

JOHN GRUBER ["On the Job," pages 32–33, 44–45, 58–59, and 66–67] is founder and president of the Center for Railroad Photography & Art. An award-winning photographer himself, John has contributed 14 articles to CT's "Great Photographers" series.

JOHN P. HANKEY ["The Railroad Life," pages 8–13] comes from a long line of B&O employees, and did stints as a B&O brakeman, fireman, engineer, company historian, and curator of the B&O Railroad Museum. A frequent contributor to railroad publications (including CLASSIC TRAINS, in Spring 2000 and Summer 2003), John is a historian and museum consultant.

DOUG HARROP ["Stalled on the Loop," pages 50–59], a veteran writer and photographer, retired in 2003 after a career with SP and successor UP. The Utah native hired out on SP in Arizona in 1967 as a road brakeman and management trainee, and a decade later left to return to Utah to enter engine service for SP between Ogden and Carlin, Nev. He and his wife Dianne live near Morgan, Utah, where they raised their two sons and one daughter. He's had nine stories in TRAINS and one in CLASSIC TRAINS, on Hermosa, Wyo., in the Fall '08 issue.

CASEY HAYES ["Working for the Pullman Company," pages 60–65] joined the Rio Grande in 1948 as a switchman, and over a 40-year career served as a brakeman and yard conductor. He has served the public, too, being elected to several terms as councilman and treasurer, and one term as mayor, of Commerce City, Colo., where he still lives. Casey also served four terms in the Colorado State Legislature. He collects vintage autos and currently sits on the Adams County Historical Society board of directors. This is his first byline with us.

WILLIAM H. LOTZ ["Trouble in the Tunnel," pages 28–31] had a 40-year career as a passenger trainman on PRR and successors; he retired in 1977. He had a large model railroad, which his children's elementary school classes visited every year. This is the first CT byline for Lotz, who died in 2002.

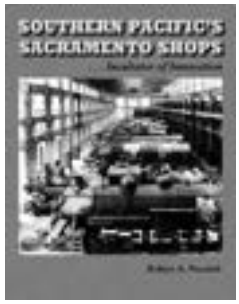
DAN SABIN ["Titanic Decisions," 68–75] worked for CP Rail, Chessie, and Iron Road Railways before returning to Iowa in 1994. Since then, he has been co-owner and president of Iowa Northern Railroad (IANR), which runs the ex-RI between Cedar Rapids and Dan's hometown of Manly, site of his new Manly Junction Railroad Museum. Dan and his wife Colleen live in Coralville, Iowa. Their sons Josh and Jonah help Dan in running IANR. This is Dan's fifth byline in a CT publication, including "Night Chief at Des Moines" in our Winter 2010 issue.

FLETCHER SWAN ["Santa Fe's Flying Irishman," 84–91] has lived much of his 87 years near the Santa Fe in South Pasadena, though he now lives in Las Vegas, Nev. His photos have appeared in many publications since the 1940s. He left the ATSF in 1950 to join a family business. His one previous story with us, in the Winter '07 CT, concerned a secret Presidential special.

E. R. "WILL" WILLIAMS ["The Cab Card," 46–48], now age 87, hired on with NYC in 1942 right out of high school. Raised in Malone, N.Y., he moved in 1934 to Albany, where his father was an NYC claims agent. After a 1942–45 stint in the Marines, Will was promoted from fireman to engineer. He stayed with NYC, Penn Central, and Conrail, retiring in 1983 and then moving with his wife Ruth (who died in 2004) to Nokomis, Fla. This is his first byline with us.

KARL ZIMMERMANN ["Sues and Stews and Zephyrettes," 34–43] is the author of numerous books, the latest being *Little Trains to Faraway Places*. He thanks Beulah Bauman, Joan Dolan, Barbara Hancock, Charlotte Hudgens, and Lila Kravitz for sharing their recollections; Darren Doss of the GM&O Historical Society; and historian Bill Howes for providing a vast and invaluable trove of research on rail hostesses. This is Karl's 13th byline in a CT publication.

Coming Soon!



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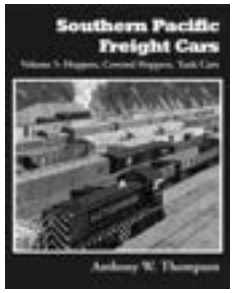

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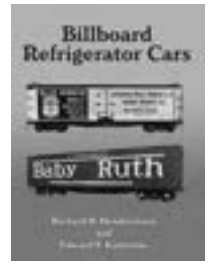

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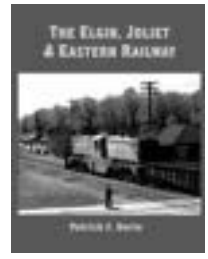

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The RAILROAD life

Classic-era railroaders were a breed apart, with their own customs, communities, and loyalties

BY **JOHN P. HANKEY**

I hear the lament every time I talk with older railroaders—especially men and women nearing retirement who had the chance to be "out there" before the profound changes of the last two and a half decades.

Railroad work is different now. It is safer, cleaner, generally easier, and always highly choreographed in the ways favored by modern corporate management. No one can argue with the efficiency and prosperity of today's railroading, especially every two weeks when the direct deposit shows up in the checking account. Waiting for a pay car, or having to show up at a clerk's desk to collect a check on a Friday afternoon after the banks had closed, offered no romance or pleasure.

But these older railroaders have a point: When they say, "It isn't fun anymore," they certainly don't really mean that railroad work ever was anyone's conventional definition of "enjoyment." When they complain about "the company" (and it never matters which company) or shake their heads and say, "It just isn't like it was," they are searching for ways to express a sense of loss.

Railroading always was a business, and it always was hard. But for many folks, railroad work was rewarding in ways it simply is not now. There was real camaraderie and often a genuine sense of being part of some greater enterprise.

And if it wasn't necessarily "fun," the work did offer something intangible. Maybe it was the skill and craft involved, or the kinds of problem-solving and responsibilities that some people find satisfying. Whatever it was, it has been pretty well wrung from the industry. And it is doubtful senior management even noted its passing.

Over the last couple of centuries, perhaps 15 million men and women have worked on railroads. They were white, black, Latino, Asian, and from every country that sent people to America. The work they did was so varied it almost defies description. For a long time, railroading was where bright, ambitious people could get ahead.

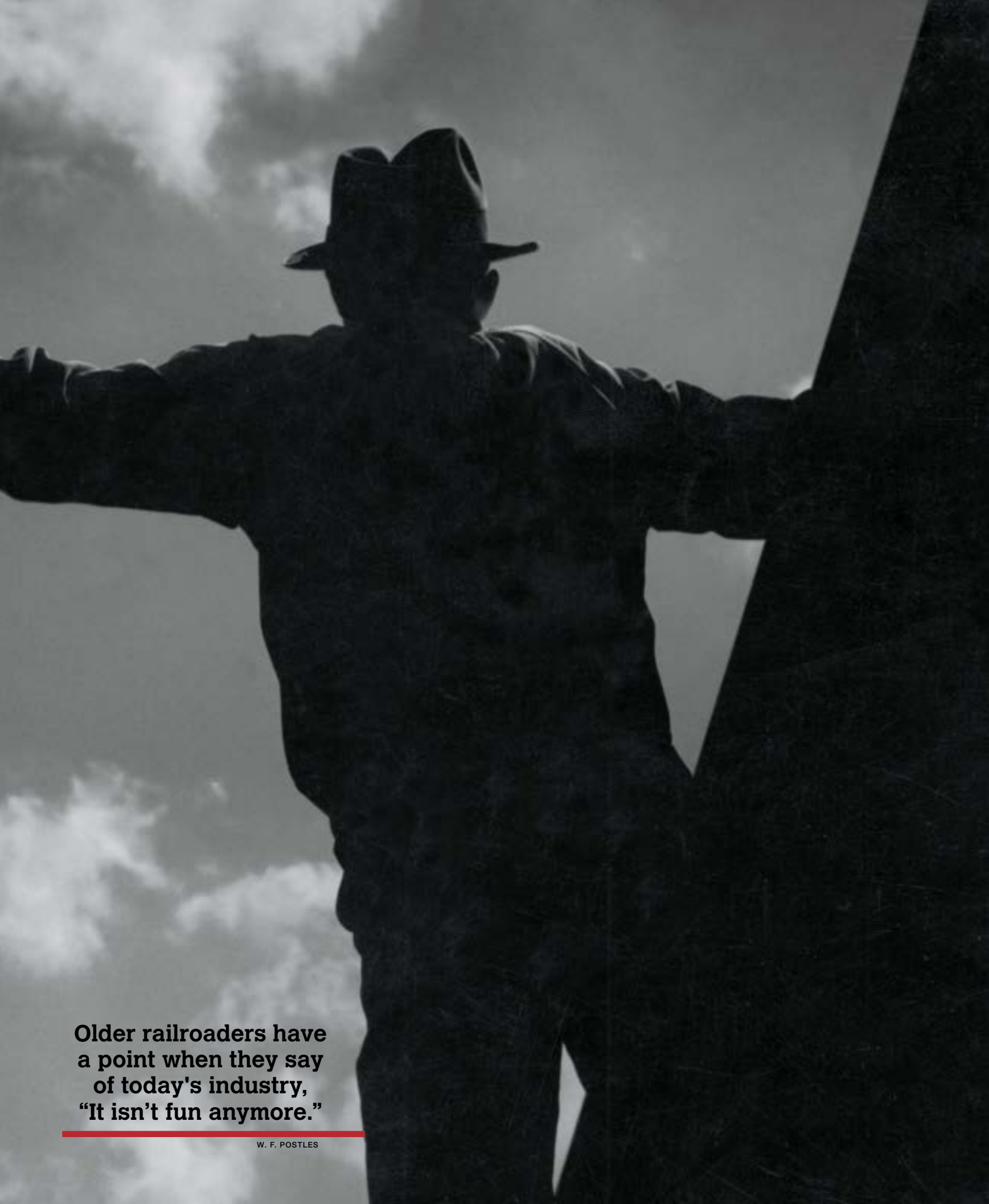
And we shouldn't underestimate the appeal of railroading. Just as some folks know from an early age that they want to go to sea, or farm, or be doctors, we all know someone who never wanted to be anything but a railroader. Sometimes it was a family tradition, sometimes a highly personal decision.

But liking trains or being attracted to the railroad didn't always translate into being a good railroader. I've seen lots of railfans who make their dream come true—only to find that actually working as a railroader may not be all that much fun.

They sometimes become disillusioned because the work is hard, dirty, and consuming. Or the hours are inconvenient and it is difficult to sustain relationships and have anything like a normal home life. The work can be incredibly tedious, the bosses downright treacherous, and stress of one sort or another an everyday guarantee. There are many, many reasons not to like working on the railroad.

But then there are the "naturals." On my part of the old Baltimore & Ohio, just about the highest compliment a person could get was to have some old head offer the comment that "he's a real railroader," as distinguished from the knuckleheads who were just there for the paycheck and didn't really "get it."

It didn't matter what craft you might have been in. I've seen clerks, trackmen, railroad attorneys, and chefs who fit the bill. They enjoyed the work, enjoyed being part of what they regarded as a noble enterprise, and they somehow kept in check the cynicism and bitterness that could sour a career.



Older railroaders have a point when they say of today's industry, "It isn't fun anymore."

W. F. POSTLES

JOHN GRUBER

About 2 in 10 were "naturals"—not just employees but, as old heads would say, "real railroaders."

Sometimes you would see athletic young bucks with enough experience to know better struggle to swing cars or get a train over the road in one piece, and think to yourself that they ought to find another line of work. And then there would be the grizzled, spent old man who could still catch a car going by at 10 mph, or who could make good time with a bad train with such finesse that it seemed like magic. If I had to guess, I'd say maybe 2 out of 10 were "naturals." And probably an equal proportion should never have been allowed to hire on in the first place—they were the ones you tried to steer clear of.

For the vast majority of railroaders, it was a job. For most of them, working on the railroad was a kind of Hobson's choice—they needed work, a railroad was hiring, and somehow their skills aligned with their duties. If you were smart or lucky, once on board you moved around a bit within the company to find a job that you liked, and could become good at. That was one of the defining characteristics of railroading: It almost didn't matter what skills you brought to the company. The railroad would train you to do things *its* way.

For the most part, though, railroaders stayed within their craft or department until the company, the union, and the Railroad Retirement Board agreed they had enough time to go home for good. Sometimes there was a sincere and emotional retirement observance, in which a respected employee or genuinely nice person got a party, a gold watch, a ceremonial last run, or maybe a farewell "collection." (When you saw the collection jar in the window of the caller's office at B&O's Brunswick, Md., roundhouse, you always hoped it was for a new baby or fond farewell. Too often the reason was an accident, sickness, or death.)

More rarely, an employee of retirement age might have developed an "attitude," or accumulated a series of slights, injustices, and grievances that called for a more forceful leave taking. One of my favorites was the engineer out West who decided to retire just as his light-engine consist was snaking through a crossover on a busy main line. He shut the engines down, declared that he was officially retired, and walked away. Needless to say, the road foreman did not congratulate him for his years of service.

It could be easy to form unkind opinions about the quality of local management and the overall intentions of the company. Partly that is because railroading is one of the most regularized and rules-driven industries anywhere. Where there are lots of rules and regulations, there were lots of opportunities for mischief. "The Railroad," at an official level, could seem arbitrary, capricious, and sometimes downright mean-spirited.

But it worked both ways. There were

railroaders who had trouble distinguishing between what was theirs and what belonged to the company. And some were so expert at milking every last dime out of union contracts that everyone knew them as "sharpshooters." They were the guys who would back a train over their own mother to gain a turn, or claim a "time card" (extra pay) if they saw anyone else doing what they understood to be "their" work, according to the labor agreements.

Front-line railroad managers could be kind and honorable men that you sincerely wanted to work hard for. Or they could be officious, spiteful, or persnickety. None of this was unique to railroading, of course, but most industries didn't have such a dispersed and uniquely skilled workforce requiring very particular kinds of training and supervision.

Railroading is decentralized by its nature. To manage such vast, dispersed enterprises, rules were essential—everything from the Book of Operating Rules used by Train and Engine Service crews to some of the most obscure and particular reporting requirements and procedures you can imagine, in every department, covering every topic. Railroading is like the military in so many ways.

In fact, traditional "command and control" railroading was modeled after military organization. There was no other precedent available in the formative years before the Civil War, and after the war thousands of former soldiers became railroaders and brought their shared military experience with them. It was no coincidence that railroads developed rigid lines of command, stressed adherence to "duty," and generally thought in terms of "the service" and obedience to "officers."

Like the military (after its 1948 desegregation, anyway), railroading provided people of color with a path to advancement. Railroad employment exposed minorities—particularly African-American Pullman porters—to influences and opportunities that formed the foundation of the civil rights movement.

"Investigations"—sometimes "Boards of Inquiry," sometimes "Hearings"—were an unfortunate fact of life. No one enjoyed investigations or took them lightly. They always meant that something serious had happened, and usually the person found responsible got "time off" (suspended from duty) or even lost his job. Letting your train get by a red signal was one unforgivable offense; a "Rule G" violation (drunk on the job) was another.

The need for effective discipline had to do with the very nature of the railroad. Few other industries have ever presented the logistical challenges of managing and operating a network as far-flung and decentralized—and yet so high-maintenance and hands-on—as the railroad. And few industries vested so much responsibility, under sometimes difficult conditions, in individuals.

BRUCE CRYDERMAN

The decentralized, 24-hour nature of railroading led to a military-style organizational structure.

Locomotive engineers come to mind quickly. But train dispatchers, tower operators, machinists, signal maintainers, car inspectors, and dozens of other jobs entailed life-and-death responsibilities that could play out in cruel and unpredictable ways. What might happen if a trackwalker missed a broken rail, or a car knocker failed to notice a hot journal on a passenger car? The slightest errors could have lethal consequences.

The nature of the work—and the habits of mind and skills that railroaders brought to their tasks—often set railroaders apart. It is only relatively recently that we've become accustomed to a "24-hour economy," requiring all sorts of folks to work odd hours. But railroad men and women long recognized that their work required flexibility, stamina, and a willingness to be where the company needed them, when they were supposed to be there, doing what needed to be done. For so many railroaders, clocks and calendars had a different meaning; their lives were defined by railroad rhythms.

Many traditional occupations required toughness and hard work. But I think railroading was unique in requiring so many different kinds of exertion, under so many varying circumstances. And the work often had an intellectual component that we rarely consider.

Imagine hand-firing a locomotive on a busy main line on a hot summer night—needing to anticipate the engineer's moves, keep water in the glass, and manage the fire. You would have had to call

FRISCO

Few insurance companies would write policies for railroaders—their jobs were considered too risky.

wayside signals, which meant knowing where you were pretty much all the time. There were train orders to observe, water stops to anticipate, and 8 or 10 tons of coal to move into the firebox. The engineer could make life even more hellish if he was a sloppy runner or had a grudge. A good fireman had to be a planner, manager, and sometimes diplomat.

Or think of the brakemen who in some places had to ride the tops of cars downhill well into the 1950s—in winter, in rain, at night, at speed, and sometimes for long stretches. It is difficult to fully comprehend just how physically and mentally challenging many railroad jobs could be.

That was often brought home by the fact that few conventional insurance companies would write policies for railroaders—their jobs were considered too risky. Early in the 20th century (and before the various "Safety First" campaigns that we still see today), a dozen railroaders—on average—died on the job *each day*. On any given day, tens or hundreds more were injured or maimed.

So railroaders set up their own group insurance plans and mutual benefit associations. The idea of a pension is not new. But an industrial pension program so that employees could expect to retire (rather than work until they died) was largely a railroad innovation. The first plans emerged in the early 1880s and led to the creation of the Railroad Retirement Board in 1934, which was the model for the Social Security Act a year later.

After about 1890, the vast majority of railroad jobs were structured according to seniority. It was a simple concept and brought a kind of pecking order to the workforce. The longer you stayed in one craft and one district, the more ability you had to "bid" on a better job. The "oldest" men on a particular seniority roster got to hold down the "best" jobs. The "youngest" were the first to get furloughed when the inevitable contractions came. It seemed only fair.

That is partly why seniority rosters for the different crafts were so important and so often governed who worked which job. You pretty much always knew who was 5 or 10 turns on either side of you, and it was the union's job to help keep the pecking order straight.

Everybody knew when they "made their date," the day they formally established seniority on a given crew roster. And it was always sad to see rosters with "RAD" (Retired Account Disability) or a simple "Off" by a person's name. It usually meant they had been seriously hurt, but for some technical reason were still carried on the roster.

Especially early in a career, a railroader could get "furloughed" whenever there wasn't enough business to keep busy. Railroad traffic used to be much more seasonal and erratic than it is today. In some crafts, a man could expect to be laid off routinely. That is one reason men would transfer around the system, trying to fill whatever vacancies they found.

Then there were the boomers—skilled railroaders who chose not to stick with one company, but move around from place to place, company to company, looking for work much like present-day migrant workers follow the harvests. The practice gradually died out after World War II and always seemed to be more prevalent in the West. But it speaks to the distinctiveness of much railroad work that an engineer or brakeman could show up at a terminal with a valid union card, a clean record from his last job—and be hired on the spot.

Railroaders enjoyed joining things. Partly that was because most belonged to a labor organization, and partly because railroaders (like folks in law enforcement or agriculture) often had more in common with each other than with the "outside world." There were the usual groups—Masons, Elks, Odd Fellows, VFW, and the dozens of other lodges that thrived in railroad communities.

But there also were a wide variety of railroad clubs, craft associations, railroad athletic and sporting groups, railroad church organizations, glee clubs, and local associations with a disproportionate railroad membership.

There were railroad towns, and railroad communities within larger towns and cities. Many of them had the quality of a parallel universe, or perhaps a tribe of sorts. Railroaders and their communities worked out often elaborate systems of

credit, provisions for mutual support, and all sorts of customs that accommodated the vagaries and quirks of railroad work.

Hundreds of thousands of railroaders worked in jobs that took them away from their homes and families. Sometimes they enjoyed networks of boarding houses, railroad YMCA's, beaneries, and places of entertainment and commercial affection. At other locations, the away-from-home accommodations could be threadbare or downright inhospitable.

And just because railroaders and their families might create their own communities, they also could be fiercely territorial. Engine crews generally weren't welcome in the caboose, nor trainmen in the cab (except for the head end brakeman). There were communal places, like washrooms or the sand house. But every craft seemed to have what sociologists describe as "defended territory"—certain places that were more-or-less off-limits to everybody else.

And then there were names. For everyone from the president on down, official railroad documents generally identified employees by a sterile two initials and surname. Yet no group of industrial workers embraced nicknames more than railroaders. At my old Brunswick division point, I worked with two Butches, a Nookie, Boogie, Shotgun, Skeeter, Barney, Screwdriver, Speedy, and all sorts of fellows who, for one reason or another, went by some alternate version of their given names.

All of which speaks to a larger truth. Despite the hazards and demands, railroaders were proud of their work. I've heard some variation of this theme many times: "I hate the company but love the work." Or, "I can't believe they pay me to do this."

In the early 1920s, total employment in railroading and its related industries peaked at something over 2 million men, women, and boys—about 2 percent of the total U.S. population of 106 million. They handled some 2.5 billion ton-miles of everything needed to keep America fed, housed, and at work—and the lion's share of local and intercity passengers.

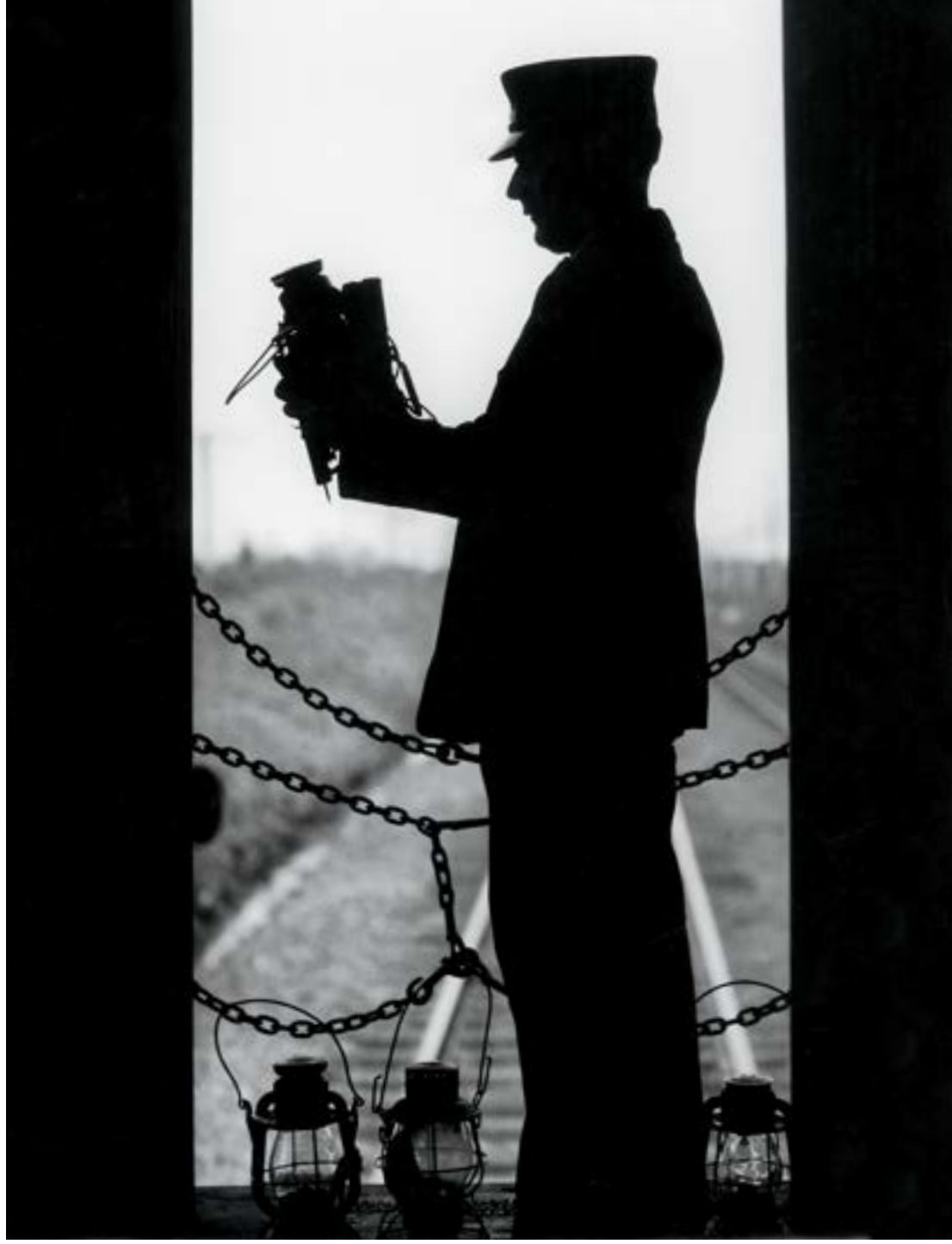
Although rail is not the force it once was in the passenger business, rail freight traffic is today at stratospheric levels—nearly 1.8 *trillion* ton-miles per year. The industry manages that on about 140,000 miles of track, or about 55 percent of the peak mileage of 254,000 on the eve of World War I.

But it is the employment number that most clearly tells the tale of the astonishing rise in railroad employee productivity—and the ways the work has changed. Roughly 200,000 railroad men and women are at work today, just 10 percent of the peak figure, and a nearly invisible few in a nation of 300 million. And that workforce is delivering five times the tonnage on a little over half the track.

That, I suppose, is what "right-sizing," intense capital investment, and "working to plan" really mean—the survival, and prosperity, of the entire industry. After decades of decline, it is again possible to look forward to a challenging, cutting-edge career in a rail industry with bright prospects.

Right up until the beginning of today's Railroad Renaissance, it was possible for a kid to learn from a man who hired out before the Great Depression—and who learned his craft from a man who made his first day in the 19th century. If you were lucky, you encountered the ghosts of your ancestors. It happened to me.

But now, the veterans are retiring. They take with them a way of life and work at the same time new generations of railroaders are creating their own. Today's "rails" face their own challenges, make their own traditions, and we can trust that they will understand what it means to be a railroader, too. Who knows? Maybe someday, the early 21st century will be railroading's "Good Old Days." ■



H. ARMSTRONG ROBERTS

Despite the hazards and demands of their jobs, railroaders were proud of their work.

The SUMMER of my CONTENT

A boy's love of steam led to a 1952 job as an extra fireman on the Lackawanna, a character-building experience that prepared him for future challenges

BY **HARRY J. BRUCE**

Like many small boys in the 1930s and '40s, I had a Lionel train set. It was a hand-me-down, a big clumsy O-gauge thing. If it were still around it would have some value to a collector—but not to me. Even as a boy, I had little interest in model trains. I wanted the real thing.

I grew up in northern New Jersey. Steam locomotives were still the dominant mode of motive power for the trains I knew, and steam locomotives attracted me like an iron filing to a magnet. One of my clearest and most enduring memories is of being taken by my family to the Jersey shore, a place I reveled in for two reasons: the ocean and beach during the day, and the New York & Long Branch Railroad's Manasquan station in the evening. The gatekeeper's shanty was a delicious delicatessen of sights and smells. There were the red and white lanterns that would be lit with care and concern as dusk began to fall, the slightly sweetish smell of kerosene that lingered even when the lamps weren't burning, and the small white bulbs whose star-like blinking warned the watchman of an approaching train. And always, day and night, whether the rails were humming with trains or silent during a lull in traffic, the ineradicable smells of creosote and cinders mingled and lingered as if to mark the boundaries of the railroad's territory.

Now add to this concoction the arrival of the evening train bringing vacationers down to the seashore from New York. First came the manual ringing—one resounding *clang*—of the crossing bell mounted on a post just outside the shanty. Next came the groaning and creaking of the hand-cranked crossing gates, their movements coordinated by counterweighted cables running under the street from the stand manned by the gatekeeper. As the locomotive whistle sounded in the distance, drawing closer with each blast, the four-quadrant gates would swing from vertical to horizontal, almost like subjects bowing at the approach of an emperor.

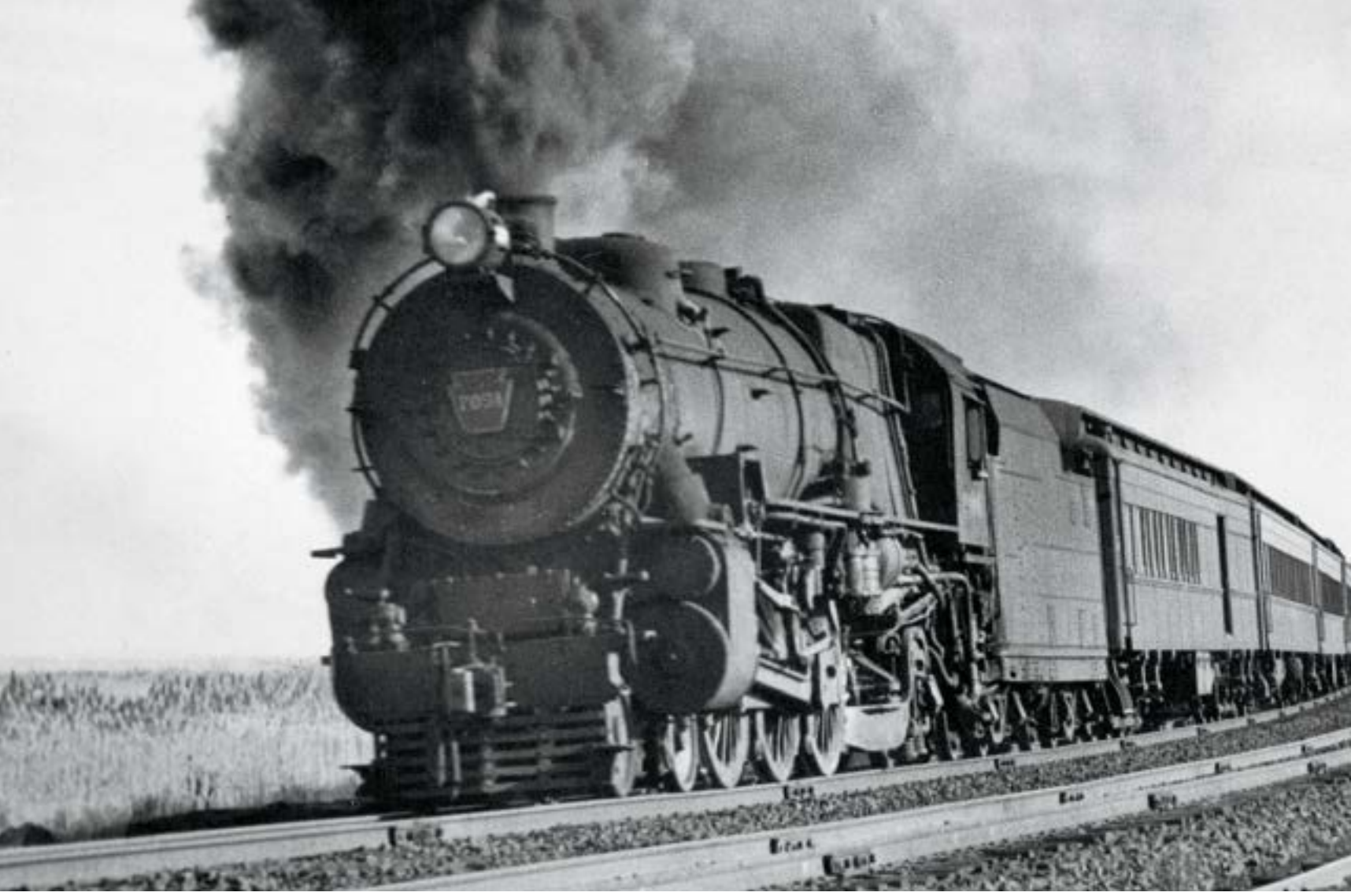
Then the great machine would arrive, brakes squealing and clanking, air and steam issuing mysteriously from apertures too numerous and obscure to remember, while a soft chuffing emanated from the stack as the speed dropped. I would run down the platform to the far end where I knew the engine—either a Jersey Central Camelback or a Pennsylvania Railroad Pacific on this jointly operated line—would stand panting, its air pump thumping as it replenished depleted reservoirs, steam roaring from its safety valve, fierce waves of heat radiating from the glowing firebox. Certainly the most aesthetic of man's mechanical creations, the steam train seemingly had a soul.

Oh, how I dreamed of being the fireman in that cab! I would be up there, not down on the ballast. I would be in charge of stoking that fire and maintaining the head of steam that made all those fascinating noises.

But in my family, a boy's dream of running a steam locomotive was not something to be shared. Unlike so many other boys who hung around the tracks, I had no railroad pedigree in my family—no uncle, no grandfather, and certainly no parent with any history of railroad employment. My father was a research chemist whose first job was with Thomas Edison in his famous laboratory at West Orange, N.J. My brother Jack was well along in school when I arrived, and he too followed our father into the physical sciences. So when my undistinguished high-school career culminated with graduation in 1949, it was no surprise that chemistry was "chosen" as my career as well. At the strong urging of a family friend, I was packed off to a place where it was imagined I couldn't get into much trouble, Bethany College in tiny Lindsborg, Kans., 20 miles south of Salina.

Author Bruce learned the craft of firing a steam locomotive aboard elderly Lackawanna engines like 2-8-0 736 (Schenectady, 1909), pictured with a local freight on the Gladstone (N.J.) Branch, ca. 1950.

JOHN BRIGGS



With luck, or perhaps even a miracle, my parents imagined I would emerge in four years with a degree in chemistry.

It didn't happen. I believe I must have set the all-time Bethany College record for non-study. Instead, I worked at the Missouri Pacific depot as a night baggage handler and from time to time as a gandy dancer. I even did a short stretch as a roughneck in the Kansas oil fields. It was pretty clear that I was quietly rebelling against family efforts to steer me into chemistry. After three years I was back in New Jersey, a college dropout.

With that kind of background in mind, you can imagine the row I set off in spring 1952 when I announced to my parents that I had just hired out as a fireman on the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western in Hoboken. My first week on the job was spent in the ash pit, meaning I not only had to forego the prestige of actually working aboard a locomotive, but got filthy in the process as well.

But the job had its upside, including my boss. He worked me hard, but he taught me lessons as well: how to lift and swing a shovel without wearing myself out, how to get along with fellow employees, how to show proper deference to superiors. He also helped me get oriented by explaining what went on in the engine terminal. I started to understand why certain things had to be done a certain way and at a certain time. Even the most dedicated railfan might find cleaning out an ash pit lacking in glamour, but to me it was the most exciting thing I had ever done. I literally could not wait to get to work each day.

It would have been hard to imagine that even bigger thrills were in store, but after a week in the ash pit I was detailed to ride as student fireman aboard a freight engine. As I pulled myself up into the cab, eagerly displaying my engine pass, I was greeted by the fireman, an affable fellow from Dover, N.J., with arms the size of my thighs.

Then I saw the engineer, and for a moment I thought I had looked upon the forbidden face of God—stern behind wire-rimmed spectacles, a shock of pure-white hair protruding from under the brim of his striped cap. He was adjusting a valve when he boomed out, "Sit down, boy—there, on the fireman's box—and mind you, don't make any mess in my cab!" I was scared to death, and it showed. The fireman was grinning broadly. He told me later that the white-haired engineer "never was much with new hires." They always spilled coal on the cab deck, he said.

That summer of 1952 was the summer of my content. Working the extra board and catching a different job almost every day, most of them on the Morris & Essex Division, brought me in contact with a wide range of memorable characters and a series of exciting experiences that even the most daring 21-year-olds of the '50s rarely imagined. What I could not realize then, however, was that my summer of adventure would serve me handily 18 years later, when, after a hitch in the U.S. Army and jobs in the steel, trucking, and beverage industries, I would turn up again in the railroad industry, working once more for a stern and demanding authority figure—Al Perlman, president of the Western Pacific—and having the time of my life doing it! In fact, I believe the success I later enjoyed in the railroad industry had a good deal to do with an ability I developed while stoking a firebox on the DL&W—the ability to

M. B. COOKE

ARTHUR F. KNAUER

Jersey Central and Pennsy trains at the New York & Long Branch's Manasquan, N.J., station fed a fascination with steam. At Red Bank (above), 18.5 miles up the coast from Manasquan, CNJ Camelback 4-6-0 774 stops with a southbound train. Near the end of its Bay Head–South Amboy run (left), PRR K4s 7054 skirts the ocean at Morgan in 1947.

grow and learn and enjoy myself even while making mistakes, absorbing correction, and coming back for another try until I got it right and satisfied my superiors.

Early in my brief engine-service career, the caller phoned to tell me I was marked up to fire extra on a Denville-bound local freight. I showed up at the roundhouse at 7:30 a.m. The regular fireman handed me a bunch of cotton rags—"waste" was what they called it on the railroad—and told me to get busy wiping all the gauges and valves. "And for God's sake," he stressed, referring to the boiler-water-level indicators, "don't smear them sight glasses or there'll be hell to pay." He didn't describe what hell would be like, but he didn't need to. The memory of the white-haired engineer on my first student trip was still fresh in my mind, and the fireman's remark seemed to suggest that today's engineer could dish it out in his own fine style.

Neither of the two regulars seemed particularly pleased to have me aboard that morning, but the raging case of railroad fever from which I was still suffering protected me from worry. As we chugged west through the Bergen Hill tunnel, I was in hog heaven. Just west of West End Tower on the Boonton Branch at Secaucus Yard, we picked up a few cars and, much to my amazement, a caboose with its crew. Until that moment I simply hadn't realized that train and engine crews reported to work at separate locations, and that the locomotive must run light—sometimes for considerable distance—from the roundhouse to the site where the train itself is made up. As we coupled onto our short train, it seemed to me that the engineer was not fond of the conductor, the brakeman, or the flagman. No matter how they tried to pass signals and give him direction, the engineer loudly regaled the fireman about their lack of intelligence, while speculating nastily about the possible pedigrees of their parents.

To me his attitude seemed painfully inappropriate for such a glorious July morning and particularly unfitting in view of my mood, which was upbeat and excited. The morning seemed to fly by, and we made half a dozen setouts before I realized we were in Denville and it was time for lunch. The fireman told me we would "tie up" and head for the diner in town. I wanted to ask but didn't dare: "Tie up" what? (Later I figured out that "tie up" meant to tighten the hand brake on a car or locomotive to be left unattended.)

I love diners—always have and always will. I thought the one in Manasquan, the Paramount on Main Street (it's still there), was the best of all. You could sit on a stool at a white-marble counter and enjoy Jake's blue-plate special, as they still called them in those days.

The diner in Denville turned out to be a lot like the one in Manasquan. Although I didn't realize it at the time, we sat at the counter in proper pecking order: first the conductor, followed by the engineer, then the fireman, flagman, head-end brakeman, and me. The food and the atmosphere must have dissipated the ill will that started off the morning, for I heard no more grumbling about anyone's professional competence or presumed ancestry. Instead, there was a lot of genial joking, plus a steady stream of talk about baseball. I had no trouble keeping my mouth shut. Baseball has never been my forte. What I chiefly remember about my visit to the diner that day was that I consumed an entire blueberry pie, something my mother never would have tolerated in our home. I justified my binge by reflecting that a) I wasn't at home and b) the caloric demands of a 21-year-old tasked with hand-firing a steam locomotive in wayfreight service cannot be met by "sensible" eating.

With my blood sugar restored, I was antsy to get back on the engine. I was beginning to learn how much coal to feed the firebox and how to hit the treadle that opened the butterfly doors in a rhythm that would allow the doors to reach the

To me, cleaning out the ash pit was the most exciting thing I had ever done. I literally could not wait to get to work each day.

fully open position just as a load of coal was leaving my shovel. It was not an easy task to master, and I was not the best-coordinated kid who had ever gone firing on the DL&W. Like most novices, I tried to make up in sheer speed and effort what I lacked in skill, perhaps hoping to impress the ever-skeptical engineer with my dedication. But my campaign for approval only provoked alarm. "Hold your horses, boy!" the hogger barked. "This is an eight-hour job—we have to plan our moves to get back to Hoboken on time."

This was code for a siesta, or, as it's known on some railroads, "layin' in the weeds," a time-honored institution among railroad men, who know that returning to the home terminal too early can eventually result in elimination or rescheduling of a choice work assignment. Our engineer had a favorite spot in a cool meadow where crews could stretch out in the grass. The fireman had his own way of using this interlude, particularly on a hot day. He would climb to the top of the tender, strip to his birthday suit, and lower himself into the tank for a refreshing splash in the water supply. While the fireman bathed and the rest of the crew snoozed, I was supposed to "keep an eye on the fire." As I look back on that day from the perspective of 58 years, I still wonder: Whatever did they mean exactly by "keep an eye on the fire?"

Obviously, that meant I was supposed to watch the fire, but there was a strong suggestion that I was to do more—maintain it, perhaps, or nurture it in some way. I actually had received no training in firing a steam locomotive. Like most new hires then, I had been given a book of rules and urged to study it, but the Uniform Code of Operating Regulations concerned only train dispatching, operating procedures, and safety, not the physics of generating steam from burning coal. I was given no book on that subject, nor was there any classroom instruction. A student fireman, like a student brakeman, was expected to learn everything by "shadowing" a senior crewman, to "watch me and do what I do." Everything I had done so far had been in the presence of the regular fireman and the engineer. Now I was alone. And I was expected to know my business.

All I knew about fire-building was what I could recall from watching my father fire up the two coal furnaces in the basement of our house at 440 Clinton Place in Newark. He always seemed pleased when a low blue flame appeared through the lumps of a fresh shovelful of pea coal. Applying this policy, I now devoted myself to the firebox on the locomotive. Peering inside, I saw small tongues of bluish flame darting through the cracks that stippled the dark mass on the firebox grate. Good! I had kept an eye on the fire, and the fire had behaved just as my father would have wished.

But when the fireman finished soaking and sunning himself at the far end of the tender and climbed down into the cab to have a look in the fire, he suddenly became very agitated. After discharging a stream of invective centering around the legality of my parents' union at the time of my birth, he raised the dire possibility that Division Superintendent J. A. Craddock himself, a luminary only slightly lower than a Roman proconsul, would discover that we had to be towed in.

"Look at your goddamn fire—it's all clinkered up!" he sputtered, grabbing the shaker bar and trying to jiggle the congealed mass into fragments that would permit the passage of a little air. It didn't work. Nary a flicker of orange flame appeared.

ROBERT R. MALINOSKI

DL&W's "Paterson Roustabout" out of Port Morris, a train like the author's Denville local, is westbound behind 2-8-0 370 on the Boonton Line near Montville in July 1946.

EDWARD H. WEBER

Consolidation 790, built by Schenectady in 1908, was the oldest active engine on the DL&W when it paused on December 27, 1950, with a westbound local freight at Dover.

"How could you be so stupid, opening the door so much you cooled the fire? Wake up, dummy—you're not here for a joy ride!"

The flame in the firebox may have been blue, but the air was bluer. I felt faint. At one point I even wondered if it was all just a bad dream brought on by an overdose of blueberry pie. My speculations ended as the fireman sighed and then turned to me in a kind of quiet, rational desperation.

"Look," he said, "there's only one way we're gonna get out of this, and it's gonna take both of us to do it: I'm goin' down on the ground with the ash pan hook and try to poke some holes in the fire from underneath. You stay up here with the shaker bar and rock the grates back and forth. Okay?"

I had barely enough strength left to nod compliance as he backed out of the cab and dropped to the ground. Then I bent over the dwindling fire and watched as the fireman began his poking.

"Plick-plink, plick-plink" went the hook as it chipped away at the fused panel of incomplete combustion that lay on the grate. I realized why the stuff was called "clinker." It's semi-metallic, and it sounds like it when struck.

Fortunately, the clinker had not fused into solid metal. As it began breaking up, small tongues of dark orange flame began to emerge from the fissures created by the fireman's hook.

"You see any fire?" he said. "Okay, keep rockin' the grate and lettin' that ash fall. I'm goin' around to the other side. When you hear me pokin', start rockin' the other grate." I did as he ordered, and little tongues of flame soon began appearing on the other side of the fire.

After about five minutes the fireman reappeared in the cab, covered by more soot than I had seen since my initiation in the ash pit. He peered into the firebox, then stepped back and grabbed a shovel.

"Okay, that's a start," he announced. "We've got just enough of a flame and just enough air circulation down there to revive that fire—*if* we go about it right and *if* nobody screws up this time."

As I relived this incident in later years—and believe me, I've done it many times—my recollections of the fireman's near-pedagogical approach have pretty much convinced me that what happened in the cab of the Denville Local that day was cooked up for instructional purposes. Because underneath all the invective there *was* instruction—and I listened.

"Start out small," the fireman admonished. "You don't want to overwhelm a small fire with too much coal. Just put in a small amount of fresh fuel and spread it on the bright spots. And don't forget: The blower is the fireman's friend." Firing isn't just a matter of slinging enough coal through the firebox door to keep up steam, he pointed out. The other half of the equation is oxygen, and when the throttle is closed and there's no steam exhaust to create a draft up the stack, the blower can draw in a steady stream of fresh air to keep the fire hot and maintain a head of steam for the next time the hogger needs it.

Then he explained to me the three secrets of successful steam-locomotive firing: the Light Fire (not too much coal), the Level Fire (no high or low spots), and the Bright Fire (a yellow-white flame, not blue). The Level Fire was the hardest to achieve, he said, because unless you were careful, the coal you shoveled into the firebox tended to form a mound in the center while leaving the corners—especially the far corners toward the front—relatively bare of fuel. But there was a way to deal with that, he said: When placing coal in the distant corners of the firebox, don't fill your shovel. Lighten your load to half a scoop. A light shovel will make your throw more accurate and the coal that leaves your shovel will fly farther.

Oh, sure, I probably could have found those principles in a book somewhere, and had there been a training film or lecture I probably could have picked up the same tricks from those sources. But because of

When he saw what I'd done to his fire, the fireman exclaimed, "How could you be so stupid? Wake up, dummy—you're not here for a joy ride!"

BILL SLADE; MIKE DEL VECCHIO COLLECTION

The fireman on Lackawanna 366, another high-seniority 2-8-0 assigned to a wayfreight, takes water at East Dover on October 16, 1948.

the emotional context in which the lesson was delivered that day in the meadow, I *remembered*. In fact, I still remember every tense minute we spent in that cab watching the needle on the steam gauge slowly creep back up to the vertical position.

In truth, not much time had actually elapsed. That fireman really knew his business and had us back in action so fast that J. A. Craddock probably never knew anything was amiss. But to me, the waiting period seemed like all eternity, and during that time I absorbed every single word and gesture and glance he used to teach a green kid how to fire a locomotive. If I were to find myself in front of a cold firebox today, I think I could do everything he taught me all over again.

Unfortunately, I didn't get a lot of time to use my newfound knowledge, because after six months on the job I came home to find a letter informing me that my local draft board had arrived at its own solution to my career problems. After passing my physical, I reported to Camp Kilmer, N.J., where I joined a large group of U.S. Army inductees headed for basic training as tank drivers at Fort Knox, Ky. Like everyone else in the group, I assumed that after training I would be shipped off to Korea, where two years earlier the Cold War had turned hot.

But luck intervened. During basic training, I took numerous tests. I must have done well on them, because I soon found myself headed for Fort Benning, Ga., and enrollment in Officer Candidate School. In one fell swoop I had gone from college bozo to second lieutenant on a fast track to military promotion and increased responsibility. I was sent to Fort Jackson, S.C., for additional training, including a good deal of public speaking and even work as a tactical training instructor. I seemed to be getting farther and farther away from railroading—all the way to Germany, in fact.

I might well have become a career Army officer, but fortune intervened again. While stationed in Munich I fell in love with an art student named Vivienne Jennings from Alton, Ill. Marriage plans matured quickly, and when my hitch was up in spring 1955, I headed back across the Atlantic for mustering out at Camp Kilmer. Our wedding date had been set for September in Alton; until then I would return to my old job at the Lackawanna. When I reported to the yard at Hoboken, I quietly rejoiced when one of my favorite engineers, Herb Proton, said with a smile, "Glad to have you back."

By law anyone serving in the military kept his railroad seniority rights, so I returned to the DL&W as if I had been working there for three years. Many of the men I knew had retired, so I was very high on the crew roster and could bid on almost any job. Imagine the road foreman of engines' consternation, then, when I told him I wanted the midnight-to-8 a.m. drill job.

There was method to my madness, however, even if I never revealed it to the road foreman. I wanted the midnight job because it would enable me to earn a good paycheck while attending night-school math classes at the Newark campus of Rutgers University. My success in the Army had done what Millburn Township High School and Bethany College could not: It had given me a taste for academic achievement. Now I was eager to make up the lost years in my education, and the G.I. Bill would pay the tuition. My brother, who lived near Princeton, introduced me to a neighbor, who turned out to be the provost at Rutgers. Reviewing my records, the provost found my military record outstanding but diagnosed a severe case of math deficiency in my academic background.

"We have an excellent practical course at our Newark campus that could help you," he said. "You fix that up and then we can take a look at you." I signed up and began attending as soon as the next classes formed. When I got out of school at 10 p.m. I would grab a bite to eat, then walk to Lackawanna's Broad Street station and catch a train to Hoboken. School and railroad were a good fit, and I never got lower than a B in my courses. And when one of my math instructors learned I was a rail-

When I returned after my Army hitch, I quietly rejoiced when one of my favorite engineers said with a smile, "Glad to have you back."

DON WOOD

En route west in 1955 after resigning from the DL&W, author Bruce glimpsed Nickel Plate Road Berkshires at night west of Buffalo.

roader he took me aside and said, "You know, you can use math in the transportation industry. It doesn't have to lead strictly to a science career."

His remarks watered a seed that was already beginning to sprout. I knew the Lackawanna had a training program for young managers, and I figured that when I finished school I could try out for it. But the instructor, Professor Franz, had something better in mind.

"The business school at Kent State University in Ohio has a good transportation program," he said. "Once you complete your math requirement here, you could do the rest of your studies out there and qualify for a degree in transportation and industrial engineering."

His remarks intensified my determination to bring my math grades up. I even carried my homework aboard the engine, hoping to work on my lessons during lulls in the action. The DL&W had completely dieselized in my absence, so there was not much for me to do. I figured I could use some of the time to work out problems. But that didn't sit well with Herb Proton the first night he caught me at it.

"Look, you're here to call signals and keep a sharp eye on the road ahead and learn how to operate this engine," he said. "It's not for me—it's what the bosses want." Herb was a tough old hogger, and I believe his attitude about professionalism in the cab was shared by most of his colleagues.

I completed my math studies at Rutgers over a period of six months, attending school and working on the midnight switch engine five nights a week. But it wasn't until I left the railroad and headed west to visit my in-laws-to-be in Alton in August 1955 that I realized what it meant to be a member of the railroad fraternity. My DL&W pass was officially valid only over the division on which I worked, which ended at Scranton. Technically I should have paid the normal coach fare for the rest of the trip. But when the new train crew boarded at Scranton, the conductor already had learned about me from his disembarking predecessor.

"Are you a member of the Firemen?" he inquired as he approached my seat, referring to the union to which I belonged.

"Oh, yes, sir," I replied.

"Then sit back here and enjoy the ride," he said, beckoning me to the area where he and the brakeman rode when not collecting tickets. The same thing happened at every other division point, including Buffalo, where our train was turned over to the Nickel Plate Road for the rest of the run to Chicago.

Buffalo was hospitable in another way as well. Unlike the Lackawanna, the Nickel Plate had not yet dieselized. I pressed my face to the window, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Nickel Plate's famous Berkshires as we pulled out. During the night I saw them waiting for us in sidings as we rushed west. It would be my last "experience" with steam.

Clerks in the call room

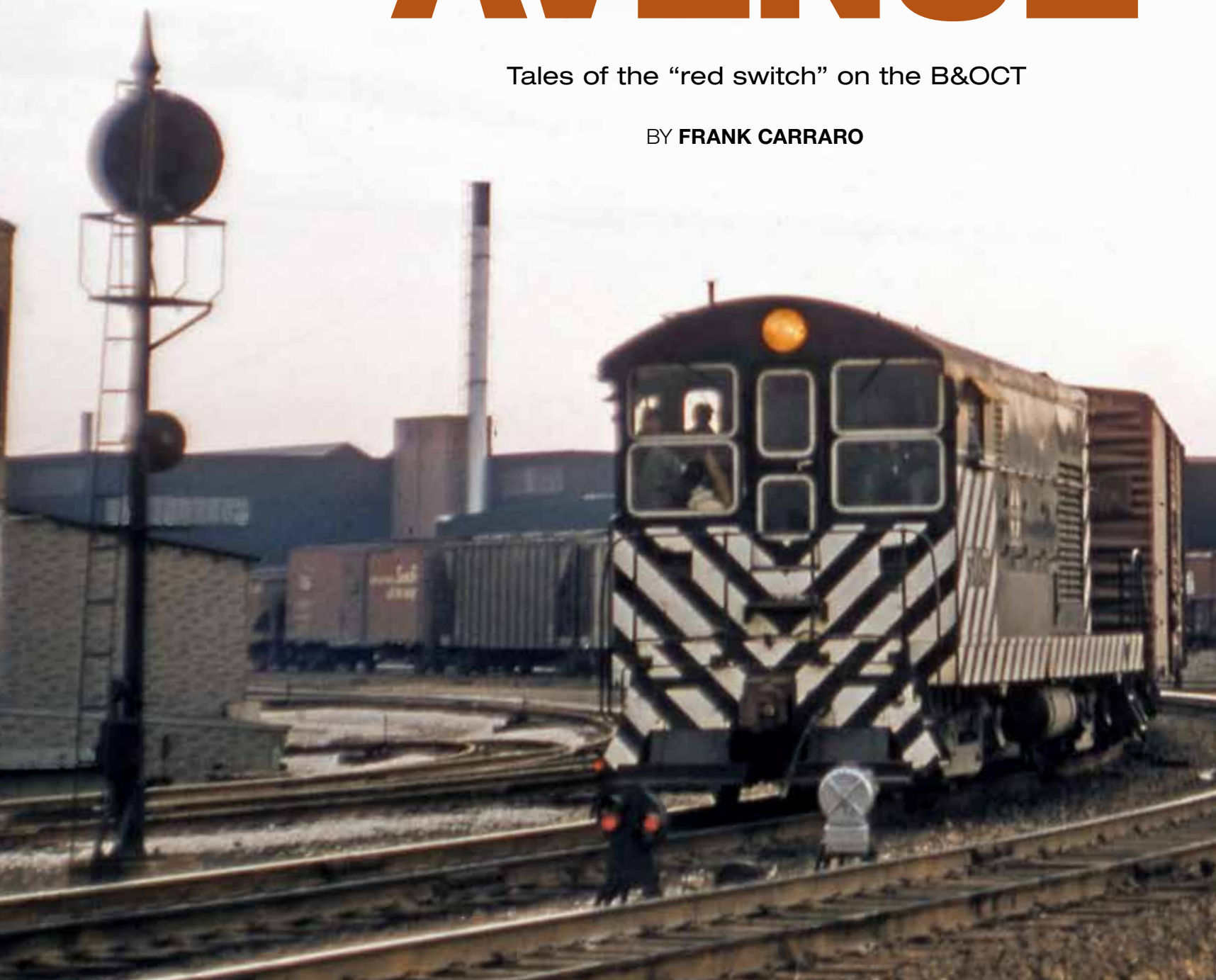
Making sure each train was staffed with qualified people to operate it at the proper time was the duty of the "crew callers," an unsung but vital railroad job, one required by the 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week nature of the industry. The craft evolved from clerks sending young "messengers" around on foot or bicycle to boarding houses, hotels, and homes, to using telephones from a central office, to today's highly automated systems. Southern Pacific's West Oakland, Calif., office in the 1950s had 430 names on the trainmen's "board," largest on the system, and here we see four callers working the board, which was, of course, a 'round-the-clock operation. The railroads depended on many thousands of clerks to keep track of billing, inventories, and the myriad other aspects of a sprawling industry in the pre-computer era.

RICHARD STEINHEIMER

A cold and snowy night at WESTERN AVENUE

Tales of the “red switch” on the B&OCT

BY **FRANK CARRARO**



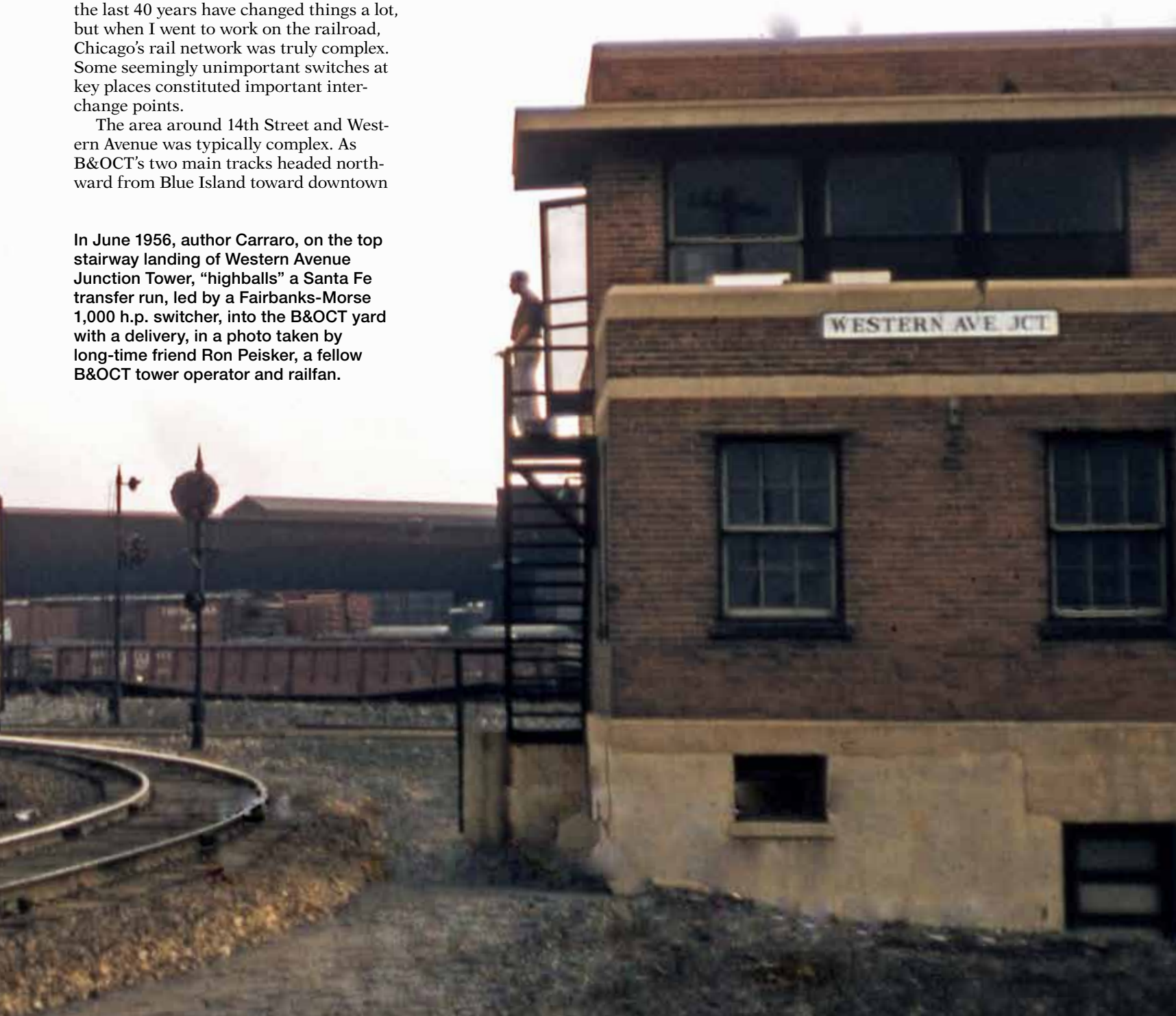
I began my railroad career as "Leverman-Telephone Operator" on the Baltimore & Ohio Chicago Terminal in 1956. My first job was a traveling relief position, in which I worked the off days of regular operators in three different interlocking towers, all on third trick, midnight to 8 a.m. My favorite location, and the tower where I inherited the regular third-trick job after a few years, was Western Avenue Junction Tower, a late-1930s structure with a Union Switch & Signal UR (for "Union Route") type interlocker. It was on Chicago's southwest side near Ogden and Western Avenues.

Chicago's railroad map, of course, is all about crossings and connections among railroads. The mergers and acquisitions of the last 40 years have changed things a lot, but when I went to work on the railroad, Chicago's rail network was truly complex. Some seemingly unimportant switches at key places constituted important interchange points.

The area around 14th Street and Western Avenue was typically complex. As B&OCT's two main tracks headed northward from Blue Island toward downtown Chicago, they were sandwiched between tracks of two other companies for about three miles north from 39th Street. The New York Central-owned Chicago Junction Railroad (CJ) was on the east, while the Pennsylvania Railroad's "Panhandle" line was on the west. At 14th Street, the B&OCT broke away, turning east in a broad curve to cross the CJ and pass Western Avenue Junction Tower.

One track of the CJ paralleled B&OCT's inbound main around the curve, connecting with Chicago & North Western's Wood Street Yard [page 68, Summer 2010 CLASSIC TRAINS]. Thus did the two B&OCT mains and the CJ "wye" form three concentric curves. Unbelievably, in the middle of this curve there was what amounted to a crossover from the B&OCT main to the CJ wye (behind the FM diesel in this photo). One end of this curved crossover was interlocked and controlled by my interlocking plant; the other end was a hand-throw switch. It was what was called a "red switch," which meant it had a red target that was displayed when the switch was lined for the B&OCT. Such switches were to be returned to normal position after use, contrary to the huge majority of hand-operated switches in yard territory.

To further complicate matters—and herein lies the crux of my story—there was a dwarf signal and a derail in the middle of the crossover! The signal and derail



In June 1956, author Carraro, on the top stairway landing of Western Avenue Junction Tower, "highballs" a Santa Fe transfer run, led by a Fairbanks-Morse 1,000 h.p. switcher, into the B&OCT yard with a delivery, in a photo taken by long-time friend Ron Peisker, a fellow B&OCT tower operator and railfan.

TOP: LOUIS A. MARRE COLLECTION, ABOVE: J. DAVID INGLES

Players in Act 1, on a cold and snowy night in January 1957, were members of these classes of diesel switchers: a derailed 1,200 h.p. Lima-Hamilton switcher of New York Central's Chicago River & Indiana (pictured when still active in 1963), and—on a work train trying to rescue the Lima—a B&OCT 600 h.p. EMD SW1 (shown at Barr Yard in '61).

were part of my interlocking, whereas the CJ wye track was none of my business. Trains used the track from the CJ to the C&NW, or vice-versa, all the time without any concern of mine as long as the red switch was lined for the CJ.

BATTLE OF THE SMALL DIESELS

One night in January 1957, I reported for work at "Western Avenue," as we called it, to find the small parking lot for operators and signalmen full of cars and company trucks. The area around the C&NW connection was a beehive of activity. As I crossed the tracks to reach the tower, a closer look revealed one derailed NYC diesel switcher, one B&O SW1 with an ancient tool car converted from a coach behind it, about a dozen trackmen, a couple of signalmen, and one General Yardmaster. The temperature was a few degrees below zero, and a couple of inches of snow cover were being blown around by a 15-mph wind. The red switch was red, and the derailed NYC unit straddled the derail. The cars the engine had been towing had been pulled back into the C&NW yard, and our SW1 had seesawed through another connection to the C&NW in order to get behind the derailed unit. The "GYM" was running the show. His name was Charley Rosenbach, and I got to know him pretty well that night.

The NYC engine was bigger than our little SW1. I've never been a great diesel-spotter, but I recall it as one of the half dozen 1,200 h.p. Lima-Hamilton switchers in the fleet of CJ ally Chicago River & Indiana. "New York Central System" was spelled out on the hood, with "Chicago River & Indiana" inside an oval emblem on the cab. (The 1,200 h.p. units were in the 8400 series; CR&I also had 21 smaller Limas of 800 h.p. in the 9800 series; "Chicago Junction" was not indicated anywhere on any of the Limas.)

Trackmen struggled to place re-railing frogs and spike them in place. Then everybody got out of the way as the SW1 tugged to pull the bigger Lima back on the rails. Time after time the whole thing would slip two or three feet, and the trackmen would have to dig the frogs out of the ballast, chip away at frozen earth and rock, replace the frogs, and repeat the whole process. The little B&O unit didn't have enough power to raise the heavier engine slowly onto the re-railing frogs, so it would pull until it suddenly slipped up and over.

In the meantime, I had only a single track on which to run trains. My switchboard phone line kept ringing with calls from the Superintendent, the Chief Dispatcher, and various other officials wanting to talk to Charley.

Charley wore a suit and tie, an overcoat, and a fedora. His hands, ears, and (I imagine) feet were turning blue. I loaned him my gloves and a pair of earmuffs but couldn't do much for his feet. About 3 a.m., an NYC Mechanical Department boss showed up. Each time his Lima was dragged a little more along the rails, he would wince at the damage being inflicted on it. Charley would curse under his breath and come inside to make phone calls and try to warm up. He tried several times to convince somebody higher up to send another engine, or a bigger engine, but to no avail.

Finally, about 5 a.m., the NYC engine had been dragged behind the signal and thus off B&OCT tracks. It must have been dragged more than 20 feet during the vain attempts to re-rail it. When the Super heard this, he told Charley to send everyone home and let the CJ worry about it. NYC sent a small crane that picked up the end of the derailed engine and set it back on the rails, and 15 minutes after the crane arrived, the Lima was back on the track and being towed away. By this time it was daylight and the end of my trick. I reclaimed my gloves and earmuffs from a grateful GYM and went home and to bed.

CAB UNITS BUTT HANDRAILS

Go forward in time almost 10 years, to the mid-1960s. I am the regular third-trick operator at Western Avenue. A Santa Fe engine had delivered cars to the Baltimore & Ohio's Robey Street Yard, to the east. After the Santa Fe crew ran around their cars and got their caboose, they called me to line them out of the yard and go to Wood Street Yard. This was a common request, as there was a good 24-hour restaurant at Wood Street, and switch crews of all roads liked to "take their beans" there. I lined the Santa Fe caboose-hop down to the south end of the plant and

LOUIS A. MARRE COLLECTION

ALFRED JAEGER; LOUIS A. MARRE COLLECTION

Players in Act 2, on a warmer night a decade later in the 1960s, were a B&O F7 leading inbound freight 97, and an Erie Lackawanna FA on a transfer out of Wood Street. The red switch was not properly lined, and the units tangled handrails. It could have been much worse.

then back into the CJ wye connection.

Some time later, B&O 97, an inbound time freight, was reported. I lined him up into Robey Street Yard and put my feet up on the desk. As I did, I heard the rumble of an Alco diesel behind me, and the glow of a dimmed headlight shone in my window. I glanced over to see an Erie Lackawanna transfer job, with a black Alco FA leading, pulling slowly out of Wood Street, bound for Chicago Junction rails and home.

I turned back to my board, where the lineup for 97 was a white line of lights. As 97 passed the home signal about a quarter-mile south of the tower, the first part of the line turned red, as was normal. A few seconds later, however, the part of the white line where the switch to the CJ wye was located went red. Immediately after that, I heard a thump as the FA went on the ground. The track circuit dropping when the Erie went by the red dwarf signal also caused the second signal in 97's route to go to "stop"; 97 big-holed it, but its lead F7 rubbed noses with the EL Alco right in front of my tower.

When everything got stopped, the crew of 97 came down the cab ladder shaking. I was a little shaky too, because if they had really piled up, the tower and I would have been included in the pile. Damage was confined to handrails and paint. The red switch had been left red again, and a few more inches of progress would have resulted in a powerful impact and a serious wreck. I was never called for an investigation, but if I had been, I could not have testified as to who left the switch reversed since I didn't watch the Santa Fe job when it used the switch.

Just after the line on the model board went red, I heard a thump as the FA went on the ground.

All wheels except the EL Alco's lead set were on the rail, and the weather was a lot more pleasant, so it wasn't long before the unit was re-railed and pulled back off B&OCT tracks. By the time I went home, everything was back to normal. After that, of course, as long as I worked at Western Avenue I made it a regular thing to check the position of that switch whenever I cleared a movement into Wood Street Yard. Apparently the EL engineman had failed to check it that night, just as the CR&I/NYC hogger had done back in 1957.

Those two nights stand out among many in my memories of Western Avenue. In 1967 I transferred to the Engineering Department and became a Communications Maintainer. In 1970 I was promoted to the position of Supervisor of Communications and was among the first Supervisors to have territory on both former B&O and C&O lines of what came to be called the Chessie System. I retired from successor CSX in 1998 as the most senior Communications Supervisor. Western Avenue Junction Tower no longer exists, and much of the track in that area has been taken up—including the red switch.

This is the view the engineer of author Lotz's ill-fated train had as his GG1 breezed into the west portal of the eastbound tunnel under the Hudson River.

J. A. MCLELLAN

Trouble in the TUNNEL

An easy trip for a Pennsy trainman turns sour with a break-in-two under the Hudson River

BY **WILLIAM H. LOTZ**

In July 1944 I was discharged from the United States Army Air Corps. I had been a B-17 pilot in the Eighth Air Force and, although I was offered a good job as a commercial airline pilot following my discharge, I felt that after surviving 28 bombing missions, I might have used up all my good luck. Keeping my feet on the ground seemed to be the way to go. Instead of an airborne career, therefore, I chose to return to my prewar job as a passenger trainman on the Philadelphia Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Initially I was placed on the Harrisburg extra list, meaning I had no regular work schedule, but was called as needed.

One Sunday morning early into my resumed career, I was called for a "drag," which consisted of a GG1 electric locomotive, 29 empty mail cars, and a cabin car (PRR's term for a caboose) from Harrisburg to New York. The mail cars were being deadheaded back to New York's Sunnyside Yard.

My conductor and I expected a slow trip because

PRR

The side walkways in the single-track Hudson River tunnels afforded little head room, as this photo, made before the installation of overhead catenary, shows.

the railroad was teeming with wartime troop and materiel trains, and servicemen on furloughs or weekend passes filled the regular passenger trains to capacity. We assumed that an empty train like ours would be held or slowed while other traffic got priority.

Our train left Harrisburg at about 3 p.m. and, to our surprise, we moved right along through Lancaster, Philadelphia, and Trenton. Only after leaving Newark, N.J., 13 miles shy of our destination, were we stopped, on a siding at Meadows Yard. The conductor called the tower, whose operator told him there was no telling how long we might be held there, but that Sunnyside, where the mail trains were made up, needed the cars, so it might not be long.

In less than an hour, we had the signal to go and headed east on the No. 1 main. There was nothing between us and New York except Portal Tower, whose interlocking we breezed right through. As we entered the 6,100-foot-long tunnel under the Hudson River, the engineer applied the brakes because the distant signal to the home signal controlled by Tower A at Penn Station showed an "Approach" indication: Reduce speed to 30 mph and be prepared to stop at the next signal. The home signal was located at the lowest point in the tunnel, 100 feet beneath the river, where the grade changed from 1.3 percent descending to 1.92 percent ascending. We had reduced our speed to 6 or 8 mph when the home signal changed to "Clear."

The engineer released the brakes and started taking power on the GG1's 22-notch controller to resume speed. As he did so, a coupler knuckle broke on the leading end of the fourth car, the train separated, and the brakes went into emergency.

Immediately after we stopped, I unloaded from the cabin car in order to flag a train that was closely following us. This involved hiking back on one of the tunnel's side walkways, several feet above track level. This was no mean trick for a 6-foot 2-inch man wearing a 4-inch-high trainman's hat, for the tunnel walls begin to slope inward from about 2 feet above the walkway. After the following train was stopped safely behind us, I walked forward beside our train, with the conductor, who joined me from the cabin, to survey the situation.

Even though the lights in the tunnel were spaced about 100 feet apart, it was easy to see that the knuckle was broken, and that the engine and three cars were about 50 feet ahead of the rest of the train. The engineer and fireman were standing and staring at the break; the conductor had gone over to a lineside phone. It was usual practice in such situations to take a good knuckle from the nearest unjoined

WILLIAM D. VOLKMER

Having passed under the Hudson River without incident, GG1 4884 leads a train out of the east tunnel portal and into the Penn Station complex in March 1960.

coupler, which in this case was on the leading end of our GG1. I went to the front of the engine and removed the knuckle pin; it came out easily and the knuckle dropped to the track. I hefted it up to the fireman on the tunnel's walkway, then joined him. Walking hunched over to avoid hitting our heads, we carried the heavy and awkward object nearly the length of a football field back to the car that needed the new knuckle. So far, so good.

At this point I noticed that my formerly immaculate trainman's uniform was getting covered with soot and becoming damp from the water dripping off the tunnel ceiling. Grease and grime covered every inch of my skin, hair, and the cuffs of the white shirt my wife had so carefully bleached and ironed. Nevertheless, more had to be done. I got down on my knees and attempted to remove the broken knuckle. Of course, it would not budge. Using all my strength, I pounded it with the knuckle pin from the engine, but even that did no good. The fireman also tried, but he could not move it either. The conductor called Tower A and reported that the knuckle pin could not be removed. The engine crew was ordered to bring in the motor and three cars still attached. They were happy to leave. The conductor and I were to wait with the disabled bulk of the train.

We both stood there, nervous, alert, and aware that the remaining 26 cars and cabin were on a downward grade. If they started to move, their weight would quickly increase their speed and we would need to be out of the way. I decided that at the first sign of the brakes giving way, I would jump up and lie down on the walkway, otherwise my head might be crushed by the sides of the cars. The passing minutes seemed like hours, but in fact it was soon after our engine arrived in Penn Station that a station shifter locomotive carrying several car inspectors was sent back to us. The inspectors had sledge hammers, the right tool for the task at hand, and after pounding on the pin of the broken knuckle for several minutes, they were able to dislodge it. They then replaced it with the good knuckle that we had removed from the engine.

It was easy to see that the knuckle was broken, and that the engine and three cars were about 50 feet ahead of the rest of the train.

The car inspectors coupled the shifter to the stranded cars and pulled them into Penn Station, stopping briefly to let the conductor and me get off. We watched as the cars were pulled away to Sunnyside, then reported to the crew dispatcher, who took one look at the condition of me and my clothing and ordered me to deadhead home on the first available train.

As I rode back to Harrisburg I had 3½ hours to contemplate my fate and assess my ruined clothes and filthy skin. When I got off the train, my eyes at first went heavenward as a plane flew over, and I wondered if the sky was truly any more dangerous than Pennsy's Hudson River tunnel into New York. I never forgot that day . . . but I also never regretted my return to the railroad.

The North Shore family

THREE PHOTOS, JOHN GRUBER

Short lines and electric interurbans often had an "employees as family" atmosphere. Although the Chicago North Shore & Milwaukee quit in 1963, its traditions continue. An annual picnic begun by the company in 1898 today is organized by a reunion committee that boasts a North Shore employee list of 9,624 names; the September 2010 event at Waukegan, Ill., was its 48th. The interurban's 87-mile Chicago–Milwaukee route was known for high speeds, trains every hour, and "Electroburgers" from the grill in the dining area of the *Electroliners.* The employees pictured, all in passenger service, are ticket counter agent Arleen R. Warzinik (right), last agent on duty at Milwaukee, on January 20, 1963; conductor Gene A. Bergfeld, also at Milwaukee (above), who hired on as a collector in 1953 (he also was a dispatcher, including on the last night of service); and Bruce Carlson (opposite page), shown "putting up the whip [trolley pole]," a task he performed many times as trains made the transition at speed outside Chicago from third rail to overhead wire. Carlson lives in New Hampshire and still misses the North Shore. After January '63, he was a conductor for Boston & Maine for 20 years, and retired from Amtrak in 1999. He is from a true "North Shore family"; his brother was an electrician at Highwood shops and his father a ticket agent for Chicago Aurora & Elgin, then CNS&M.—*John Gruber*

Sues and stews

By any name, female attendants were an important part of life aboard the great passenger trains

BY **KARL ZIMMERMANN**

"It was a very special profession," Joan Reitz Dolan told me last March, reminiscing about her career as a "Sue"—a stewardess-nurse on the *North Coast Limited*, Northern Pacific's stylish flagship that connected Chicago with Seattle and Portland (although the Sues served only on the Seattle leg). "The train was a little community on the move." Joan Reitz, as her name then was, worked as a Sue from September 1960 to April 1962, then returned in 1963 as supervisor, a role she filled until January 1967. For the most part, the job was a pleasure.

"You'd get nice letters from top officials, sometimes even the president of the railroad, because they'd gotten letters complimenting you," added Barbara Person Hancock, who worked as a Sue from October 1957 to December 1958 and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. "You'd get a yellow slip in advance with VIP's listed, and anyone with medical problems, but other things you figured out on your own. You'd see mothers with babies, for instance, and know that they'd need a little help."

The origin of the NP's universally applied moniker "Sue" is somewhat murky but apparently stemmed from the public-relations department. "Hello, I'm Sue, Your Stewardess-Nurse," head-

ABOVE, AL RUNG; RIGHT, C&O

Hostesses for C&O's *George Washington* strut their stuff for a 1947 publicity photo (right). Also in 1947, a Pennsy passenger representative (above) takes some good-natured kidding from her male colleagues during the *Jeffersonian*'s Altoona station stop.

and Zephyrettes

JIM JEFFREY

NP's Seattle/Portland–Chicago *North Coast Limited*, train of the "Sues," is eastbound nearing St. Paul Union Depot in July 1965.

lined a magazine ad from early 1959 showing a Sue in a *North Coast Limited* dome car. "'Sue' exemplifies the corps of friendly, capable young women, all registered nurses, who help make travel more pleasurable," the ad continued. "They also had TV commercials with the character of Sue," Barbara added, "a cartoon figure that swung her hips as she walked down the aisle. Not very dignified."

"For print advertising, they used professional models," Joan said. "They didn't use the girls."

Perhaps the ad person who came up with "Sue" had in mind, consciously or unconsciously, the widespread term "stew" for an airline stewardess. And it's tempting to see an analogy with the retrograde, clearly insulting practice of calling Pullman porters "George," after George M. Pullman, but the term "Sue" wasn't similarly freighted with the implication that an individual's name wasn't worth knowing or using. In any case, the custom was readily embraced by the Sues themselves. On the train, whether her name was Barbara or Joan or Carol or Geraldine, she was "Sue" to both passengers and crew.

Like airline stewardesses, and the "Harvey Girls" who worked Fred Harvey's restaurants and lunchrooms strung along the Santa Fe Railway, the women who served as hostesses on the trains remain proud of their calling and in many cases have kept in touch over the years. In 2002, on a "Montana by Steam" excursion behind restored Spokane, Portland & Seattle 4-8-4 No. 700 on the old Northern Pacific route, I spotted ex-Sue Barbara Hancock wearing her old uniform —ample evidence, I thought, of this pride. "I was invited to come in uniform as a 'surprise' greeter for Northern Pacific Historical Society members as they boarded the train," she told me. "From the reaction of the group, I gathered that they too were proud of the Stewardess-Nurse service."

KARL ZIMMERMANN

Barbara Person Hancock, her old NP "Sue" uniform marked with a "Stewardess-RN" patch, smiles beside the "Montana by Steam" special in 2002.

ON PLANES BEFORE TRAINS

Stewardess-nurses made their first appearance on the rails in the mid-1930s, but they were in the skies before that. In the seminal days of commercial air travel, smartly uniformed and attractive stewardesses had fast become a glamorous, iconic part of a still-novel experience. In 1930, United Airlines hired Ellen Church, a 25-year-old registered nurse, as a stewardess, and a tradition was born. Before that, airline passengers had been served by male stewards—white, in contrast to the black men who worked as porters on Pullman cars. (Today, of course, the men and women who work in the cabins of airliners are called "flight attendants.") The title "steward" was borrowed directly from the ocean-going passenger liners and, secondarily, from railroad dining cars, where stewards were in charge.

By 1937, nearly twice as many stewardesses as stewards worked aboard the airliners, and most if not all were registered nurses, a requirement that would be relaxed when World War II began in 1939 and many nurses enlisted in the armed forces. In later years there were various requirements for stewardesses—attractiveness being perhaps the paramount one—but a nursing degree was less and less frequently required.

With porters serving in the Pullmans and waiters in the dining

cars (where the position of steward was the exclusive domain of the white male), the role of airline stewardess or hostess (as they were also known) didn't translate directly to railroading, though it was certainly not unknown. Indeed, a significant handful of roads—New York Central, Pennsylvania, Chesapeake & Ohio, Seaboard Air Line, Atlantic Coast Line, Chicago & North Western, and Central of Georgia among them—did at one time or another employ young women in various roles over the years, and with various titles: stewardess-nurses, registered nurse-stewardesses, courier-nurses, stewardesses, hostesses, train passenger representatives, maids, or secretary-hostesses.

Likely the best-known among the groups of women were the postwar Zephyrettes, who served on the popular *California Zephyr* (operated by the Burlington Route, Denver & Rio Grande Western, and Western Pacific) from its inauguration in 1949 until its demise in 1970, and NP's Sues. However, Burlington's *Twin Cities Zephyr* and *Denver Zephyr* had them in the 1930s, and the first streamlined train in the Deep South, Gulf, Mobile & Northern's little articulated *Rebel*, which debuted in 1935, employed on-board hostesses from the beginning, making GM&N the first railroad to do so. Pioneers along with GM&N and CB&Q were Union Pacific, Santa Fe, and Baltimore & Ohio.

KARL ZIMMERMANN COLLECTION

An NP postcard shows a stewardess in the *North Coast*'s Traveler's Rest lounge car. Ads like this one from *National Geographic* promoted the women; later versions even used the "Sue" moniker.

"They always said that the hostess department was President Tigrett's baby," remarked Charlotte Hudgens, who worked on Gulf, Mobile & Ohio trains from 1951 to 1954. "He wanted the passengers just to be comfortable on board, as if they were in their own home. That's why he didn't want us to wear hats." When Isaac B. "Ike" Tigrett decided to put hostesses aboard his pocket diesel streamliner, the Jackson (Tenn.)–New Orleans *Rebel*, he was indeed breaking new ground. On July 11, 1935, Katherine Sullivan, dressed in a gray business suit with white vest, went to work on the *Rebel*, starting a tradition that, while never widespread, was an illustrious part of railroad heritage in mid-20th-century America.

By the time Hudgens hired on, the GM&O (formed by merger in 1940 of the GM&N and Mobile & Ohio) had based its hostess service in St. Louis, with Vera Elvert as superintendent. The hostesses worked the *Abraham Lincoln* and *Ann Rutledge* to Chicago (trains under the GM&O banner since its acquisition of the Alton Railroad in 1947) and the *Gulf Coast Rebel* to Mobile (service was extended there in 1937).

"The railroad put us up in Chicago at the Palmer House," Hudgens recalled, "but in St. Louis we all chipped in on an apartment at the Forest Park Hotel: living room, dining room, kitchen, two bedrooms, plus a pull-down bed in the living room. There were five of us there at any time, and if you had an early train you slept in the living room so as not to disturb the others. On the overnight run to Mobile we were guaranteed an upper berth, but if a lower or roomette were available, the Pullman conductor would generally give it to us."

Hiring requirements and duty expectations for the GM&N/GM&O hostesses were much like those other railroads with similar programs would establish. GM&N hostesses didn't need to be nurses, however, though college degrees were a must.

"'I don't care what the degree is,' Mr. Tigrett said," according to Charlotte Hudgens. "He thought we'd be more self-assured if we'd gone to college. We were there to make the trip more enjoyable," she concluded, and that summed it up perfectly.

On April 25, 1937, when Bernyce Etna Young, smartly dressed in a double-breasted royal blue uniform, left Chicago on the *Shenandoah*, bound for Jersey City, B&O became the first eastern road to offer stewardess-nurse service. She and four colleagues—described in the vernacular of the times as the railroad's "first lady train crew members"—could be expected to hold or feed a baby, describe points of interest, help travelers with practical information, or render medical assistance in an emergency. One of the five, Norma A. Thompson, would go on to become chief of Santa Fe's stewardess service. On the then-B&O-affiliate Alton Railroad, stewardess-nurses began aboard the *Abraham Lincoln* just months later, in June, and, when it was inaugurated later that year, the *Ann Rutledge*. Also in 1937, the New Haven began using women as stewardesses in the dining cars of some of its feature trains.

The next B&O train to get stewardess-nurses was the *National Limited*, on April 1, 1939. In July 1941 they joined the crew of the *Diplomat*, a St. Louis train like the *National* ["Henrietta Hanson on the B&O," RAILROADS AND WORLD WAR II, 2008]. When the *Cincinnatian* debuted in 1947, stewardess-nurses were aboard, as they were on the new streamlined *Columbian* when it entered service two years later. Although stewardesses had remained on B&O trains during World War II, the requirement that they be nurses had been dropped. By the *Cincinnatian*'s debut, the requirement had been reinstated.

C. V. SIMON, J. DAVID INGLES COLLECTION

CHARLES TREFTS

Little Gulf, Mobile & Northern was the unlikely pioneer of train-hostess programs. When the 750-mile road inaugurated its *Rebel* diesel train in 1935, hostesses were part of the crew, and the program was expanded with the Mobile & Ohio and Alton mergers. Above, the *Rebel* is at Murphysboro, Ill., during the GM&O era; at left, a hostess stands in the *Ann Rutledge*'s ex-Alton obs car.

NOT JUST FOR COACH TRAINS

On B&O as on other roads, the early focus of stewardess-nurse service had been on luxury coach trains, perhaps because Pullman passengers had porters to look after them. On March 1, 1957, however, B&O's flagship, the all-Pullman *Capitol Limited*, became the stewardess-nurses' latest assignment when they replaced the uniformed male secretaries who for 34 years had served the many businessmen who rode that train. By this time, Margaret M. Lynch, supervisor of stewardess service, had quite a roster, some two dozen women, to manage.

Qualifications for the stewardess-nurse job on the B&O were typical. In addition to being registered nurses, the "girls"—as they were called, and as they called each other—had to be between age 22 and 27 when hired, 5 feet 3 inches to 5 feet 7 inches tall, 115 to 135 pounds, couldn't wear glasses, and couldn't be (or ever have been) married. "Many of the B&O stewardesses have been models," according to the May 1957 issue of *Baltimore & Ohio Magazine*, which also pointed out that the marriage stricture caused considerable turnover since "oftentimes they marry passengers—and end their stewardess careers!" Stewardess-nurse presence on the fleet was gradually cut back beginning in the late 1950s; the final service, on the combined *Capitol Limited/Columbian*, terminated in 1963.

In June 1937 Santa Fe had introduced courier-nurses on the *Scout*, a Chicago–Los Angeles economy coach and tourist sleeper train. According to a promotional brochure, they were "alert, pleasant, capable young women, registered nurses all, assigned to help mothers with babies and children . . . to watch over youngsters traveling alone . . . to administer to invalids and the aged . . . and to assist all others on the *Scout* requiring their free and friendly service." The courier-nurse was based in a customized room in the lounge car.

Courier-nurses were added to *El Capitan*, Santa Fe's luxury Chicago–L.A. coach train, in February 1938. "Besides her professional ability," explained a brochure for that train, "the Courier Nurse can bring to interested travelers a personal knowledge of scenes along the route of *El Capitan*, for she has visited the many scenic attractions in the colorful Santa Fe Southwest." Now a roster of 17 women—registered nurses ages 24 to 29, about 5 feet 6 inches tall, 125 to 135 pounds, unmarried, of "direct and courteous manner" with a "pleasing personality" and "good appearance"—worked aboard the two trains.

Union Pacific, Santa Fe's competitor in some markets, the year before had placed what it called registered nurse-stewardesses on some of its trains: *Challenger, Forty Niner,* and the *"City"* streamliners. "Elderly women and mothers with small children will find a most welcome innovation in this service," read a 1938 brochure, reflecting what was an important motivation for all railroads, the preponderance of whose passengers were male, in offering stewardesses: to make train travel more attractive to women.

Burlington was thus motivated in hiring Velma McPeek, a former teacher who was managing a department store tearoom when the railroad found her, as supervisor of passenger-train services. It was she who introduced the Zephyrettes on the *Denver Zephyr* in 1936 and the *Twin Cities Zephyr* soon after. In summer they wore lightweight white silk suits over navy blouses, while in

ABOVE LEFT, FRASER HALE; ABOVE RIGHT, ATLANTIC COAST LINE; BROCHURES, KARL ZIMMERMANN COLLECTION

Competitors Seaboard and ACL both had hostesses on their New York–Florida streamliners. Stewardess-Nurse Patricia Howell (above left) had by 1955 racked up 2 million miles in 14 years on SAL trains. Hostesses led sing-alongs on ACL's *Florida Special*; "Miss Herring" (near right) and "Miss Moore" graced the covers of otherwise identical SCL pamphlets.

winter they donned gray man-tailored suits with a red silk-lined cape. Hiring requirements for the Zephyrettes were similar to those for most railroad hostesses through the years, but they were not required to be RN's. The Zephyrettes were dropped from the *Denver* and *Twin Zephyrs* with the onset of World War II, when pleasure travel was discouraged, and they didn't return at the war's conclusion. With the inauguration of the *California Zephyr*, however, they were front and center more than ever, with Velma McPeek still very much in charge.

In December 1964, Beulah Ecklund was riding a Milwaukee Road suburban train from Chicago out to Elgin when, as she recalls, "I saw a gal in what appeared to be a flight attendant's uniform. 'Are you an airline stewardess?' I asked. She said 'No, I work on a train.' I asked which one and she said the *California Zephyr*, then told me that if I was interested I should get an interview with Mary Lou Gordon at the Burlington's office in Chicago." She did, and although "I wore glasses, which was not allowed, so I had to get contact lenses," Beulah met the other requirements: 21 years old (originally it had been 24 to 28), between 5 feet 4 and 5 feet 8, with a college degree or education the equivalent of a registered nurse, and "of good character with a pleasing personality."

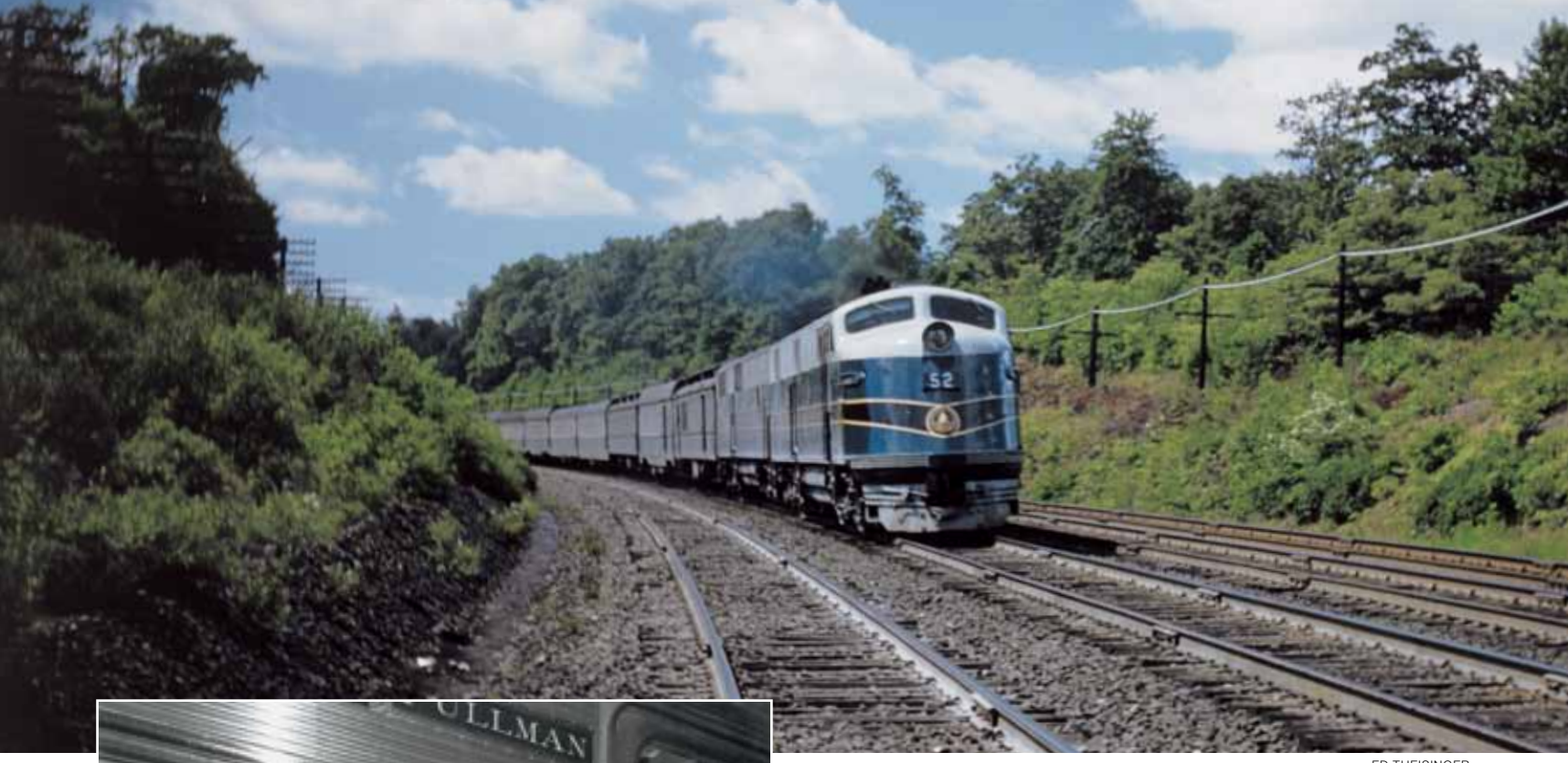
TEAM EFFORTS AND WAKE-UP CALLS

"What a team effort it was!" she told me, ensuring that passengers "enjoyed the experience of a lifetime on 'America's most talked-about train.' There were conductors who were the epitome of the team captain—diplomatic and gracious yet firm when the situation called for it. There were dining car stewards and staff who made working on the train a wonderful experience. Many times we Zephyrettes found a demitasse cup of coffee at the door of our room in the Vista-Dome buffet-lounge car for a 'wake-up call' to get us going for the day." Reading announcements from the master communications control board in the diner, and making dinner reservations, were among the Zephyrettes' routine duties, along with helping the elderly and mothers with babies.

"Mary Lou Gordon was our 'boss,' really more of a mother hen," Beulah remembers, with considerable affection for the woman who was godmother to one of her children. "She took an interest in each one of us, both on the job and off the job." Beulah recalled other supervisors fondly as well. "I met Harry Murphy, president of the CB&Q, in the observation car shortly after I hired out. I didn't even know who he was until a trainman told me later, but he was very kind and down-to-earth."

"Looking back," she said, "I'd guess that the appeal of the *California Zephyr* was its reflection of a life's journey, with different challenges to meet on every trip and constantly changing scenery. There were a few detours and delays, but it was always high adventure, and our fellow crewmembers often made the difference. It was an incredible family feeling," she continued. "Often I would bake a cake for someone on the crew making his last run.

"Several of the Zephyrettes—including me—met their spouses on the train or among men employed elsewhere in the railroad



ED THEISINGER

BALTIMORE & OHIO, BILL HOWES COLLECTION

B&O had an extensive, long-lasting stewardess-nurse program covering its major trains, including the *National Limited*, pictured (above) eastbound at Fanwood, N.J., in 1951. At left, one of the women poses with a Slumbercoach for the *Columbian* in 1958.

industry," Beulah said. Her career as a Zephyrette ended on March 22, 1970, at the same moment the *CZ* ended.

In July 1983, Beulah (by now Beulah Ecklund Bauman) had one more memorable *CZ* experience when, with Arthur Lloyd, a WP passenger veteran she had known and admired and who was by then Amtrak's Director, Corporate Communications–West, she re-christened the *California Zephyr* when the Superliner train regained its original name and original route through Colorado.

"We did the ceremony twice, in Denver and then in Glenwood Springs," she recalled, "and both Art and I spoke." The champagne bottle was recalcitrant, and when she broke it over the locomotive pilot on the second try she ended up with a bloodied hand—but otherwise happy memories, to go with those accumulated during her substantial time on the train.

INROADS IN THE EAST

Other roads followed the *CZ*'s lead. When in June 1956 New York Central inaugurated *The Xplorer*, a low-cost, low-slung train between Cleveland and Cincinnati, a hostess was among the crew. Then in September '56, the "Girls of the *Century*" began service on Central's famed *20th Century Limited*, with some of their duties—typing, placing radio-telephone calls from the train, and sending telegrams—reflecting the fact that they were replacing the male secretaries who previously had worked the train. These young women, college-educated but not RN's and dressed in smart uniforms created by Christian Dior, also performed the typical train-stewardess duties, including sewing on a button or warming a baby's bottle. (A decade earlier, that railroad's luxury all-coach *Pacemaker* had featured a maid, stationed in a coach reserved exclusively for women, who offered some of these services.)

In April 1957, "Empire Girls" went to work (but apparently not for long) on the New York–Buffalo *Empire State Express*, providing the usual hostess services and taking reservations for the new "State Dinner Service." Their uniforms were typical but for their side-draped berets, which led them to be touted as the "girl in the red tam." For a time after World War II, Central's rival Pennsylvania Railroad employed female "train passenger representatives" on its all-coach *Trail Blazer* and *Jeffersonian*.

Other trains offering hostess service at one time or another included Chesapeake & Ohio's *George Washington*, originally in 1947 as part of Robert R. Young's pro-passenger program (which eventually was largely aborted) and again in 1953, this time billed as "hostess and travel assistant" service. Central of Georgia had uniformed maids aboard the *Man O' War* and *Nancy Hanks II*. Sea-

KARL ZIMMERMANN COLLECTION

SANTA FE

Another durable program was Santa Fe's, which placed courier-nurses on the *Scout* in 1937 (as featured in a booklet, above left) and the *El Capitan* in '38. Pro-passenger to the end, the road was updating their uniforms as late as 1969, when two courier-nurses modeled the latest look with an *El Cap* Hi-Level coach as a prop.

board Air Line had registered nurses on the *Silver Meteor* and *Silver Star* to Florida. SAL rival Atlantic Coast Line introduced hostesses on the winter-season *Florida Special* in 1962 for the 75th anniversary of the train. Among their duties was modeling fashions, including bathing suits, in the recreation car. Under Seaboard Coast Line auspices, hostesses were on the train wearing distinctly '60s-style uniforms in the years just prior to Amtrak.

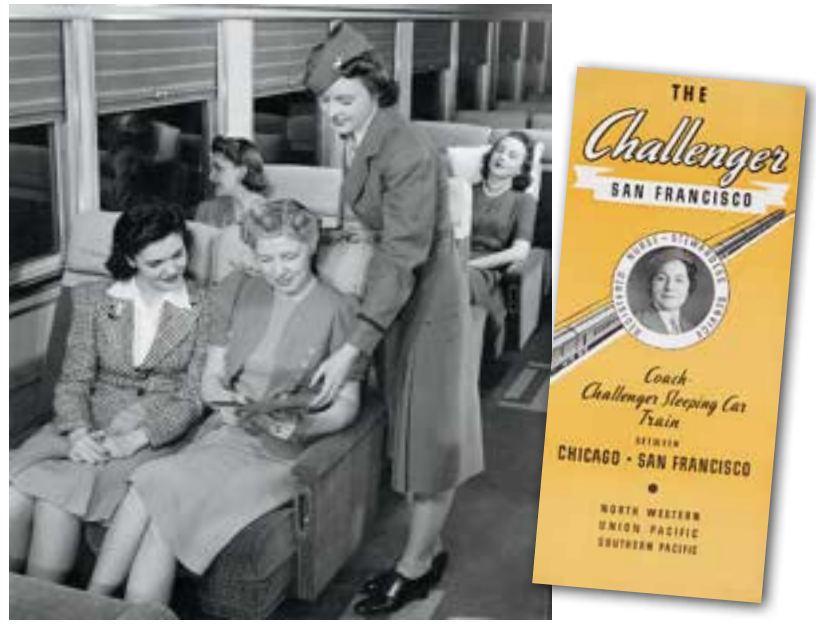
Northern Pacific's Sues arrived in the early 1950s, when the road decided to upgrade its streamlined flagship *North Coast Limited*. The train received a bright new two-tone-green color scheme created by industrial designer Raymond Loewy in 1952 ["The Most Gorgeous Train You Ever Saw," DREAM TRAINS, 2003], and two years later, coach and sleeper domes, two of each per consist, entered service. Not long afterward, "Lewis and Clark Traveler's Rest" lunch-counter tavern cars, rebuilt from chair-buffet lounges to specifications provided by the Loewy firm, were introduced, and a significant aspect of these enhancements would be the addition of stewardess-nurses. To establish this new service, NP passenger management contacted Margaret Lynch at B&O for a recommendation. She suggested Lila Brekke, today Lila Brekke Kravitz, who in the late 1940s and early '50s had spent six years with B&O as a St. Louis-based stewardess-nurse on the *National Limited*, *Diplomat*, and *Royal Blue*.

Lila Brekke had graduated in 1942 from the Methodist-Kahler School of Nursing, then affiliated with the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. Shortly after graduation, she learned that Chicago & North Western wished to place a stewardess-nurse aboard its *Rochester 400*, since many Mayo patients traveled that train—enough so the railroad had arranged a removable window in a Pullman car for boarding of stretcher patients.

"They interviewed about 100 girls," Lila recalled recently, "and I got the job. I guess they must have liked my story. When I was about 12, I told them, I used to sit on this hill not far from home and watch the trains go by. The trainmen in the caboose and I always waved to each other. I hoped that when I grew up I could get on and see what was at the other end of the track. North Western hired me and I left that week for Chicago."

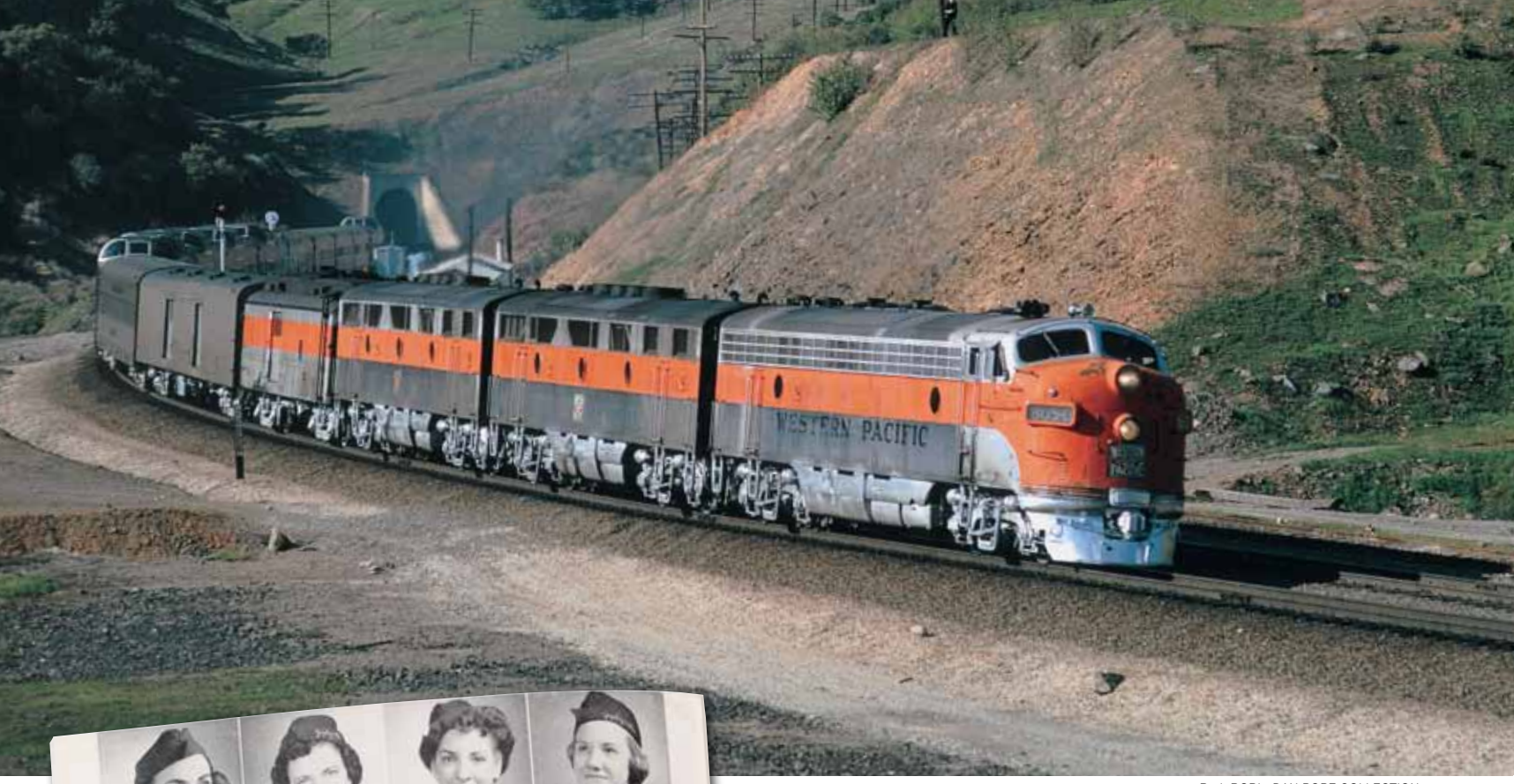
Lila worked for C&NW for a year and a half, then became an army nurse stationed on a hospital ship. "We brought 606 boys back from the Philippines," she remembered. After that she went to the B&O, and then to hospital nursing, before the NP asked her to go to its St. Paul headquarters to interview with G. W. Rodine, passenger traffic manager, as a candidate to inaugurate and manage a stewardess-nurse program. She was hired, and the railroad moved her from her home in St. Louis to Seattle, which would be headquarters and crew base for the stewardess-nurse program.

"They moved my automobile on a freight car," she recalled. Ensconced on the 16th floor of Smith Tower, an elegant Art Deco skyscraper, she went to work. She designed the original uniforms



PHOTO, UNION PACIFIC; BROCHURE, KARL ZIMMERMANN COLLECTION

The UP called its women "Registered Nurse-Stewardesses" and deployed them on its transcontinental trains operated jointly with C&NW and, in the case of the *Challenger* and *City of San Francisco*, SP. In the photo above, the employee's uniform includes a *Challenger* hat pin and "RN-Stewardess" sleeve marking.



R. J. ROBL, DAN POPE COLLECTION

The Burlington Route staffed its Denver and Twin Cities streamliners with Zephyrettes, but took them off the trains at the start of World War II. The position was revived in 1949 with the launch of the CB&Q-DRGW-WP *California Zephyr*, pictured on the WP at James, Calif., making its final eastbound run in March 1970.

KARL ZIMMERMANN COLLECTION

A page from a 1951 issue of WP's employee magazine *Mileposts* shows Zephyrette boss Velma McPeek and her charges. The women were forbidden to smoke or drink while in uniform, and were to avoid spending time with passengers who were imbibing.

(green, of course, the train's signature color, with a large white blouse bow at the collar), wrote a manual, established the requirements for hire (identical to B&O's, not surprisingly), interviewed and hired the first crop of Sues (though that term was not coined until later), and collaborated with Forrest G. Scott, the head of western passenger services and her supervisor, on the along-the-way commentaries that the stewardesses would read over the p.a. system. The service kicked off in June 1955; after three and a half years on the job, Lila Brekke left to operate her own nursing home. Her successor was Geraldine Yanta, followed later by Karen Laumbach and Joan Dolan.

BECOMING A *NORTH COAST* SUE

Barbara Person learned of the Sues at a nursing-school classmate's wedding. "One of the guests changed into this green uniform and had to leave the reception early to catch the train, and she told me about Northern Pacific's stewardess-nurse program. I went right down to Smith Tower and applied—and was hired. I had a physical, had my weight and height measured, and received an hour's training with a disc jockey for speaking over the p.a. system." Barbara was particularly interested in the opportunity with NP because it allowed her to use her nursing skills and also continue as a part-time RN at Swedish Hospital on the four days off in Seattle.

"Though originally airline stewardesses were registered nurses, at the time I was hired by NP that requirement was being dropped—except for Pan Am overseas flights, and for that I'd have had to move to California, which I didn't want to do."

Joan Dolan, who comes from Pennsylvania, read about the opportunity with NP in the *American Journal of Nursing*. "That's how the railroad got a lot of the Sues," she said. "I was intrigued. It's

BEULAH ECKLUND BAUMAN COLLECTION

Zephyrette Beulah Ecklund makes her rounds in one of the *CZ*'s dome cars as the train passes though mountainous territory on the Rio Grande or WP. She worked the train until its discontinuance, then helped christen Amtrak's version of the train, in 1983.

something different, I thought. I'd see a whole different section of the country. So I went to the Palmer House in Chicago for an interview." She was hired.

Based in Seattle, the Sues, who were accommodated on board the train in a roomette near the diner, worked 10-day cycles: two days on the train eastbound, two days in Chicago, two days westbound on the train, and four days off.

"There were 10 nurses in all," Joan recalled, "and in Chicago we always stayed at the Palmer House, room 2141." Sues not from the Seattle area often shared a rented apartment or house there, and many worked other jobs.

Novice Sues made one or more student trips before going out on their own, and Barbara's was with Carol Bell. A typical responsibility for train hostesses was the routine completion of trip reports. NP's included listing of the train consist, by both "loading number" and car number, and sections for air-conditioning failures, condition of equipment (cleanliness, temperature, functioning of the p.a. system, and the like), "parties not on passenger information list"—the VIP roster provided to crew—"but seem of importance to me," and spaces for information on wheelchair and ambulance cases, elderly people, medicines administered, and children traveling unaccompanied (Barbara had 14 on one trip).

There was also a section for miscellaneous remarks where, after her student trip, Barbara wrote, "Mr. Clinton and friend kept asking Bell and I to lunch in Chicago. We didn't go." The report, which went to the passenger traffic manager, western passenger traffic manager, and supervisor of stewardess service, was also a place to note passenger complaints—"like so-and-so complains that she got sick from the salmon at dinner," Barbara explained, "and you wrote that down. Then you talk to her husband, who says she was sick before dinner, and you write *that* down too."

"I went down to King Street Station and saw the girls off every day," Joan said in discussing her duties as supervisor, "to see if their nails were done, they were in proper uniform, and if they had their medical bag—which basically had nothing of great value in it." The *North Coast Limited* was the only train among those serving the Northwest carrying nurses, however, and that was a matter of considerable pride for the Sues.

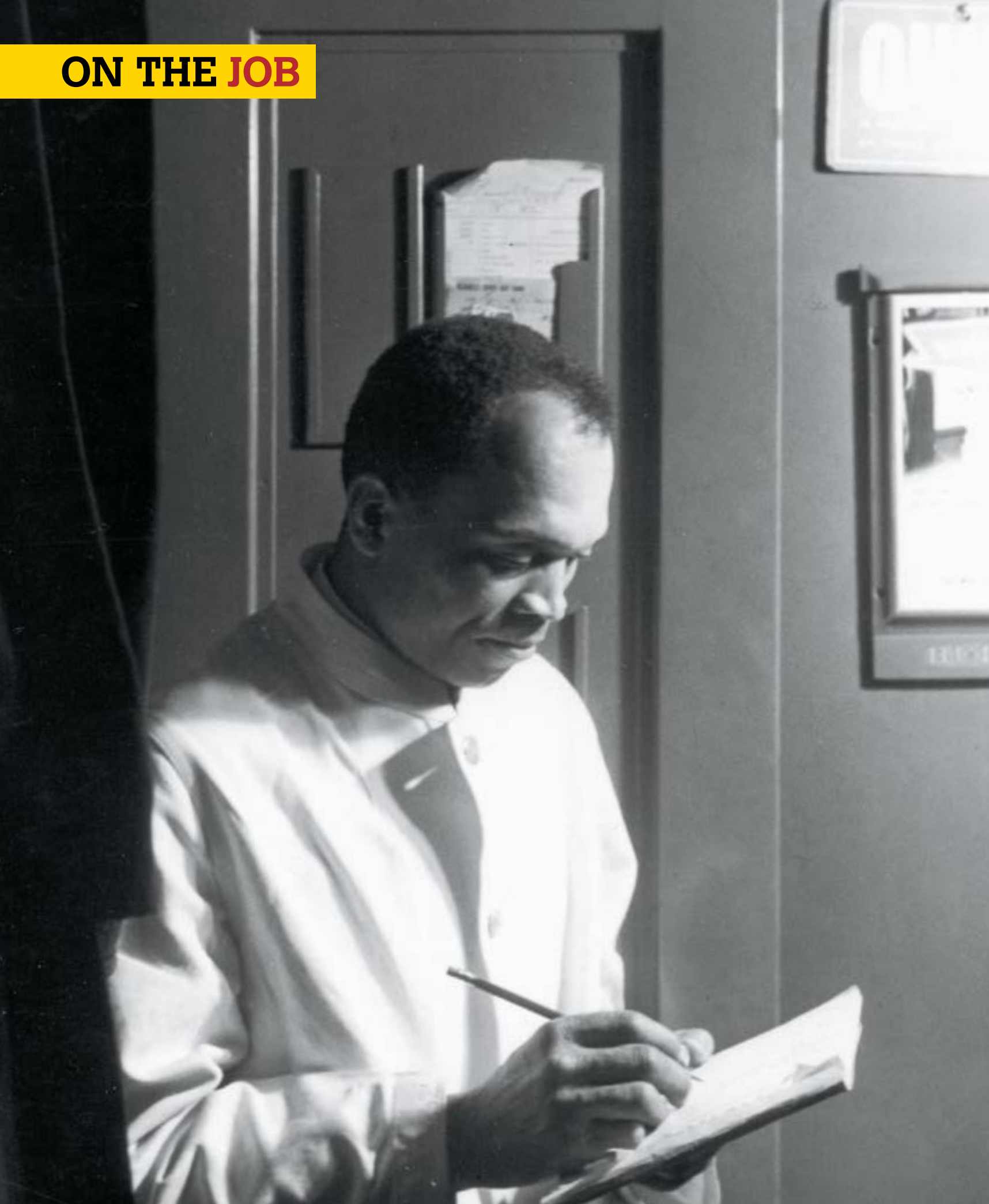
Perhaps because of her long tenure on the train, Joan had some rough trips, including a number of grade-crossing accidents—and one serious derailment. "One winter we were running east along the Yellowstone River in Montana," she recalled, "and there'd been a Chinook wind, temperatures about 80 degrees, and a huge rock fell from the cliff onto the tracks. We came around a curve, the engineer couldn't stop of course, and we hit it, and everybody went sailing. I saw the RPO pop out of the consist and fall into the Yellowstone, breaking partway through the ice." Amazingly, the only injuries were to the two clerks in the Railway Post Office car, and they survived.

But the overwhelming preponderance of her memories are positive ones, such as dining-car crews insisting on making special meals for the Sues. Once Joan dined with the chiefs of seven Indian nations who were on the way to President John F. Kennedy's inauguration. Even the Billings-based conductor who'd chafed at a perceived usurpation by the Sues of some of his prerogatives, and locked horns with Joan more than once, ended up conciliatory.

"I just want to tell you that you won't be seeing me any more," Joan had told him on the last trip after she'd resigned.

"Well, Sue, I'm going to miss you," he answered—which could have been a mantra for the countless thousands of passengers and crews who traveled or worked with the many hostesses who served on some of America's greatest trains in their glory years.

ON THE JOB



A ladder up

For many African-Americans, railroad employment was a ladder up from low economic status. Increased financial security and the travel often involved in railroad work brought social progress as well. As with railroading in general, family ties were important, with several members of immediate and extended family often working for the railroad. Two labor unions, headquartered in Chicago, represented black railroad workers who served the public in sleeping and dining cars. Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters member Alfred McMillan (left) is pictured in the early 1940s checking the wake-up call list for the passengers in his car on Baltimore & Ohio's *Capitol Limited*. He worked for the Pullman Company from 1922 to '69. Leland Cain Jr. (right) joined the Chicago & North Western as a fourth cook (dishwasher) in 1941, remaining with the road for 53 years. He worked on most of C&NW's passenger trains and, later, its business trains. In this photo, he is in the galley of an office car at Madison, Wis., in 1980. Cain, known by the nickname "Sugar," retired as a bartender for Chicago's RTA in 1996. By 2007, the Cain family, including Leland's father, son, stepdaughter, brother, and nephew, counted 166 years of railroad service among them. Leland Sr. was chairman of the dining car union for the C&NW, a part of the Joint Council of Dining Car Employees; Leland Jr. also was a member of the union. An unidentified Milwaukee Road parlor car porter (below), presumably also a Joint Council member, waves as passengers leave the *Morning Hiawatha* at Wisconsin Dells in 1971. The Brotherhood, formed in 1935 as the first significant minority-worker union, was led by A. Philip Randolph, a civil rights leader and founder of the 1963 March on Washington. The Joint Council is less well known. Both contributed to the betterment of their members and members' families.—*John Gruber*

HENRY A. KOSHOLLEK, COURTESY CENTER FOR RAILROAD PHOTOGRAPHY & ART

JOHN GRUBER, COURTESY CENTER FOR RAILROAD PHOTOGRAPHY & ART

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The CAB CARD

A wild ride down West Albany Hill on a freshly inspected NYC Hudson

BY **E. R. "WILL" WILLIAMS**

Some time ago, while looking through some old boxes, I found one of my old fireman's time books. It was for October 1949 and fortuitously had missed being thrown out in the clean-up before our move to Florida after I retired in 1983.

In it were some notations about a trip I worked, and I thought of this long-ago experience and all it had taught me.

I was a locomotive fireman on the Mohawk Division of the New York Central and had been called for a "pedaling job," to bring engine 5421—a late 1930s class J-3a 4-6-4 Hudson type—from Selkirk, N.Y., the yard west of Albany, to the Rensselaer roundhouse across the Hudson River from the capital city. The engine was just out of inspection and was to be used that night on train 155, an all-stops mail-and-express local to Syracuse.

My engineer was a 1929 hire, qualified on anything on wheels. We were only to deliver this engine, one of those "once in a lifetime" easy jobs. The engineer left his car in Rensselaer, and my wife drove us to Selkirk so that, when we finished, neither of us had to go back to fetch our cars.

As usual, when we arrived at the Selkirk roundhouse to register for work and to read the bulletins, the foreman was there to push us on our way. Every job leaving there was faced with this problem—the foreman always wanted the crews to get on their power and get going and not take time to look things over.

My engineer, named Harry, and I went out to our engine and climbed into the cab, putting our grips into the seatboxes. I looked at the federally required cab card mounted over the fireman's seatbox and noted that it was in good order—properly signed and dated by each locomotive inspector. This I mentioned to Harry as he prepared his inspection on the ground. While he was doing this, I made up a ball of waste and attached it to the long hook, put some kerosene on it for light, and opened the firedoors to inspect the crown sheet and side sheets for leaks. All was well in there.

I checked our tools, lamps, flags, fusees, drinking water, ice, and the water level in the tender, which was a high-capacity PT type. I then checked the water gauges and blew them out, and used the engineer's injector. Next I wet down the deck, boiler head, and coal pile, as we were to back westward out of Selkirk to South Schenectady to the WH interlocking. The next thing was to get the fire in shape and trying the stoker and water pump.

Harry came back up in the cab and tried the brake valve for leaks and got himself all set. He sent our flagman to a telephone to get permission to leave the terminal and also called the dispatcher in Utica to let him know what we had to do and where we were going.

We got the OK and moved up through the westbound advance yard, past the top-end yardmaster's office, and out the westbound lead to the home signal. When we hit the circuit, the signal lit up (green), so we were on our way.

We had orders not to exceed 35 mph because of work having been done on the 5421's bearings. It was about 17 miles to WH, all backing up tender-first. At WH, Harry shut off the throttle and we coasted to a stop just short of the single dwarf signal. We watched the crossover points move to line us up to the cut-off line that would take us to Tower 7 on the passenger main line just east of Schenectady. The dwarf turned green, and away we went at 15 mph to Tower 7. We were now running engine-first.

At Tower 7, even though we had the signal for the main, Harry came to an easy stop and went down to inspect the engine for hot journals. We were not on any passenger trains' time, but the flagman went to the tower anyway to let him know what was happening.

JOHN P. AHRENS

New York Central class J-3a Hudson 5421, the very engine author Williams rode down West Albany Hill (though with a larger PT tender), rolls east at Camelot, N.Y., on June 2, 1940, with train 38, the *Missourian*.

In a short time we were once again on our way, eastbound on Track 2 to Albany. Harry had found no hot journals, so he raised our speed to around 40 mph. It was a nice fall afternoon, sunny and crisp with that special fall smell in the air. We covered the 12 or so miles from Tower 8 to just west of the West Albany locomotive shops. This is where the grade started down toward Hudson River level at Albany and Rensselaer. The line starts gradually downhill, so Harry shut the throttle off and coasted.

As we came near Tower 3 at the top of the 1.63 percent grade, we were rapidly picking up speed, so Harry applied the independent brake. It soon became apparent that the brakes were not slowing us down, nor even maintaining our 40 mph. Our speed was increasing . . . sharply!

We had about 3.5 miles to the interlocking at Livingston Avenue in Albany. Harry hollered over to me and told me to open the cocks on the top of the valve chambers. I grabbed a packing hook and climbed out the cab window and along the narrow metal ledge of the cab and then up onto the running board. It was a windy, wobbly trip to the front of the locomotive and around the smokebox to the valve on the engineer's side. I got to the steps up to the other running board and hung on for dear life as I tried opening the steam cock. I finally got it pried up with the packing hook and then turned back to the other side. I got the other cock opened, then climbed back up onto the running board.

The flagman must have told Harry that I was coming back, for behind me, steam was really coming out the valve cocks and also the cylinder cocks. We were really rolling now, and that engine's weight, together with the fully loaded PT tender, was difficult to hold back.

Once I was back in the cab, I saw that Harry had dumped the air and now had reversed the reverse wheel to just past center position and had the throttle notched out. We could feel that take hold in jerky motions.

What we had ahead of us was not good. At Livingston Avenue there was an interlocking plant and also two bridges over the street. We were on Track 2. Tracks 1 and 2 went through the right-hand bridge going eastbound into the Albany passenger station. The left-hand bridge angled away to the left from the other bridge at about 10 degrees; this was for Tracks 3 and 4, which went around a sharp curve to line up for the freight-route bridge across the Hudson River to Rensselaer (today, it is the only rail bridge in use). The tracks then went around another sharp curve to the right, paralleling the river. Harry was straining that poor engine's parts to the max, and by the time we went by the automatic signal at Tivoli Hollow, we were back down to 40 mph.

Harry backed the reverse wheel another notch or two and had the sand running and also notched the throttle out some more. It was either blow the cylinder heads out by trying to slow up more, or face the distinct possibility that we'd derail crossing over to Track 4 or tipping over on the sharp curve to the bridge.

TWO PHOTOS, W. J. ERICKSON

Fighting the 1.63 percent of West Albany Hill on a chilly January 1944 morning is new Lima L-4b 4-8-2 Mohawk 3140 with the *Empire State Express* for Cleveland and Detroit.

We came around the last curve before the home signal at the head of the interlocking. We had the signal, a green on the bottom for the 15-mph crossover. Harry now had the engine down to about 28 mph, and we truly bounced through that interlocking, first leaning to one side and then the other, the flanges screaming and the tender rolling and rocking.

We somehow made it around that curve and were looking down at Livingston Avenue from about 30 feet above. We had the signal onto the bridge, which was restricted to 20 mph across it, although we were still doing about 26. We went by the Cabin D tower and around the other sharp curve and finally onto flat ground to Tower 99, still moving about 22 or 23 mph. Fortunately, we had a yellow on the dwarf signal. We got through the diamond, the intersection of the track coming from the Albany depot and the southerly passenger river bridge. We had to travel about a half mile or so to Tower 98, where we were lined to cross over to the lead that went north back to the roundhouse. Miraculously, Harry finally got the engine stopped below the tower.

I got down on the ground and chained two wheels. Then Harry, the flagman, and I walked around to see what had happened. We found every brake piston to be out the proper amount of piston travel. The problem turned out to be that there were no brakeshoes in contact with any of the wheels, except the leading four pilot wheels. The brake pistons were not hooked up to any of the brake riggings, which of course were underneath the trucks and driving boxes. Harry and the flagman walked to Tower 98, while I returned to the cab to stay with the engine.

While Harry phoned the roundhouse from the tower, I removed the federal cab card from its frame and put it in the pocket of my overalls.

When Harry returned, he told me that the Rensselaer roundhouse foreman, upon hearing of our trip down the hill, decided to have the crew on duty at the roundhouse bring a switch engine down to us and tow us back to the roundhouse. I gave the cab card—which had been signed by the airbrake inspector at Selkirk—to Harry. These cards had an uncanny habit of disappearing in some circumstances. In the event of an inquiry, we needed any evidence we could find to help us.

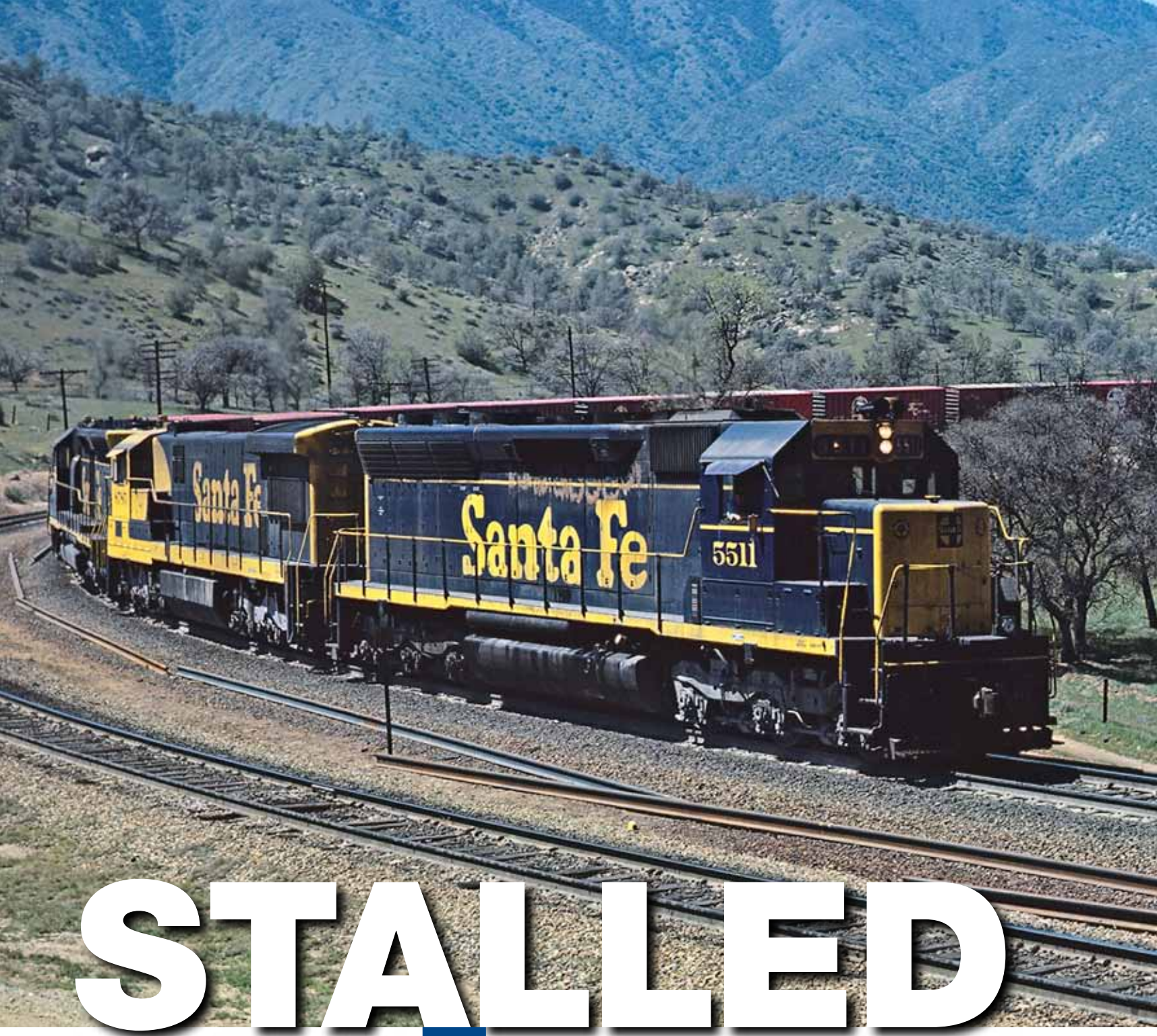
By the time we reached the roundhouse and arrived at the foreman's office, a considerable number of interested men had gathered, including a trainmaster, the chief road foreman of engines, the airbrake inspector from Rensselaer, and several others whom I did not recognize.

Eventually, after we told our story and the engine had been inspected, most of these men were convinced, even though Harry had missed seeing the slack brakeshoes, that Harry and I were in the clear . . . especially after Harry presented the cab card!

We were told we could sign off duty for the day and were OK to mark back up on our respective extra lists for future work. The 5421, of course, did not go out on train 155 that night, as the mechanical forces had a lot of inspection work to do and also take care of the brake rigging. I never heard anything more about our trip.

We were fortunate not to have had the engine tip over, which could have been a disaster for the three of us.

I have often thought of how Harry handled the situation that day in 1949, and think the company owed him at least a tip of the hat for being so resourceful and innovative. He was a true engineer and a real hero. A lesser man might well have decided to jump off that locomotive and let it roll on, uncontrolled.



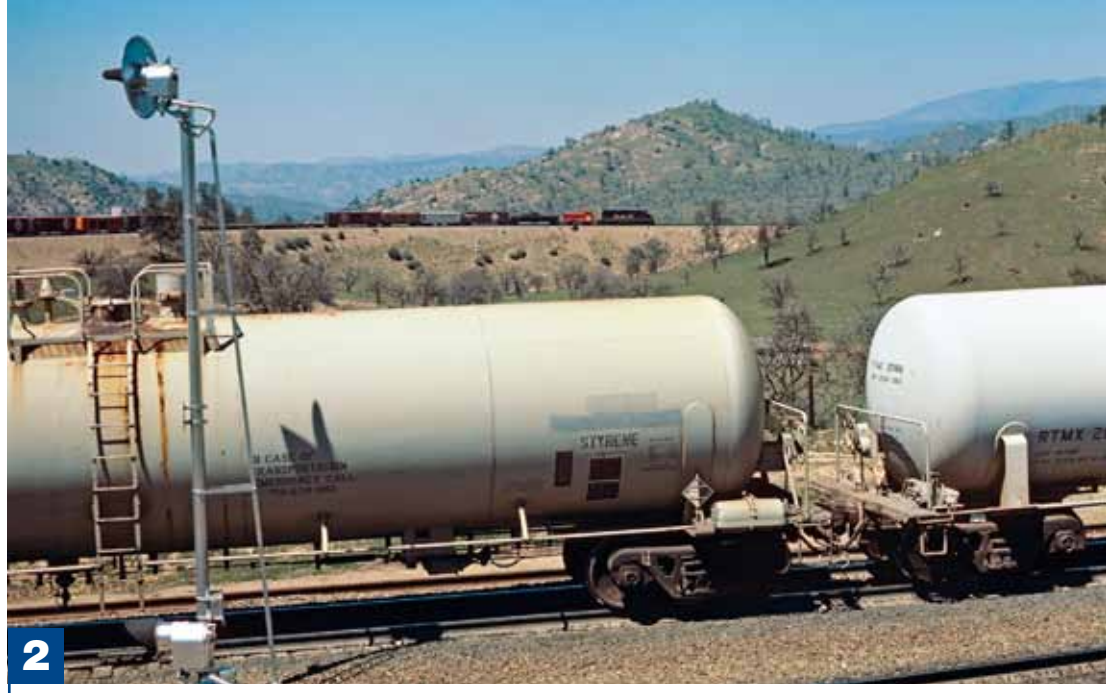
STALLED on the Loop

No “doubling the hill” on Tehachapi

BY **DOUG HARROP** • PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

1

It's the afternoon of April 7, 1977. The author, having resigned his SP officer's position to return to Utah to enter SP engine service, is visiting the Tehachapi Loop area one more time . . . and is promptly treated to a stalled train. It's Santa Fe Extra 5511 East, a boxcar train creeping unusually slowly up the main line along Walong siding at the Loop.



2

The train is led by SD45 5511, with a GE U33C, another SD45, and two GP35's trailing —but at least one unit is having trouble. Visible above the tank cars as the train makes an abortive attempt to depart Walong is the helper, SD45 5506, behind the caboose.

The harvest season was just getting started when I arrived in Bakersfield, Calif., in early 1968. I was a green and freshly minted Southern Pacific operating officer, having just graduated from the company's management training program. I would be an assistant trainmaster, the bottom rung on the authority ladder. I would answer to Larry Dubois, a trainmaster who didn't care much for green new help, though he always treated me OK.

My assignment would be to oversee the loading of perishables—potatoes, grapes, melons, onions, carrots, etc.—at the many large produce sheds that lined the SP main track in the Central Valley between Bakersfield and Tipton, about halfway to Fresno. Things would get pretty hectic as the season progressed, but first I would be taught the nuts and bolts of railroading.

My principal mentor turned out to be a road foreman of engines, Everett Lemaster, at Bakersfield. He would begin the training that would prepare me to one day (presumably) be promoted to trainmaster. He being a former locomotive engineer, my training would be heavily weighted toward that craft. Neither of us could have possibly known that in less then 10 years I would become an engineer myself. I am sure that is not what SP had in mind for its management trainees.

Night after night, after a long day's work around Bakersfield and up the Valley main line, Everett would take me "testing" up on the Mountain District. That, of course, was Tehachapi Pass, the storied grade over the mountains that separate the San Joaquin Valley and the Mojave Desert from the Los Angeles Basin. The railroad there, owned by Southern Pacific but also used by the Santa Fe, was mostly single track under Centralized Traffic Control, with maximum grades of 2.52 percent eastbound (toward L.A.) and 2.3 percent westbound.

Then as now, it was almost all twisting mountainous territory for the 63 miles from Bakersfield to Mojave, with the eastbound grade stiffening at Caliente, 22 miles out of Bakersfield. Ten-degree curves are frequent, and there is little tangent track. I found the traffic to be incredibly heavy as Santa Fe—which operated on trackage rights, dating from 1899, between Kern Junction (Bakersfield) and East Mojave (foot of the westbound grade)—added its considerable Valley and San Francisco Bay traffic into the mix. Surprisingly, to me at least, Santa Fe ran as many trains as SP, and often more. Years before, a fellow railfan told me that Tehachapi was a "must-see" place, so I visited the area in 1964 and '65 while on break between college semesters. He was right—it was an incredible railroad theater. Now I was back again as an employee, doing efficiency tests of train crews on the mountain.

LYING IN THE WEEDS

The testing was a means to keep crews "on their toes" and also a way to measure operating rules compliance and knowledge. Everett approached testing in a pretty orthodox manner, no gimmicks, just keep it simple. He mostly parked us out of sight at Caliente or Bealville and checked to see if the engineers blew their whistle

3

ATSF Extra 5511 East, having stalled trying to leave Walong, has backed down between the siding switches. Its cars are visible on the fill above Tunnel 9 as the head end of SP Extra 9218 East emerges from the bore. This "monster" will run through Walong siding.

4

In another view from the bluff above the Loop, the four lead units of SP Extra 9218 East pass the stalled Santa Fe train, which holds the main. Visible at right in the photo is the SP train's U33C pusher—a circumstance possible only at this curve-laden location.

and rang the bell for the required one-quarter mile and all the way over the crossing. He wasn't looking for failures, but there would always be a few.

Another favorite test was holding a red absolute signal while working in conjunction with the dispatcher in Bakersfield. When red, absolute ("A") signals, found mainly at the ends of controlled sidings in CTC territory, cannot be passed without authority from the dispatcher, and then only after applying appropriate rules. Tucked out of sight ("in the weeds," as it was called), we would watch to see if the brakeman, down at the switch, and the engineer applied the rules. Moving forward, the engineer would be running at Restricted Speed, prepared to stop short of any obstruction that, presumably, was causing the signal to be red in the first place. Sometimes officers would place themselves around a curve or in a cut and would crack a fusee, give a stop signal, and hope for the best.

Everett did this one night, a year before I arrived, to a heavy downhill train. The engineer, fearful of not getting stopped in time, used too much air and went into emergency, breaking two knuckles, one of which was inside a tunnel. Thanks to Ev's test, traffic became backed up over the entire district that night. Ev told me ruefully that he never did that test again, add-

ing that for one week he had to eat his meals while standing up, off the fireplace mantel. He couldn't sit down, figuratively, because higher-up officers routinely took bites out of subordinate officers' posteriors when things went wrong.

The point of Ev's story was to teach me that, up on the mountain, you did nothing that would interrupt the flow of traffic, or even worse, cause a train to stall on the grade. Getting away from the follies of testing, he spent hours talking about how a good engineer would plan ahead to prevent stalls. If a diesel unit was giving trouble before starting up the grade, get it fixed or find another one from some other train. He taught me how to repair units on the road, using duct tape, fusees, flag sticks—whatever was available—to keep them running to the top of the hill. Later on, after I became an engineer, I often praised his name as I worked to keep units running on my own mountainous portion of the SP, in northeastern Nevada.

Stalls on Tehachapi were actually fairly common, but they were not a major problem. The trains that did stall rarely had to "double" the hill, as there was almost always another train or light engine in the vicinity to lend a hand. On occasion, while testing, we would offer to help coordinate getting a stalled train moving again. Learning how stalled trains were handled by all involved was very educational. Doing it efficiently was necessary because of the heavy traffic on the mountain. I also began to think that stalled trains were really no big deal.

ENJOYING THE LOOP OFF-DUTY

One night Everett took me up to visit the crown jewel of the mountain, the amazing Tehachapi Loop. Here the railroad was designed and built to gain maximum elevation by winding back and forth before making a complete circle. An upbound train leaving Woodford, first siding west of the Loop, would travel up a stretch of somewhat tangent track, then swing to the right around a horseshoe curve, then start curving left for 580 degrees—one and one-half complete circles, broken only by a short tangent where the line crossed above itself—before finally curving right again.

That night, we parked just above the east switch at Walong. I told Everett I had visited here before, but he continued talking about the Loop as though I had not seen it before. Soon we heard a train coming up out of Woodford. We were able to trace, by its sound and headlight glow, the train's movement through four distinct levels before it went thrashing by us. It was a Santa Fe headed by four Alco RSD15 "Alligators" with three SD24's helping from mid-train. Its passage was a memorable experience, and I marveled that I was being paid to sit there and take it all in.

5

SP 9218 East has additional help mid-train, three U33C's, and they are perfectly positioned for the author to capture this photo, showing the lead units passing alongside 5511 East above Tunnel 9 as the mid-train GE's emerge from the upgrade portal.

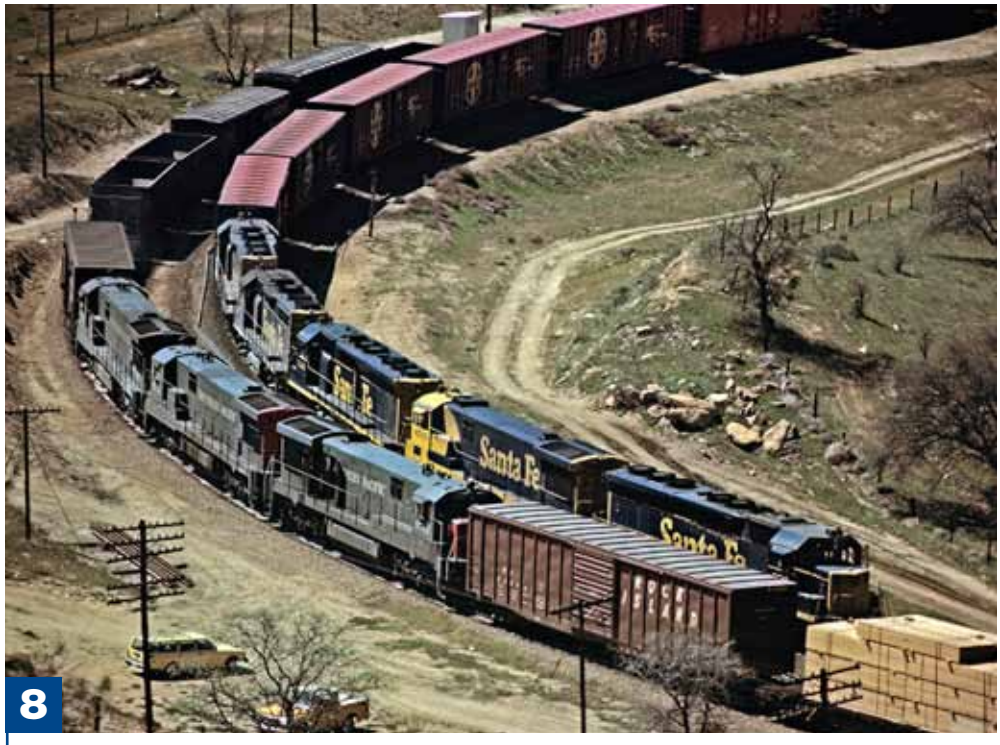
6

The two giant Western railroads' primary road diesel models of the era are on full display below the photographer as SP 9218 East's head end passes the units leading ATSF 5511 East: EMD SD45's, SD45T-2's (and two GP35's thrown in), plus GE U33C's.

I took no railroad photos on Tehachapi in 1968. Back then, being a railfan and an SP officer was an iffy situation. No one knew if it was acceptable or not. In general, employees who were fans out on the road were frowned upon. Nevertheless, as I worked my way up the corporate ladder over the next 10 years, when assignments sometimes took me back to or through Bakersfield, I went up on the mountain whenever possible to do a little photography after the day's work was completed. I encountered a fair share of stalled trains during those times, and crews would just sit back and wait for help, which made for

7

The rear-end helpers are briefly together in the photographer's telephoto lens as the rear of the SP "monster lumber hauler," going through Walong siding, overtakes its stalled counterpart. Soon the Santa Fe helper will cut off and head down to Bakersfield.



8

If you've been to Tehachapi, you know the cacophony created on the Loop, with squealing wheel flanges mingling with the sounds of GE's and EMD's hard at work.

good photo opportunities. One day in April 1972, a Santa Fe train, again headed by four RSD15's, bogged down at Bealville just as a light helper set was going down the siding. The dispatcher directed the eastbound to get help from the light engines, and the crews didn't mind my taking pictures. The brakeman even admitted they could have made it, but getting a helper would expedite the trip to the top, and the helper crew liked the idea because it meant more pay for them.

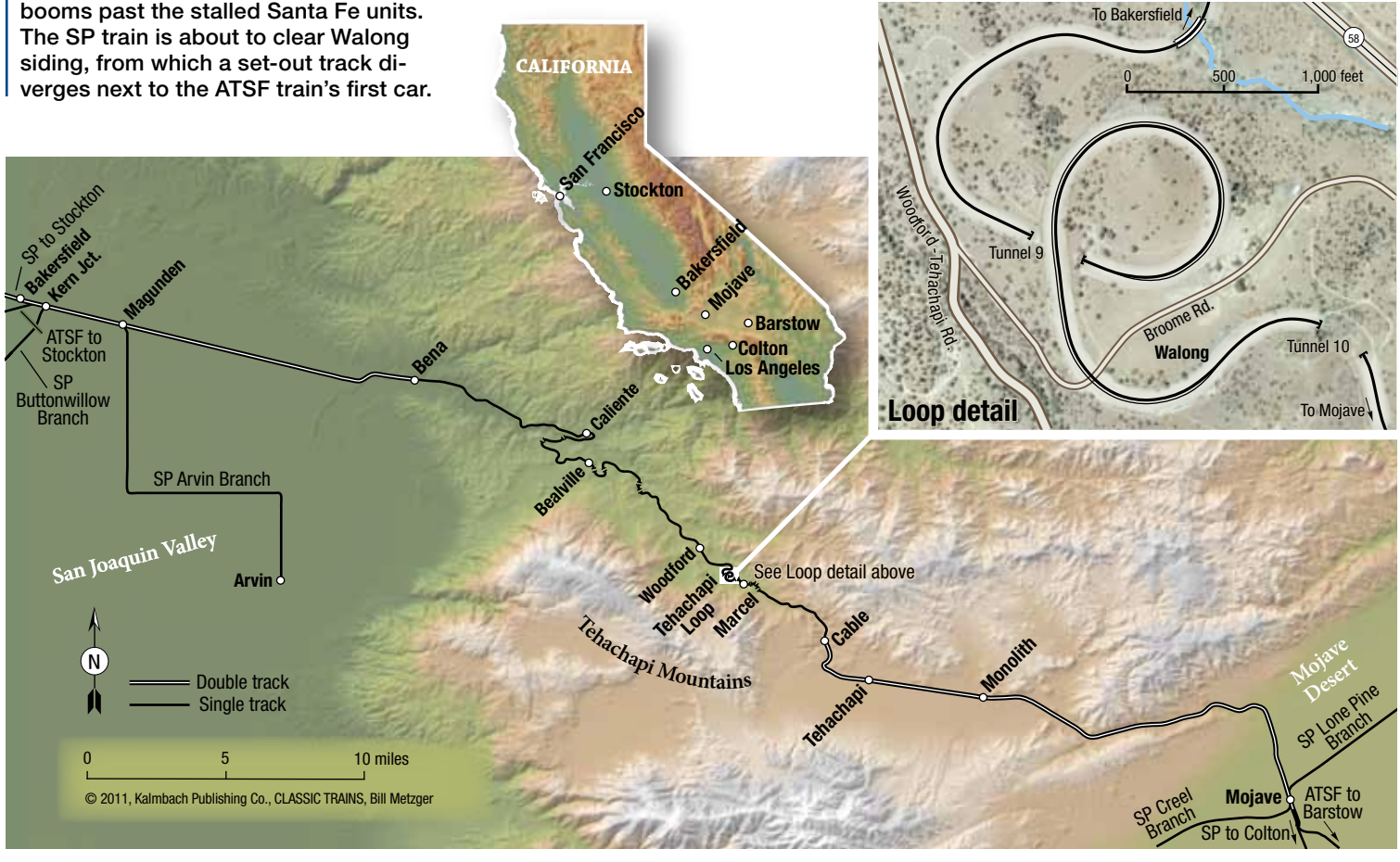
A STALL FOR MY FAREWELL

I resigned as an SP officer in 1977 to return to Utah and, as mentioned before, enter engine service. Before leaving California, I took some vacation time to make one more trip to Tehachapi for some final photography on this great stage for mountain railroading. As if on cue, the railroad provided a splendid opportunity with a stalled train right on the Loop at Walong siding. Again it was a Santa Fe train that could not make the grade.

The episode started innocently enough. An eastbound boxcar train was coming up around the Loop at a painfully slow pace. "Why doesn't he just come up to the signal and stop?" I wondered. Surely a meet is to happen here. Soon a westbound Santa Fe popped out of Tunnel 10 and headed into the siding. Once that train cleared, I ex-

9

Finally, the SP train's rear-end helper booms past the stalled Santa Fe units. The SP train is about to clear Walong siding, from which a set-out track diverges next to the ATSF train's first car.



10

Next to pass is a hot eastbound Santa Fe piggyback train with a nice mixed consist up front of an SD45, U33C, SD40, and SD26 (a rebuilt SD24). Once he is clear, the dispatcher finds help for Santa Fe 5511 East . . . in the form of a westbound SP local!

11

The local, with two U33C's and an SD39, passes. He will leave his cars in the siding and couple onto the Santa Fe's caboose.

12

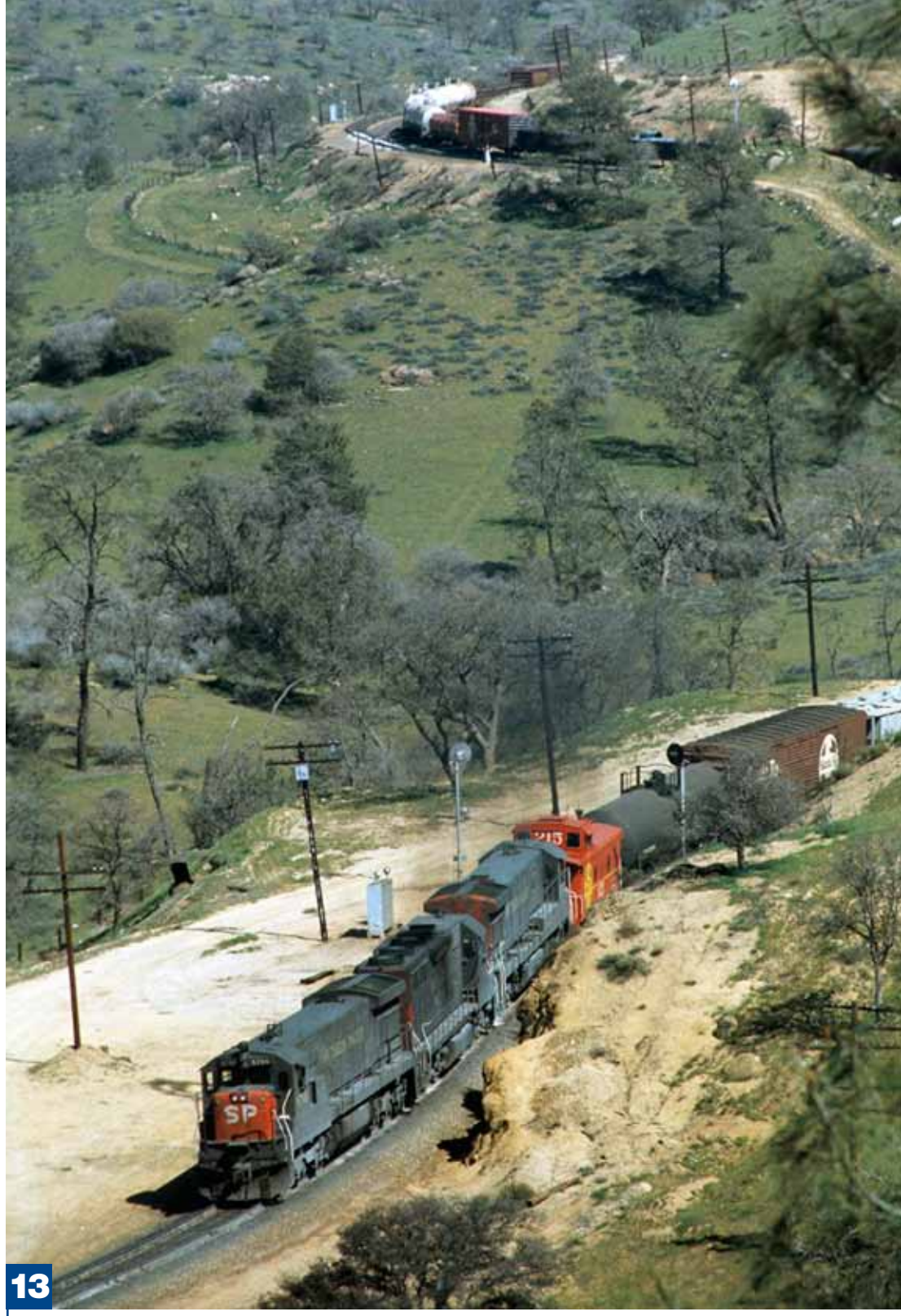
Passing his own train's cars in Walong siding, the Monolith–Bakersfield local's power is beginning the push on Santa Fe 5511 East, whose front-end power heads for Tunnel 10. Highway 58 lies beyond, while railfans enjoy the show in the foreground.

pected the eastbound, still moving, to open the throttle and charge up the grade. However, when his head end reached the east switch where I was located, he was already opened up . . . but barely moving. Engine trouble for sure, I thought.

Given his locomotive problems, I was surprised when the engineer took the green signal and continued east over the switch. At this speed, if the fireman trying to re-start the engine in the third unit did not succeed, the other units will soon be frying their traction motors. The engineer wisely decided not to enter Tunnel 10—a bad place to stall—and brought the train to a stop. He then—slowly and with a good set on the air brakes—backed down to get in the clear between the Walong siding switches.

Now what? The brakeman informed me the dispatcher would find them some help, but first he had to run some trains. I scampered up the mountain for a bird's-eye view of the show that was to follow. And what a show it was—one of the best I've ever witnessed as a rail photographer.

First the dispatcher brought a train up from Woodford, a "monster" Southern Pacific lumber hauler equipped with two sets of helpers, and ran him through the siding. I would have preferred a true monster—12,000 tons with two sets of in-train helpers and a helper behind the caboose—but I wasn't complaining. Next was an eastbound Santa Fe piggyback hotshot. Then the dispatcher brought an SP local down from Marcel siding, 2.3 miles to the east. Its crew tied their train down in Walong siding, cut off the power (three big six-axle units), and placed them behind the caboose of the stalled train (whose single



13

This show at the Loop is about over as the SP local's units push Santa Fe 5511 East toward the town of Tehachapi. For the author, it was a memorable farewell to California.

Santa Fe SD45 pusher had returned to Bakersfield). After an air test, up the hill they went. It was the only time I witnessed an SP helper pushing a Santa Fe train.

As I left the hill that afternoon, I thought of how many times I'd said "Hooray!" or "Wow!" as I was firing off nearly two rolls of film. Back in my car, waiting for my heart rate to return to normal, I thought again, "Hey, getting a stalled train up the hill wasn't going to be too tough." True enough—*if* there are other trains in the vicinity. But in the light-traffic SP district out in the mountainous desert of northeastern Nevada, where I soon would be working, it was rarely that easy.

ON THE JOB

Lewis Hine's PRR men

THREE PHOTOS, LEWIS W. HINE, NATIONAL ARCHIVES, COURTESY CENTER FOR RAILROAD PHOTOGRAPHY AND ART

Lewis W. Hine (1874–1940) made a career of photographing workers, from sweatshop children in the early 1900s to Red Cross teams in World War I Europe to ironworkers creating the Empire State Building. Springing from the Progressive Era of social enlightenment, his iconic portraits also have come to be recognized as landmarks of photographic art. Hine launched a series of worker images for *Survey* magazine in 1921 with pictures of railroaders, including the two Pennsylvania employees on this page: Edward Reynolds, a locomotive engineer at Rahway, N.J., and "Jo," a trackwalker outside the Hudson River tunnels in New Jersey. The photo at left, titled *Power House Mechanic Working on a Steam Pump* and published later in 1921, shows an unnamed worker at PRR's power plant south of Penn Station, New York. Hine won his only top award from the New York Art Directors Club in 1924 for the photo of Reynolds; it was submitted to the club by Ivy Lee, a PRR public relations consultant, an indication of Hine's involvement with the road, which also used it on dining-car menus. Hine did not embrace the soft-focus, impressionist photographic style popular at the time, but curators today put the same kind of premiums on Hine's work as they do on his soft-focus contemporaries.—*John Gruber*

Working for the PULLMAN COMPANY

Discipline, frugality, and principle—Pullman in the 1940s from an office employee's perspective

BY **CASEY HAYES**

The date was August 23, 1945, and the site was room 206 in Denver Union Station, when I became employed by the Pullman Company as a Temporary Office Messenger. The monthly salary of $101.60 included 4 hours each Saturday for a 44-hour work week. I was a 17-year-old kid from Iowa, pimply faced, asthmatic, and underweight, and I was grateful for the extra 4 hours. I was living in a boarding house for $40 per month, which included two meals for six days. Sunday meals were not included, so I budgeted money for candy bars.

One of my duties was to open all mail and deliver it to the District Superintendent, a stern, no-nonsense man of German heritage in his mid-50s. He would read all the mail and initial it for me to give to various assistants for action.

The Pullman Company had rules and regulations for just about every occasion. One I remember was that the word "employee" was to be spelled with one "e" on the end. Wording was sometimes strange or old-fashioned. For example, if you were taken to task for untruthfulness, the verbiage "failure to confine himself to the facts" would apply. If a letter of correspondence was to be folded to fit a small envelope, the bottom edge was not to meet the top—the half-inch of space made it easier to unfold. All desk drawers and file cabinets had to be immediately closed after retrieving an item. For its porters on the trains, the company furnished one cheap brown pencil with no eraser to each man. I was instructed to give only one, but often I would give two; I liked to think I helped further the school education of some deserving porter's child.

The District Superintendent was sent from the St. Louis Zone to clean up the Denver office, to eliminate some undesirable or incompetent employees. One woman, who wore cowboy boots, a plaid skirt, and a blouse with a neckerchief and hat, was one of the first to go—her western attire was anathema to his eastern tastes. One of his strategies was to summon the employee to his office, review his or her work record, and if he thought dismissal was warranted, to humiliate, belittle, and speak disparagingly of the employee's race, mental competency, or ancestry. Usually the employee would get angry and resign, which is what he wanted. If you resigned, you did not receive unemployment benefits, but if you were discharged, you were entitled to benefits.

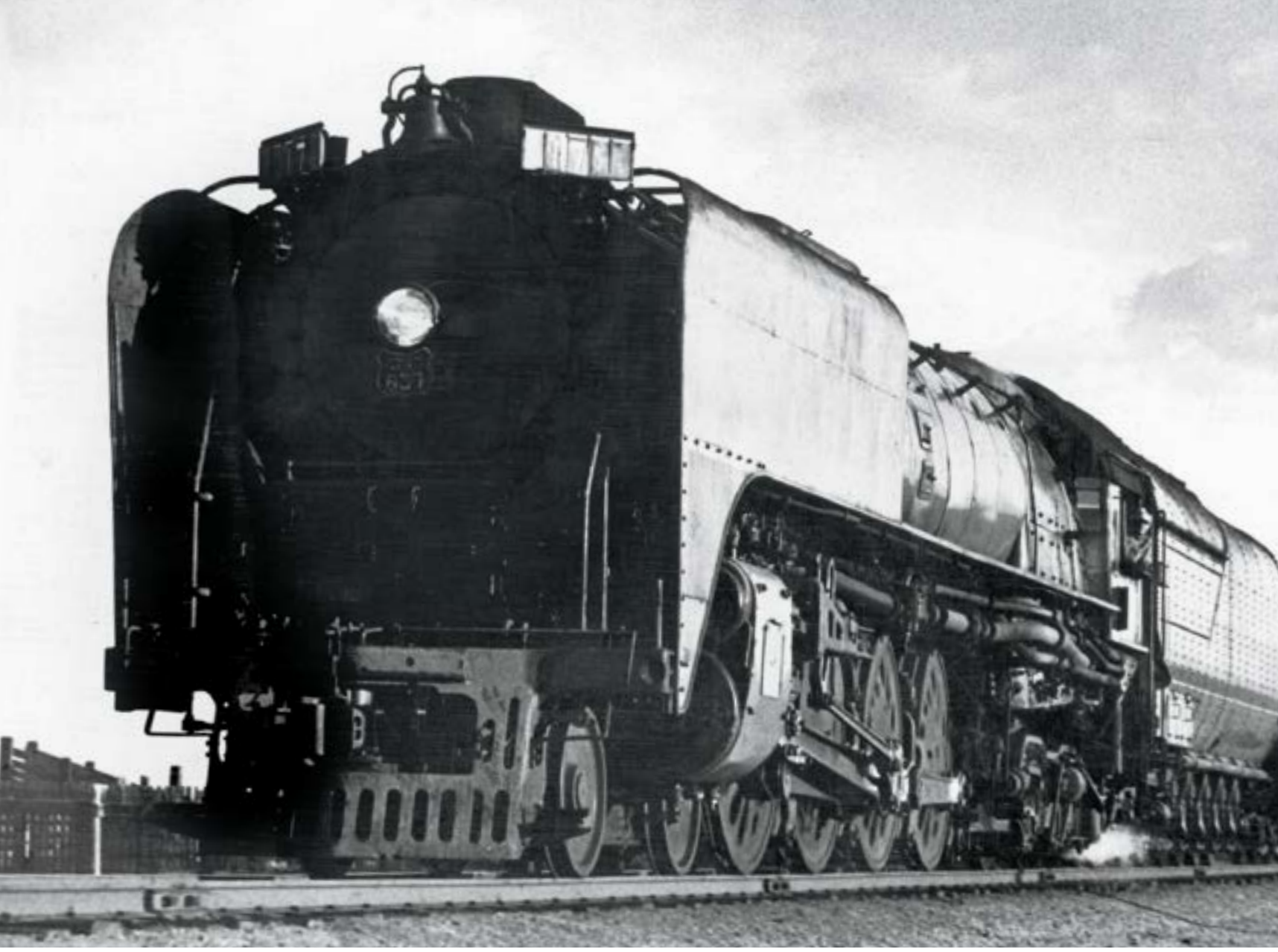
I recall much correspondence from a Traveling Auditor who was checking the receipts of a ticket agent in Colorado Springs. It was in August, and the agent toiled in a hot, non-air-conditioned office. He decided to buy a cool lemonade from the station's lunch counter, which cost 10 cents. He showed the amount on his expense account, and letters flowed back and forth concerning his indiscretion.

It's almost an understatement to say the Pullman Company was operated in a most prudent financial manner. It had a telegraph code book that allowed messages to be sent secretly with a brevity of words. "Bluff Porter Jones St. Louis" meant that a

HAROLD EDMONSON

JOSEPH SCHICK

Denver Union Station was a busy place, often full of military personnel, in the mid-1940s when the author worked out of a Pullman office on the second floor, from whose balcony he looked down onto the waiting room. Two decades later (above) only some details had changed, and in fact the interior remains essentially the same today. Just before World War II, a Denver & Rio Grande Western 4-8-4 (left) occupies a platform track in a view looking east from the 18th Street viaduct.



porter named Jones was, on arrival, to be deadheaded to St. Louis at his own cost, sometimes for a company inquiry, but also sometimes for a family emergency. Occasionally a man in this circumstance would be allowed to work back home.

To save postal charges, Pullman conductors were required to carry company mail. For example, on Union Pacific train 17, the *Portland Rose*, our conductor would carry Pullman mail for Cheyenne, Salt Lake City, Pocatello, and Portland. One of my duties was to deliver this mail to the conductor. The railroads had lineside telegraph wires, and some railroads had telephone service on the same poles. If we wanted to talk to our office in Los Angeles, we would call the Santa Fe passenger agent in Denver, use its phone wires to L.A., and then be connected to our office there, at no cost to Pullman.

Conductors and porters were not allowed to grow facial hair, and hair on the head was to be neatly combed and sufficiently short. Office employees were not allowed to wear beards. A common expression was, "If you can work for the Pullman Company and Standard Oil, you can work for anyone." In fairness, if you performed your duties in a professional and courteous manner, no vindictiveness was shown. Pullman believed in promoting from its own ranks, and in time, I became a Steno-Clerk No. 3.

Pullman had rules and regulations for every occasion, but if you were professional and courteous in your work, the company was fair.

Pullman employed confidential agents who would ride the trains and evaluate the service. The windows on the older heavyweight cars had a tendency to leak dust, and the agents checked windowsills to see if the porter was performing his assigned task of keeping them clean. To test honesty, the agent would leave a dime or quarter on a seat cushion or at another obvious place for the porter to find and return to the passenger. Most of the agents' evaluations were complimentary, and their reports were forwarded to the District Superintendent. Porters and conductors were called in for reviews, and a note was placed in their personnel file.

Temptations occurred, whether "staged" or not. One conductor told me of an incident in which he believed a confidential agent was involved. He rang the bell of a bedroom and asked the woman passenger for her ticket. She was sitting on the edge of the berth clad only in an underskirt.

RALPH E. HALLOCK

Union Pacific 17, the *Portland Rose*, whose eight cars are in the charge of 4-8-4 837 in April 1947, is doing 80 mph in Brighton, Colo., not far out of Denver on its run to the Pacific Northwest. As on many trains, the Pullman conductor on the *Rose* was required to carry company mail—it was cheaper than using the Post Office.

JOSEPH SCHICK

Pullman, like the railroads, abided by the various state laws, some of which were "ridiculous," according to the author. Thus on Rock Island's *Rocky Mountain Rocket*, departing Denver in 1940 behind brand-new E6 627, one could not purchase alcoholic beverages in Kansas, which was "dry." The train will ride Union Pacific rails as far as Limon, Colo.

L. O. MERRILL

Reflective of the times, a Texas law forbade selling a lower berth to a white female if a black male occupied the upper. So, on the *Texas Zephyr*—shown leaving Denver in May 1947 on CB&Q's Colorado & Southern, bound for Dallas—a woman Pullman passenger was denied the only open accommodation on board—the berth below the porter's.

While searching for her ticket she remarked that her underskirt was on backwards and proceeded to take it off and put it back on. A porter spoke of a woman in an upper berth complaining about the berth light being inoperative. He got the upper-berth ladder and had to reach across her nearly nude body to turn on the berth light—which worked perfectly.

Pullman complied with state laws, which at times seemed ridiculous. Liquor sales laws were a prime example. On the Rock Island's *Rocky Mountain Rocket*, which ran between Denver and Chicago, alcoholic beverages could be sold in the lounge car in Colorado, but upon entering Kansas, sales had to cease, since Kansas was "dry." Further east, the *Rocket* ran through Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois, each with different regulations. Some states required liquor establishments to be closed on election days. It was most difficult to explain to a thirsty passenger why the lounge was closed because of a local school board or city council election.

I recall a letter written by a woman who boarded the Burlington Route's *Texas Zephyr* in Texas, en route to Denver. There was only one empty berth on the train, a lower in a section. Our conductor refused to sell it to her, and she demanded to know why. We had to tactfully explain that the porter was allowed 4 hours rest in a 24-hour period, and that his berth was the upper in that same section. In that era, Texas law said that no white female could occupy a lower berth if a black male occupied the upper berth!

Porters were paid 40 cents per hour, the minimum wage, and Pullman conductors 50 cents per hour. If a porter with high seniority could hold a run on a streamliner

RICHARD H. KINDIG

Rio Grande's *Exposition Flyer* heads out of Denver behind 4-8-4 1804 on a winter 1940 morning. Finally with some time off, the author rode this train out to Salt Lake City and saw some of Colorado's spectacular mountain scenery for the first time. The train was a through Chicago–Oakland service via the Burlington Route and Western Pacific.

RICHARD H. KINDIG

RICHARD H. KINDIG

The author's favorite train was CB&Q's *Denver Zephyr*, inaugurated in 1936 and sporting a shovel-nose diesel up front and a round-end observation car (left) on the rear. Photographer Kindig was on hand for the first run (above), with Electro-Motive Corp. locomotive 9906 on the point.

like Union Pacific's *City of Denver* or Santa Fe's all-room *Super Chief*, he would earn more in tips than in wages. A conductor could sell "no-show" space or other vacancies, on the spot, and often he was rewarded with a handsome tip for doing so.

Trains carrying only a single sleeping car were staffed by a Porter in Charge, *i.e.*, there was no Pullman conductor on board. One such train was Rio Grande 19, the *Mountaineer*, with a Pullman from Denver to Grand Junction. The employee would be given additional training and an increased wage, and he was allowed to collect tickets.

Just like their railroad-employed counterparts, each Pullman conductor received a punch to validate tickets, and each punch mark was unique. For our conductors, the Pullman accounting office in Chicago could tell which conductor or Porter in Charge punched the ticket by his punch mark. This, of course, served as a check against any mishandling of tickets. Further, the count of soiled linen would indicate if any passengers had been carried without a ticket.

It seems in any group of employees, there is always one or two who have studied the book of rules and have familiarized themselves with the union contract. They enjoy taunting the company by working right up against the line of discharge. We had a porter who had become curt in his mannerisms, argumentative concerning regulations, and plain difficult to work with. He had been brought to the office and warned that he must change his ways, but he continued to do his work begrudgingly, and his demeanor was obstructive. The District Superintendent decided he had to go.

Two Assistant Superintendents, one acting as a witness, instructed him to install the temporary rain gutters over the vestibule (they were standard items carried on a car). He looked up to the sky, and not seeing any clouds or indication of rain, replied that he thought the rain gutters were not necessary. He was again asked to install the rain gutter, and he refused. Now they had him, on insubordination. He was immediately held out of service, and a porter who was on stand-by relieved him. In due time an investigation was held; the man was properly represented, but he was discharged.

About three months later, I saw him in the hallway. He had just asked the Superintendent to reinstate him. He had missed the company of his friends and co-workers. His unemployment compensation had run out, he was facing financial hardships, and he had recognized the folly of his ways and asked forgiveness. With tears in his eyes, he spoke of having found God and the teachings of Jesus . . . but the Superintendent had said "No." He later took a train to Chicago, where he spoke with the vice president of industrial relations, literally begging for his old job. He was in his mid-50s, with a minimum of education, and being a porter was the only way he knew how to make a living. Being deeply religious, he was repentant for his ways . . . but the vice president also said "No." Even today I wonder about that man's fate.

Porters would bring to our office luggage or parcels that had been left in a berth or a room. It was my job to inventory the contents of each item and make a written record in case the passenger claimed anything was stolen. On one occasion I found a woman's diamond ring. I asked the supervisor for a valuation and was told to take it to a jeweler, who appraised it for $4,500. Our office called the owner and packaged the ring, and I took it to Railway Express Agency for shipment. I had a sense of pride in being entrusted with such a valuable object.

RICHARD H. KINDIG

CLASSIC TRAINS COLLECTION

Santa Fe's Denver trains connected with mainliners at La Junta, Colo., where soldiers gathered during a layover (right). The road was a favorite of entertainment stars, and one morning the author photographed Ginger Rogers . . . almost. On July 6, 1946 (above), Pacific 1363 and Northern 3764 left Denver with train 130.

Denver Union Station, like most big terminals in the immediate postwar era, was a beehive of activity. I would stand at our second-floor balcony looking down on the waiting room and see lines of people everywhere—waiting to be seated at the lunch counter, standing in line to buy a magazine or candy bar, or waiting for a telephone booth to open. The members of the military services had their own waiting room, and the Travelers Aid women were kept busy. To board trains, the military personnel would line up, since they had preference in boarding. Many a pretty girl would strike up a conversation with a soldier so she could obtain a seat on the train.

One day I was seated at the station's busy lunch counter, and my hot beef sandwich with mashed potatoes and gravy had just been served. An Army captain tapped me on the shoulder and said, "I'll take that." He had been in charge of a military troop train and had not eaten in 24 hours. He paid me for my dinner and also gave me a 50-cent tip!

After the war in May 1946, the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen voted to go on strike. They believed President Truman was sympathetic to their cause. However, "plain-spoken Harry" said there would be no strike and declared a national emergency. If the strike continued, the strikers would be inducted into the military. One day later, Truman settled the dispute with a 16-cent-per-hour pay increase, followed by an additional 2 cents. During this time, Military Police were everywhere to guard against sabotage and maintain order. I had a pass to allow me to be on the station platforms. As Pullman Company employees, we were not involved in the strike, but the company raised our wages an equal amount.

Not owning an automobile, I availed myself of pass privileges, and to celebrate Independence Day, 1947, I took the Rio Grande's *Exposition Flyer* west to Salt Lake City. En route, I saw for the first time Gore Canyon, which was accessible only by rail, as well as Glenwood Canyon and, on the way back, the Royal Gorge.

One time, we had advance information that Ginger Rogers was aboard the *Super Chief*, would change trains at La Junta, Colo., and arrive in Denver in the morning. About 150 people and press photographers were on hand for her arrival. After the train arrived, I walked forward two cars, boarded the train, and then walked back and took several pictures of the movie star. One can imagine how a photo attempt with 98-cent Baby Brownie camera with no flash in a dark vestibule turned out, however.

My favorite train was Burlington's stainless-steel *Denver Zephyr*, with its articulated cars and shovel-nose diesel locomotives. Engine crews did not like those engines, inasmuch as there was no buffer or protection in event of a collision. The train carried five sleepers, one of which had a shower, which was usually full of excess baggage.

As passenger traffic diminished after the war, my job was eliminated, and I became a stock keeper in the Stores Department. By summer 1948, there was another force reduction, and Pullman let me go. Later I became a switchman for the Rio Grande, but that is another story.

I am now 82 years old and hope some of these remembrances will provide a viewpoint on how things were in day-to-day postwar passenger railroading. I am grateful for the office training I had, and the exposure to men and women of good character who helped mold my future.

Jack Delano's wartime portraits

During World War II, as now, Chicago was America's "railroad capital" and that's why Jack Delano (1914–1997) spent part of 1942–43 there photographing railroaders for the U.S. Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information [see "Kodachrome on the Home Front," Railroads and World War II, 2008]. He also photographed other Midwest spots and traveled west on the Santa Fe. His assignment was to describe an industry crucial to the war effort, and bolster homefront patriotism. Of all the photos made by FSA/OWI's remarkable team in the 1930s and '40s, none illuminate the lives of industrial workers more than Delano's. Charles Sawer (left), a Union Station gateman, had worked there for many years. A native of Poland, he served as an interpreter in German, Polish, Slovakian, Spanish, and Yiddish. Frank Williams (below), a freight-car repairman at an Illinois Central yard, came to Chicago on the IC from Pocahontas, Miss., in 1915; of his eight children, two were in the Army. The war reduced the ranks of men in the civilian workforce, and women stepped into traditionally male jobs. Dorothy Lucke (right) was such a woman, and her portrait is emblematic of the era. (FSA/OWI photographers pioneered in color work.) Lucke was an engine wiper—look at her stained right hand—at Chicago & North Western's Clinton, Iowa, shop. When servicemen returned, many women lost their jobs; Lucke went to work for Clinton Garment Co. for 25 years. In 2013, a Delano exhibit will appear at the Chicago History Museum.—*John Gruber*

THREE PHOTOS, JACK DELANO, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, COURTESY CENTER FOR RAILROAD PHOTOGRAPHY & ART

TITANIC decisions

A life of dispatching Rock Island trains was changing — heading south, then ending

BY **DAN SABIN**

I was raised in a railroad family in Manly, Iowa, a Rock Island division point 15 miles from the Minnesota border on what some folks called RI's "Mid-Continent line" from Minneapolis-St. Paul to Des Moines, Kansas City, and Oklahoma and Texas points (today the Twin Cities–K.C. portion is Union Pacific's "Spine Line"). Manly was also served by the Minneapolis & St. Louis and the Chicago Great Western, which went into the Chicago & North Western system in 1960 and 1968, respectively.

I almost literally lived at the Rock Island depot and spent most of my first 17 years riding trains of all three Manly railroads. I began my career at age 15 as a Rock Island student telegrapher at Manly, worked as a section laborer during the winter as a high-school junior, and as an operator through most of my senior year. At age 18, I became the youngest train dispatcher in the U.S. I dispatched the main line through Manly many times and enjoyed working when my father and brother Dave, who were engineers, would be running back-to-back southbound freights out of Inver Grove, Minn., RI's Twin Cities yard. My brother Mark would become a conductor on the C&NW, often working trains 1 and 2 or 19 and 20, former M&StL runs, between Marshalltown and Albert Lea, Minn., which ran on the joint, RI-dispatched CTC section between Manly and Curtis (in Albert Lea). Brother Duane was an RI signal maintainer at Short Line Junction in Des Moines and handled the CTC board in the dispatchers office. During 1969–70, I worked at 29 agent-operator locations on the system, and I was one of RI's first dispatchers to have worked every trick and chief dispatcher's office.

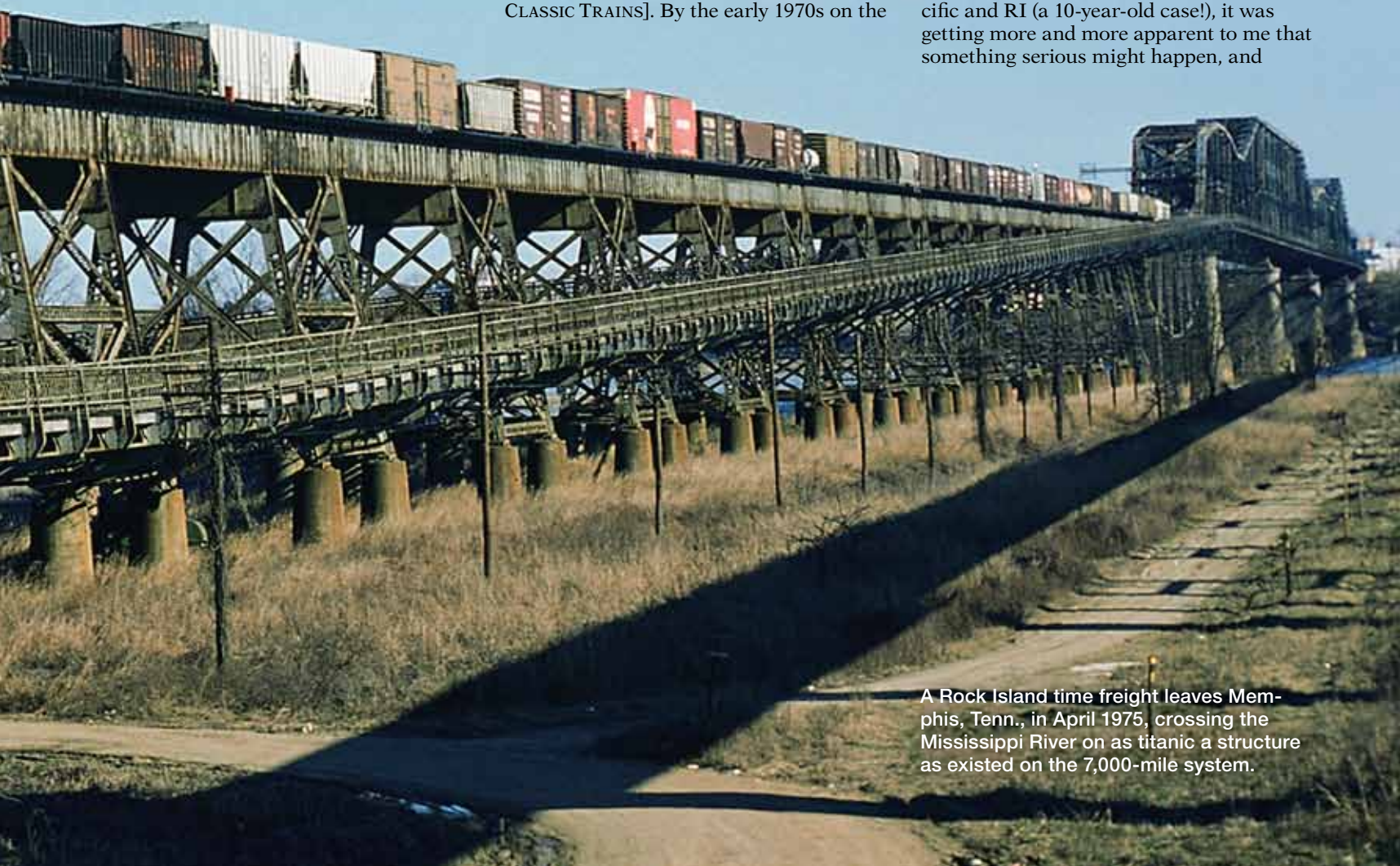
By the time I turned 20, I was holding a regular job as night chief dispatcher, first on second trick on RI's Illinois and Missouri-Kansas Divisions, then later as third-trick chief on the Des Moines Division ["Night Chief at Des Moines," Winter 2010 CLASSIC TRAINS]. By the early 1970s on the poor old Rock Island, though, operations got tougher and tougher to conduct as the property deteriorated. Derailments would occur daily, and we kept a book of them on the division, numbering consecutively from January 1. The book for 1975, as I recall, listed well over 1,000 derailments on the Des Moines Division alone!

LARGE PHOTO, STEVE FORREST; ABOVE, BILL PHILLIPS

Three of RI's 18 GE U30C's make a nice matched set at Dallas on May 5, 1974.

A YANKEE IN INDIAN TERRITORY

The railroad's finances kept getting worse, and even though the ICC in 1974 finally approved the merger of Union Pacific and RI (a 10-year-old case!), it was getting more and more apparent to me that something serious might happen, and



A Rock Island time freight leaves Memphis, Tenn., in April 1975, crossing the Mississippi River on as titanic a structure as existed on the 7,000-mile system.

West of the Oklahoma-Texas state line, the Sunbelt Line (Choctaw Route) was a lonely stretch of railroad. In March 1977, a westbound comes and goes at Groom, Texas, on its way west toward Amarillo and the SP interchange at Tucumcari.

TWO PHOTOS, DAN SABIN

soon. Following RI's declaration of bankruptcy on March 17, 1975, several officers lost their positions and returned to their seniority as dispatchers. Consequently, in 1976 I plummeted from having about a half dozen assigned positions younger than me in seniority to being about fifth on the extra board in the Des Moines office.

So I did something drastic by Rock Island standards. I crossed the line between the Northern and Southern districts (*i.e.*, south of Kansas City), a move that had not been done much before. I exercised my seniority as second extra dispatcher in the office at El Reno, Okla.

Once in El Reno, though, I was as welcome as the proverbial turd in the punchbowl. "Yankees" from Des Moines didn't normally bump into the Oklahoma office, but I still had two years of college left and was running out of options. I arrived on a hot July day and quickly found out that no provision was going to be made for me to learn all the jobs, yet I was expected to start relieving dispatchers in five trick offices and on two chief desks. My first call was literally on my day of arrival in El Reno, to work second trick on the Oklahoma train-order job, which handled the territory from El Reno to Fort Worth and from Shawnee, Okla., west to Tucumcari, N.Mex., plus a handful of branch lines.

I sat behind the first-trick dispatcher from about 1 p.m. until transfer time at 4 o'clock and immediately took a call from El Reno yard for the CTX, the railroad's Chicago-to-Houston hotshot. I confirmed the lead unit number and issued an order running engine 4597 extra from El Reno Yard to Waurika, Okla., with right over Northward Trains and wait at:

Minco until 515 PM
Pocasset until 530 PM
Chickasha until 545 PM
Ninnekah until 559 PM
Agawam until 610 PM
Rush Springs until 625 PM
Duncan until 650 PM
Sunray until 701 PM

Thus, in reading the unfamiliar points on the train sheet, did I become immediately aware of the spelling of the Native American names along what years back had been Rock Island's Indian Territory Division. By reviewing the orders issued by dispatchers on the preceding days, I could figure out roughly what the routine was.

Although a few of the older dispatchers were friendly, my co-workers with less seniority saw me as an interloper and were generally hostile. Some of the Southern Division officers were familiar to me, and I enjoyed comparing notes about our old home territories. Division Superintendent Dick Haley was a veteran of the Southern Division and a good and fair man, but the assistant superintendent hated me from the moment I arrived and ultimately, though unwittingly, confirmed my decision to leave the Rock Island as soon as I ob-

tained my college degree. I worked every job in the office, including relief chief dispatcher on both the Mo-Kan and Southern Division sides, learned a great deal about the system, and became the first dispatcher on the Rock Island to have dispatched every mile of it at least once.

Within a few months, I had the chance to bid in a regular job, second trick on the Arkansas desk. This territory was notorious for resulting in the firing of dispatchers. The job dispatched the Sunbelt Main Line from Memphis through Little Rock to Booneville, Ark., plus the line south from Biddle Yard in Little Rock to Eunice, La., and tangential branches. The "trap" there was all the Arkansas and Louisiana branch lines south of Little Rock that had overlapping extra trains over several subdivisions. A dispatcher had to fix up a number of opposing extras that started on one subdivision, moved to a junction, and then on to their final terminal on another subdivision, sometimes reversing direction. Several dispatchers had been fired for "lapping up" extras without providing protection from each other's running authority. I also had difficulty understanding the language, particularly south of Little Rock. (We Iowans have perfect diction, of course.)

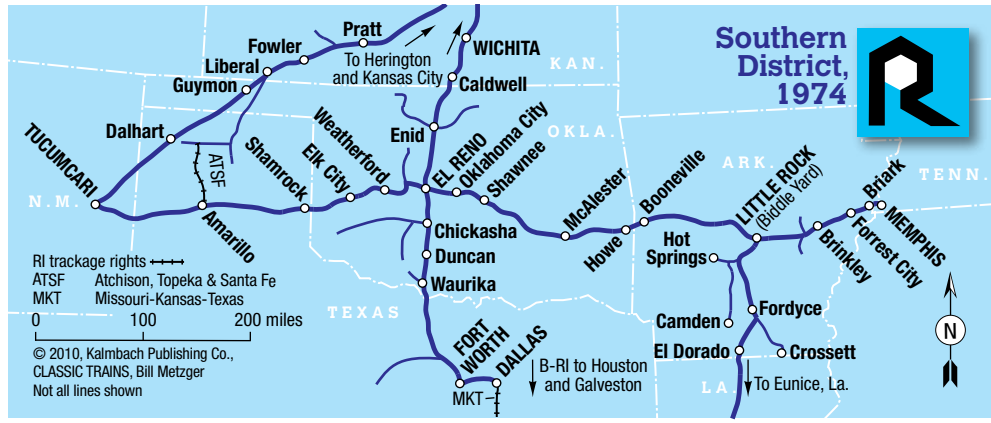
I jumped in on the position, however, with a strong passion to do a good job, and in a short time I began to really enjoy the office. I especially liked the density between Little Rock and Memphis, which included several Cotton Belt (SSW) trains on our 69 miles between Memphis and Brinkley, Ark. The territory was all train order, with Automatic Block System protection plus operators at Biddle Yard, Brinkley, Forrest City, and Kentucky Street in Memphis. The line was double track over the Mississippi River Bridge from Briark, at the Arkansas end, to Kentucky Street.

Rock Island had two scheduled trains in each direction and Cotton Belt three, for a total of 10 regular moves, plus SSW would often have two or three sections of its eastbound trains on second trick. The eastbound automobile and perishable business on SSW to the Southern Railway and L&N was brisk, so the Cotton Belt had the predominance of traffic on the joint section and made things pretty interesting.

Rock Island President John Ingram was trying hard to rebuild and market the Sunbelt Line, so at the time, No. 39 from Memphis to Tucumcari was probably one of the hottest trains on the system. With most of the traffic running in the evening, and eight sidings in 60 miles, dispatching here was a great train-order job with tremendous challenge. This Arkansas desk job also allowed me to go to school, at Southwestern Oklahoma State University at Weatherford, on a full daytime schedule and get back to El Reno by 3:30 p.m. to take my transfer. I could study when I got home after midnight.

DAN SABIN

Action at Tucumcari in early 1977: An eastbound has set out two SP GE U33C's (at right) and heads out behind three RI units, as another RI train (center) arrives from the east.



THE KING IS DEAD

One night in August 1977, shortly after I had started on the Arkansas, Dick Haley came in to check on No. 39. It had been called at Memphis for 8 p.m., but in the first two hours I'd been unable to get the Kentucky Street operator, a Missouri Pacific (Arkansas & Memphis Railway Bridge & Terminal Co.) employee, to answer my ring. I had to get orders out to several eastbound SSW trains at Brinkley and Rock Island eastbounds at Little Rock. Those orders had to be issued simultaneously to Brinkley, Biddle, and Kentucky Street. But without much information yet on No. 39, like the lead engine number and length of train, I was sweating the possibility of having to hold one or more of the eastbound Cotton Belts at Brinkley until we could get 39 fixed up, making sure they would all fit in the clear on some of the short sidings.

Turns out, this was not "just another night." I held onto the agent at Forrest City to catch First 724, but with company funds so tight, I hated to incur the overtime for him. Finally about 6:45, the operator at Kentucky Street answered my constant ringing, but before I could chew on him for delaying the Lord's work, he barked, "What the hell is wrong with you? The King of Rock and Roll is dead and all you can think of is that damn 39?" With my priorities of life now straightened out, we ultimately proceeded to "copy five" and get

JOHN MARTIN

Symbolic but deceptive are these cast-aside cars (they didn't all wreck here) at Brittain siding, just south of Little Rock, as RI Extra 304 South heads for points in Louisiana.

No. 39 fixed up against the eastbound parade. Sorry about that, Elvis.

Putting up hard meet orders with trains opposing No. 39 would have risked unacceptable delays to 39, so a different approach had to be taken. My usual practice would be to give 39 right over eastward trains, Briark to Little Rock, and then peddle time so the eastbounds could work their way east against his wait orders. This worked pretty well, and if 39 was called early and expected to leave Kentucky Street ahead of his 8:35 p.m. timetable schedule, a delay was out of the question, so I would run him as First or Second 727, a Cotton Belt schedule from Kentucky Street to Brinkley, give him right over eastward trains, and annul 39's schedule from Memphis to Brinkley. I would then run him as 39 from Brinkley to Biddle, since the slow orders from West Memphis to Brinkley would eat up some time to make his normal schedule work west of Brinkley.

Since Brinkley was a register station, the rules allowed the operation of sections to and from an intermediate point on the subdivision, unusual in train-order dispatching. Sonny Nichols was the third-trick man who relieved me, and the first time I did this, and following some discussion, he was amazed that "the Yankee" would employ that little-used (or known) nuance in the rules as a tool to avoid running 39 as an extra out of Memphis.

One night, however, I set an unusual trap for myself that I think back on to this day. It was a stormy September evening, and the Cotton Belt had at least five eastbounds to run from Pine Bluff to Memphis. There were pretty heavy rains throughout the territory, and a tornado had touched down outside Forrest City. After hearing from the roadmaster that the main track was OK, I put out my usual order, giving No 39 Eng 375 right over Eastward Trains Briark to Little Rock and wait at:

West Memphis until 930 PM
Mounds until 935 PM
Proctor until 945 PM
Heth until 959 PM
Widener until 1020 PM
Forrest City until 1035 PM
Palestine until 1050 PM
Wheatley until 1110 PM

I then started running the eastbound Cotton Belts out of Brinkley displaying green signals, indicating following sections, providing for them to run as sections of Nos. 724 and 728, not knowing for sure as what eastbounds they would actually run, with what engines, or when. I then issued this message to all eastbounds at Brinkley:

No 39 Eng 375 is over 6,000 feet long and is not to be delayed. Do not attempt to go beyond the siding at Heth or Palestine if your train or trains will not completely clear shorter sidings for No 39.

In most cases, if a train had enough time to make a siding, even if he couldn't clear, he could typically "saw" No. 39 by if 39 did fit in the siding. With that many eastbounds coming together at Brinkley in such a short time, they would also "fleet" and have two or three shorter trains go to the same siding and saw by the westbound. Only Heth or Palestine sidings, both 8,391 feet long, could handle 39's length, so I had to ensure that the eastbound Cotton Belt trains did not attempt to meet 39 at any of the shorter sidings.

With this message, however, an eastbound would be violating instructions if they did that. With a saw-by, one or two eastbounds would head into a short siding, then when the opposing train passed the east switch, would pull through and clear the west switch for the westbound train. With 39 being such a long train, a saw-by at a short siding would actually become a time-consuming, complicated double-saw and really stab 39, probably an hour or more, so I proudly covered all of the contingencies (and my butt) and sat back to eat my lunch.

NOT SO FAST, SABIN

Superintendent Haley had been in twice that night, wringing his hands and reminding me that 39 was hot and that he was to call Vice President and General Manager Bill Hoenig *and* President Ingram at home if anything delayed it. I assured him that I had everything under

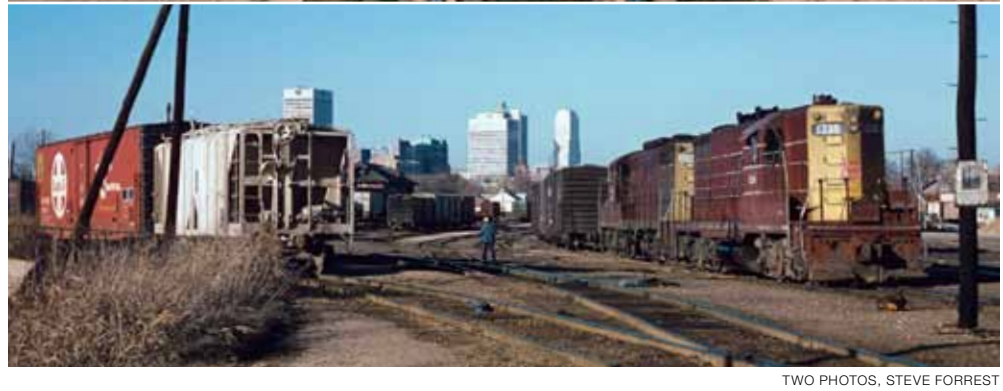
control. First and Second 724 were past Forrest City, and I expected First 724 to take the siding at Heth and Second 724 to tuck his shorter train in at Widener. Third 724 and First 728 were cleared at Brinkley when 39 was OS'ed out of Kentucky Street, so they were safe to meet 39 at Palestine with little or no delay to anybody. In a few minutes, I heard an Arkansas drawl on the dispatcher's phone that sounded strangely like, "Dispatcher, Mounds."

A chill ran up my spine as I looked at my train sheet and "knew" that by this time, First 724 would have gotten in the clear at Heth and Second 724 would be in the clear at Widener, as instructed. I answered the voice, and to my horror, heard the conductor on First 724 tell me that they had gone on to Mounds instead of clearing at Heth, and Second 724 was back at Heth. Their train did not fit in the Mounds siding, and, "What do you want me to do now, dispatcher?" They had "forgotten" my message instructing them not to go beyond Heth if they could not clear at Mounds.

My hands were soaking wet, smearing the green ink on the train sheet as I struggled to develop a plan to get out of this mess. By doing this, I was probably going to be perceived as defying Dick Haley's instructions to keep him informed of any delays to 39. I should've yelled on the intercom to the chief to call Haley right then, but instead, I yelled to Kentucky Street to call 39 on the radio and tell him to stop plenty short of the east siding switch at Mounds and to hit one of the dispatcher's phones east of Mounds.

I asked First 724 how many car-lengths he lacked to fit at Mounds, and he replied "about 15 long ones." Eventually, the head brakeman on 39 came to the phone, and I instructed him to tell the engineer to stop back 30 car-lengths east of the east siding switch, cut off his power, run down the main at Mounds, and have First 724 pull through the siding and tack whatever did not clear onto 39's power between the siding switches. First 724's engines would return to their train in the siding and No. 39's engineer would then back onto his train with the 15 cars from the head end of First 724, recover his air, and take whatever he had on to Biddle.

The conductor on 39 came on the dispatcher's phone, and I repeated all the instructions to him and asked him for a car number in his train to report with a bad air hose to cover up the delay. We agreed on UTLX 90548, a tank car seven cars ahead of the crummy, and I called the yardmaster at Biddle, told him what I was doing, and to be sure that the lead 15 cars on No. 39 were sent back to Memphis on No. 38 in the morning. He said, "Yeah, sure." I made a notation on the train sheet regarding the air hose delay on 39, then



TWO PHOTOS, STEVE FORREST

An eastbound behind three Geeps in June 1973 (top) passes Kentucky Street cabin in Memphis, whose operators (including the photographer) controlled the Illinois Central crossing. The RI train's destination is the cramped, stub-end 5th Street Yard (above).

THREE PHOTOS, BOB WEISS

Three photos in 1972, all looking east, give an overview of Rock Island's line through Forrest City, Ark., 44 miles out of Memphis, on the busy Arkansas District route that author Sabin came to prefer during his time at El Reno, Okla., for all the train-order dispatching he had to do. In the top photo, the depot is the distant white building.

told the chief to be sure to tell Haley that 39 got rapped a few minutes on the east end for an air hose. I didn't say another word to anyone else.

The next afternoon was my day off. Upon my return home from classes, I had a message to phone Superintendent Haley. I nervously called him, and he asked me if I could drop by his office. On my arrival, he said a strange situation occurred and he was hoping I could help clarify what had happened. It seemed that No. 39 had arrived El Reno that afternoon with 15 carloads of automobiles on the point, all of them "no bills" (without waybills accompanying the shipments). A computer search indicated they were autos from Roseville, Calif., off the SP/SSW going to Atlanta via the Southern at Memphis. They were not even supposed to be on the Rock Island, let alone in El Reno Yard. No one at Biddle knew why they were on 39 or where they came from. They were allegedly not on the train when it left Memphis. The only delays that 39 had incurred in the entire trip were 20 minutes at Mounds for an air hose and 35 minutes working the train at Biddle.

I sat down, took a deep breath, and explained everything that had happened. In his usual nervous fashion, he looked at me while shaking his head and then broke out laughing. He knew how hard I had tried to prevent a delay to 39 and how circumstances could arise to throw a monkey wrench in the plan. We both also knew that I could not have done this move with his authority. It was the first of many times I realized it was much easier to get forgiveness than permission. I never heard another word about the delay to 39 that night.

The Arkansas District got to be my favorite territory to dispatch. The second trick was so busy that time flew by, and you never went through a shift that didn't have something unusual happen. Things were getting worse financially for the company, and a large number of officials were told to go back to their tools. The General Superintendent of Transportation, Bill Pasta, came back to his home territory and bumped me. Bill was a real gentleman, and I had the pleasure of breaking him in for a week or so, then exercised my seniority on the CTC machine with territory between Dallas and Fort Worth and between Herington, Kans., and El Reno. It would mark my last few weeks with the Rock Island. (Bill got some time off shortly thereafter for a "lap order" south of Biddle.)

TIME TO JUMP SHIP?

I planned on finishing my degree by December 17, 1977, and I had interviewed with Santa Fe and Amtrak. The passenger railroad offered me a position in its control center in Washington, D.C., but I figured I could not afford to live there. I had taken a

physical for a job with the Santa Fe in its management training program, and was to be assigned to Topeka Shops sometime early in 1978, then work "a few years" as an industrial engineer, then as an assistant trainmaster, probably at Barstow, Calif.

However, I received a call from CP Rail, whose representative told me his road needed a "Yankee" in New England and requested that I come to Montreal to interview for a position. I did, and CP offered me a job as trainmaster at Newport, Vt., with a promise, in writing, to be promoted to assistant superintendent within three months. That would be truly new territory for me, so I called the Santa Fe and asked how long it would take me to be an assistant superintendent for them. I was told to plan on about 10 years and 15 moves to get there, if I was really good.

Hmmm. Next I called Rock Island's Bill Hoenig and asked him what I could look forward to after completing my degree. He said he would take me as a night assistant trainmaster, either in Chicago Terminal or Memphis, and if the company survived that long, I could look forward to 10 years as a night trainmaster in a dozen locations before promotion to assistant superintendent. I had a lot to think about.

Meantime, I settled into second trick on the CTC machine in El Reno. A major tie program was still in progress that fall and into the longer Oklahoma work season of early winter, installing ties and doing surfacing, mostly between El Reno and Enid. This meant that all northbound trains at El Reno were called together in the 3:30 to 6 p.m. window, and the large fleet worked its way through the many slow orders. The southbound fleet left Herington about noon, making for unbelievable congestion between Wichita and Enid on second trick.

On November 9, as I sat down for my transfer, I knew I would be in for a miserable evening on the 230.6 miles from hell. Two northbound trains had been delayed during the night, so they were held for the track gangs at Caldwell, Kans. Not only would I have the usual fleets to face the southbound parade, but also those two long northbounds at the mid-point of the territory. One by one, the track foremen came in on the dispatcher's phone with massive lists of changes to the pages of 10-mph slow orders, and every train had to have a new book of orders right away.

I also had unusually heavy activity between Dallas and Peach Yard in Fort Worth to contend with, on the track used jointly with the Frisco, and the Frisco had a train with problems at Tarrant, the only long siding on that stretch. From Dallas south via Teague to Houston and Galveston, Rock Island operated on the joint property called the Burlington-Rock Island, and we regularly had to call the Fort Worth Dispatcher of the B-RI to keep our train sheets up to date with arrival and departure times, delays, power, and tonnage on their territory.

TOP, BOB WEISS; ABOVE, STEVE FORREST

As seen from the second unit (top), orders are snared at Brinkley, Ark., on local freight 761. RI's Memphis line hosted Cotton Belt freights and run-throughs with the Southern, whose GP's mingle with RI units at Biddle Avenue terminal (above) in Little Rock in 1976.

THE LAST STRAW

By 6:30 p.m. or so, everything seemed to be in reasonable working motion, and the CTC board was beginning to light up like Christmas Eve. No. 24 from the day before was by Midland with work to do at Cline Yard in Wichita; another northbound was closing in behind him; and a southbound grain train was well out of Enid with U30C's and a big train, requiring the main track on meets with the four northbounds now all marching smartly in a row like elephants in a circus parade from El Reno Yard to Kingfisher. I calculated that I would meet the southbound grain drag with the first two northbound manifest trains at Bison, but it didn't look like anyone would fit at Jacks, so the next two northbounds would have to take a beating at Kingfisher and probably wouldn't make Caldwell before the 12-hour law got them.

As you worked long enough on the old Union Switch & Signal type CTC machines, you got to know the rhythm of the relays at each control point location and could usually tell a lot of what is going on by the various clicks of the relays and the OS bells that would sound when a train went by a control point. ("OS" is a telegraphic abbreviation used over the years to mean "train report," as in arrival, departure, or passing. It is generally thought to have stemmed from "on sheet" or "out of station." Usually an operator would say "OS," then the telegraphic call letters for his

TOP TO BOTTOM: STEVE FORREST; AUTHOR'S COLLECTION; STEVE FORREST

El Reno was the Rock Island's southern hub, akin to Des Moines up north. Tracks encircled the town, with shops (top) and a big yard on the far north side and the passenger station (now a museum) and three-story office building (middle, being passed by a southbound) west of downtown. The dispatchers' office (above) was on the second floor.

station. Upon acknowledgement from the dispatcher, the operator would then report the train's times at his station.)

Shortly after 9 p.m., No. 24 had finally made his set-out at the north end of Cline Yard, and I lined the signal out of the north end of the siding for him to get back onto his train. He would need verbal permission to pass the red signal after I lined the switch back normal to make his coupling, so I was keeping a close eye on the lights there while listening to various radio conversations going on at El Reno and Fort Worth. The red OS light went out on the north siding switch, indicating that his power was north of the control point, and the head brakeman got on the dispatcher's phone as I lined the switch back to normal. I instructed him to examine the switch points, and if they were properly lined, he could pass the signal under appropriately quoted rules to get back on his train. After the train shoved back, I relined the signal north for them to leave town; a few minutes later, the red light popped on and the bell rang, indicating that 24 was finally leaving Wichita. He would face a flock of southbounds moving well out of Herington toward their appropriate meeting points.

Something, though, didn't sound or look right to me. The OS section light was on at the north siding switch at Cline, indicating that 24's head end was still moving over the switch, but the indicator on the switch lever had gone dark instead of showing green for a normal position of the switch in the field. The relays were making a shorter click than usual. I immediately called 24 on the radio and told him to stop his train, figuring intuitively that he was on the ground. Just as I released the microphone foot pedal, the assistant superintendent flew into the office from the assistant chief's side of the wall.

"What the hell are you doing?" He was in my face and banging on the top of the CTC panel, making me think of Nikita Khrushchev pounding the table at the UN with his shoe.

Without hesitation, I explained that I thought No. 24 was on the ground and I wanted to stop the movement so the crew could get out and see what was going on. He turned bright red and proceeded to tell me what a worthless dispatcher I was and how that was about the dumbest thing he had ever heard. I would be to blame for a half dozen crews tying up on the line because of this foolishness.

He ordered me to get back on the radio and instruct 24 to get moving without an inspection of the train. Just as he pounded the top of the control panel again, Superintendent Haley walked into the room behind him, asking what all the fuss was about. Before I could answer, a voice came on the dispatcher's phone.

DAN SABIN

An eastbound freight is just out of New Mexico in early 1977, passing through Glenrio, Texas, behind two blue GP38-2's. The author saved the "Super's" nice letter.

"Dispatcher, Cline, this is conductor So-and-so on the Extra 4709 North. We have some pigs derailed and who knows what else on the bridge at the north end of the siding, and they look like they are leaning over. I don't know how you knew we were on the ground, but you probably kept us from taking the bridge out."

I pushed the pedal down to respond to the crewman, but instead, I decided to change my strategy. I turned, packed my lunch bag, loaded up my few personal belongings from the desk drawer, and decided to let the nasty assistant superintendent clean up this mess.

I didn't even wait for my relief to arrive. I walked out and sat in the parking lot while the assistant superintendent handled a situation that, moments before, he had denied existed. I received a letter of commendation from Superintendent Haley, which I still have today (right), but I left that night knowing I had no future on what had become a very decrepit property. In fact, I knew right then that soon, somehow, there would be no more Rock Island Railroad. I turned in my resignation the next day, effective on my graduation day, working a few more bittersweet weeks as a lame-duck dispatcher.

A few weeks later, I reported to CP Rail's headquarters in Windsor Station, Montreal, as the new trainmaster for Newport, Vt. That tour, chronicled in "Railroading in a Foreign Tongue" in Spring 2003 CLASSIC TRAINS, would turn out to be quite interesting.

THE ROCK

Office of Superintendent
P. O. Box 189
El Reno, Oklahoma 73036

November 22, 1977

File: WF-1197

Mr. Dan R. Sabin
612 Southwest 24th Street
El Reno, Oklahoma 73036

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for possibly averting a major and costly derailment on this division about 9:25 P.M., November 9, 1977, when Train 24A08 was leaving Cline Yard, and you saw the indicator lights on the CTC board go out and immediately stopped Train 24A08, and it was found that TTX 600317 had been derailed while moving through siding and power switch.

It is employees such as you that will be a part of rebuilding this railroad into a modern and efficient transportation system.

A copy of this letter is being placed on your personal record for future reference.

C. F. Haley

cc: Messrs. D. E. Muse
R. M. Young, LC ATDA
Personal Record Clerk

CHICAGO ROCK ISLAND AND PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY/WILLIAM M. GIBBONS, TRUSTEE

AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

DEAD RECKONING on the Southern

Out on the line on a trackworkers' motor car with the scant communication tools of the time

BY **RON FLANARY** • PAINTING BY THE AUTHOR

In today's era of Centralized Traffic Control signaling and radio-dispatched track warrants or manual-block territory, the matter of track occupancy is considerably less dangerous than it was a few decades ago. While CTC brought the ability of a dispatcher to block off a particular segment of mainline track between control points for the safety of trackworkers, work trains, or even local trains performing back-and-forth switching moves, most light- and medium-density lines were not equipped with CTC.

In 1970 I was employed as a management trainee in the maintenance-of-way department of the Southern Railway ["Yes, I DID Want to Run a Railroad," July 1978 TRAINS]. My assigned work location was Louisville, Ky., but I was seldom there. Southern's approach to indoctrinating young college graduates in the ways of the railroad industry was very "hands-on." You had to learn to swing a spike maul, line and surface track, replace ties, spread ballast, help tote tools and supplies to work sites, or anything else that was required of Southern's lean maintenance forces. There was no substitute for learning the work other than doing it yourself.

As my familiarity and knowledge progressed, the assistant division engineer gave me increasingly better but more challenging supervisory assignments. My normal work territory stretched from SJ Tower, the junction just north of Danville, Ky., of Southern's Louisville and St. Louis line with the CNO&TP (the "Rat Hole"), west to Princeton, Ind., near the Wabash River crossing that marked the Illinois border. Traffic control on the line was by traditional train order and timetable operation with automatic block signals (ABS), except for stretches of "remote control" territory on the east side of Louisville (controlled by the operator at Floyd Street), and from Talmage, Ky., to SJ Tower (controlled by the operator at Harrodsburg). Those were basically mini-CTC stretches.

An assistant track supervisor and laborer regularly patrolled the territory from SJ Tower to Louisville, including the branch from Lawrenceburg to Lexington. The vehicle of choice was a venerable bright orange Fairmont M-9 "speeder," or "motor car" as Southern called them. The now-familiar hi-rail trucks were just then coming into vogue, but they hadn't yet reached the St. Louis line.

The next westward leg to be inspected was between New Albany and Huntingburg, Ind. The stretch across the Ohio River into and through Louisville to New Albany was owned and governed by the Kentucky & Indiana Terminal, a separate entity owned by several carriers. Southern used K&IT's Youngtown Yard in Louisville and its trains ran through, but K&IT maintained its own track and facilities.

As scheduled summer vacations kicked in for the maintenance-of-way officers in the territory, my boss had me cover their assignments for the two weeks they were off. This included track inspection work on both segments. As the hottest days of July were upon us, I was detailed to Huntingburg to work the inspection route back to New Albany (eastbound on Monday, westbound on Tuesday, repeated Thursday and Friday, with Wednesday as a work day to handle anything that needed more intensive maintenance attention).

I showed up early and introduced myself to the older gentleman who would be my motor-car assistant. He would hardly speak to me. I could tell right off that he had a surly attitude—a not uncommon situation where rank-and-file laborers who had forgotten more about the railroad than I knew had contempt for us young "know-it-all college boys." I had not, in his

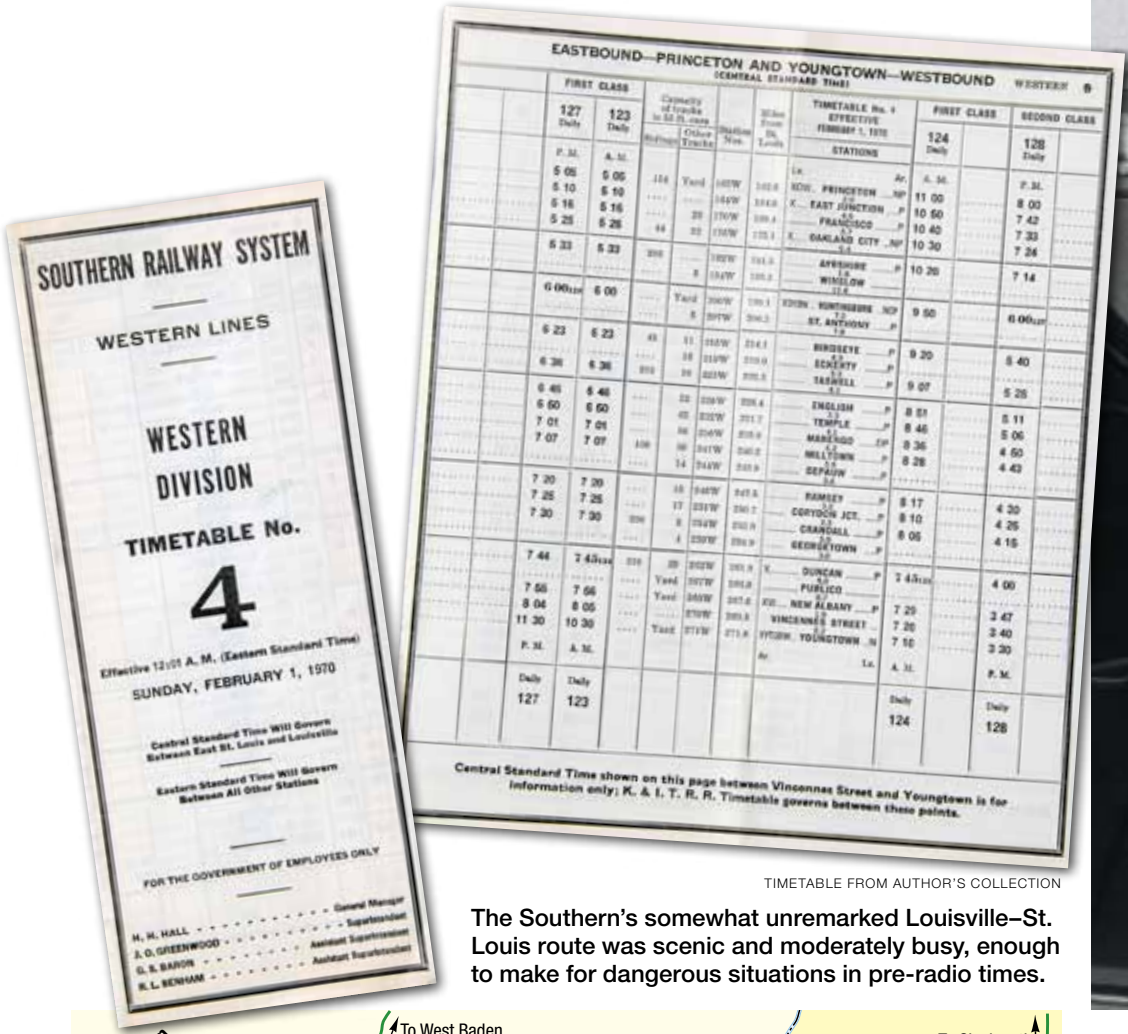
It's July 1970 at Crandall, Ind., as the author, timetable in his back pocket, highballs the westbound they left the main line to avoid.

opinion, paid my rightful dues in the world of hard knocks. Nonetheless, I was respectful of his seniority and knowledge, but at the same time I realized I was the "boss," and I had to act like it and accept my responsibilities.

By now, I was reasonably familiar with this scenic line through southern Indiana, but I had yet to ride it. There were two scheduled freights in each direction, but they almost always had following sections. There was also a recently added unscheduled run-through freight between Galesburg, Ill., and Louisville, interchanged by the newly minted Burlington Northern and us at Centralia, Ill. BN power was regular on this run, either new Cascade green GE U33C's or the smaller U23C's painted in the rare CB&Q pre-merger green and white. Throw in a few additional extras, plus the unscheduled local freight, and at times this line was fairly busy. The automatic block signals were helpful, but a motor car's axles were insulated from its wheels, so we did not shunt the track circuits.

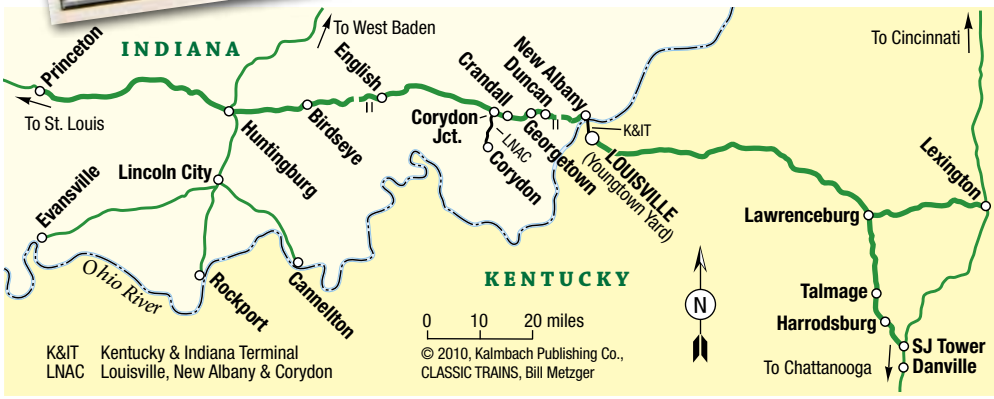
At the time, there was no "authority" one needed to put a motor car on the main line and head out into harm's way. Each morning the dispatcher would issue a line-up. This provided you with as much information as was available regarding the trains called or already en route. With only one open agency on the 68-mile run, at English, Ind., the dispatcher was understandably vague in most cases. Your line-up might note a westbound freight out of Louisville at 6:30 a.m., for example. It might be 8 a.m. by the time the line-up was issued, so how far this guy had advanced toward Huntingburg was anyone's guess. With these ambiguous notes in hand, we fired up the Fairmont and *putt-putt-putted* eastward from Huntingburg into the morning sun. Since I was the supervisor in charge, I did the running and made all the decisions. Any time I asked my assistant for advice, I got very little. He was not insubordinate, though, and he did his share of the work without a grumble.

It takes years of experience to under-



TIMETABLE FROM AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

The Southern's somewhat unremarked Louisville–St. Louis route was scenic and moderately busy, enough to make for dangerous situations in pre-radio times.



stand a particular line's operations and nuances—the time it will take a train of a particular tonnage to go from one point to another, where the grades are, where the speed restrictions are, where a train will really be rolling along, and all the other operational aspects that are so critical. Not only did we have to think about clearing for oncoming trains, but we also had to be vigilant for following movements, since none of the trains had any idea we were out here on "their" railroad. In addition to the physically demanding nature of trackwork, this took constant mental acuity, otherwise you might end up plastered on the front of a Southern SD24.

We had "walkie-talkie" radios, but with no train-to-dispatcher radio yet in place, they were useful only within an intermediate range. If you wanted to speak to the dispatcher for any critical train information updates, you stopped at one of the lineside company phone boxes and took your turn, along with everyone else on the route who was seeking his attention on this "party line."

Motor cars were limited to 35 mph by the rulebook, but they had no speedometer. Running the car over the territory was not the objective of the job—it was just an operationally necessary vehicle to haul two men and some basic track tools along the right of way. The work involved being focused on the rails constantly, looking for track bolts that had loosened or worked out, bad low spots at joints, drainage problems, clearance problems from overhanging limbs or wires, broken rails, encroachments onto the railroad's right of way, or anything else that would inhibit the safe passage of trains at authorized timetable speed.

We also made stops to apply graphite to switchpoint tie plates at frequently used turnouts. At that time, virtually the entire line was still jointed rail. If you were figuring your time to a particular place where you might "put off" to meet a train, you had to adjust for the frequent stops to replace track bolts or jack and tamp a low joint. The operation of a motor car on these lines was the equivalent of dead-reckoning navigation on the ocean.

On this trip, we were making decent progress against three westbound freights (and staying ahead of one called behind us). With a timetable in hand, I made a few inquiries to my veteran track laborer as to where he thought we should clear up. "I'd be afraid to say," was the reply.

CHARLES BUCCOLA

Extra 3105 East, an SD45 in the lead, is "in the hole" at Duncan, Ind., on April 24, 1971, to meet the BN run-through behind U23C's.

At Birdseye, I decided we should clear up on the passing track for the first westbound. We were there 20 minutes before he passed, but I figured safe was far better than sorry. As we neared English, an eastward signal flashed yellow for "approach," which meant the second guy was two signal blocks away. We cleared up, and shortly a long "radio train," with mid-train remotely controlled units, roared by.

There was a third train to deal with. I got on the phone to ask the dispatcher if he had anything more on its whereabouts. The train had had to double the hill up out of New Albany to Duncan, he reported, but other than that, there was no other word. He also told me there was nothing else called out of Louisville.

Our work continued as the Fairmont and its two passengers clicked off the miles toward New Albany, making periodic stops to replace or tighten a bolt. By now my lack of knowledge of the line, exacerbated by the paucity of information on our opposing train, was catching up with me. I was in a quandary as to whether we should get in the clear at Crandall or risk heading another 6 miles to Georgetown. We could always set the motor car off at a grade crossing, but it was much easier to use a siding. The eastbound block signals were still showing green, but for how long? I knew my colleague knew, but he wasn't talking.

I also knew, though, that he was anything but an idiot, so he likely had the same instinct for self-preservation I did. I studied the timetable with great interest, looked at my watch a few times, and generally made a big show of appearing to be calculating the next move. As we approached the last set-off point, at Crandall, I opened up a little more on the Fairmont. In one motion, he turned to me, grabbed my right leg and shouted over the racket of the motor car's one-lung engine, "We need to put off right here—NOW!"

Without another word I stopped quickly, and using the two leverage bars on the motor car, we set it over to the house track and rolled back to clear the main line. Within five minutes, a trio of SD35's came roaring around the curve with a pall of exhaust smoke laid back over their black hoods. The freight was heading for St. Louis with a vengeance.

"If we had gone any further," my colleague said, "we would have run into that man for sure. I knew he had to be gettin' close." The laborer's voice was still a little stressed by this near-death experience with the rookie college boy he'd been paired with. His inability to speak had miraculously been healed, and now he was a veritable font of wisdom and useful information.

I knew this was my opening. "You're the guy who knows this railroad, not me. Thanks for straightening me out. I'm still new to all this, and I need to learn from experienced employees who know what they're doing—like you." This little moment of self-deprecation was enough to thaw the laborer's icy attitude. I ended up spending two good weeks with him without further incident. We did our work, had some laughs, and bonded. I actually hated to leave, but my next track inspection assignment was to work another two-week vacation on the Louisville–SJ Tower leg (an assignment that was also memorable, but for different reasons). Maybe those two psychology courses I took in college paid off after all.

Women's work

UNION PACIFIC

Railroading has mostly been a man's world—it's not for nothing that many rail labor unions called themselves "Brotherhoods." That's changing now, along with gender roles throughout society, but popular notions of women railroaders have mostly been confined to train hostesses [pages 34–43] and "Rosie the Riveter" gals who filled jobs temporarily vacated by men during wartime. Of course, there were other, more vital and permanent rail roles for females; for example, many operators were women. By copying train orders from the dispatcher and relaying them to train crews, operators were an essential link in the chain, and the performance of their duty was very much a matter of life and death. Above, an unidentified Union Pacific operator hands up orders to a passing engineer at Fremont, Nebr. At right, Southern Pacific's Minnie Lee Beissel types an order at Chatsworth, Calif., in 1954.

WILLIAM D. MIDDLETON

Santa Fe's FLYING IRISHMAN

Santa Fe 4-8-2 3730 hustles the second section of the eastbound *Fast Mail* into Pasadena in November 1946. Galard Slonaker was on a sister 4-8-2 when author Swan met him at Pasadena a decade earlier.

Remembering Galard Slonaker: friend, teacher, and ace engineer of the Los Angeles Division

BY **FLETCHER H. SWAN**

For a young man fascinated with trains, there was no better place to live in the 1930s than near the Santa Fe's Los Angeles Division Second District, the route of most of the road's passenger trains in and out of Los Angeles. From the sidewalk in front my home in South Pasadena, I could watch the trains crossing the street a short block away. The ornate passenger station was just around the corner, and I visited it at every opportunity.

One evening as I was sitting in my room doing my homework and listening to my Zenith radio, my father asked if I would like to go to the Pasadena station and watch the eastbound *California Limited* arrive and depart. As we started the drive to Pasadena, we could hear the train working its way up the grade from Highland Park. It was a short drive and we arrived at the station several minutes ahead of No. 4. The big 3700-class 4-8-2 locomotive stopped right where we were standing.

The engineer climbed down from the cab and walked directly toward us, pulling off his gloves to shake our hands. He said, "My name is Slonaker. What's your name, and is this your father?" I told him my name and then he shook hands with my father. He asked if we were interested in trains and locomotives and I told him that we were. After we'd chatted a bit, the fireman yelled "Highball!" Slonaker had to leave, but said that he enjoyed meeting us and asked if we would come back to see him again, as he went out on No. 4 every other night.

That chance meeting led to a 26-year friendship. Getting to know Galard Judson Slonaker Sr. was most interesting. He was known variously as Galard, Engineer Slonaker, Mister Slonaker, or "Slony," depending on how well you knew him. He was born in Ohio on September 16, 1877. In 1898, at the age of 21, he served in the Spanish-American War. During that time there was a popular saying, "Go West young man, go West," and in 1900 at age 23 he did just that, moving to California, settling first in the San Bernardino area east of Los Angeles. He hired out as a student fireman with the Santa Fe and established a seniority date of February 16, 1901.

Slonaker worked various fireman jobs on freight trains over Cajon Pass to Barstow, the Second and Third districts to Los Angeles, the Fourth District to San Diego, and branch lines originating at San Bernardino such as the San Jacinto and Redlands districts. (He also fired passenger trains out of L.A., but I have never been able to confirm the specifics.) After six years as a fireman, he was promoted to engineer on March 19, 1907.

On his 31st birthday, September 16, 1908, Galard married 21-year-old Emma May, whom he had met about a year earlier. In 1915 they left San Bernardino and relocated to Walnut Park, a Los Angeles suburb. A few years later they acquired a house in Huntington

FLETCHER H. SWAN

FLETCHER H. SWAN COLLECTION

Slonaker strikes the classic hogger's pose on a 4-8-2 at L.A.'s old La Grande Station, ready to depart with the *California Limited*.

Another 3700-class 4-8-2 is the backdrop for a picture of the engineer and Swan, age 14, at Pasadena in 1937.

STAN KISTLER

FLETCHER H. SWAN COLLECTION

In a photo taken somewhere in Cajon Pass, Slonaker (far right) and friends stand atop the turtle-back tender of 2-10-10-2 3000, one of 10 Mallets the Santa Fe built in 1911 but dismantled in 1915–18.

Park, just a few miles from the Redondo Junction roundhouse, where Santa Fe's L.A. passenger power was based. In the early 1940s the Slonakers purchased a new home in Whittier, just east of Los Angeles, where they lived for the rest of their lives.

A TEACHER WHO SAW IT ALL

Galard Slonaker was a great teacher. Many an evening after dinner at his home, we drove to the roundhouse, where he changed into his overalls and then registered his watch in the crew room. After checking the work report for the engine assigned to the *California Limited*, we walked out to the engine. The fireman was already in the cab and would hand down the oil can and a piece of waste. As Slonaker oiled and inspected the engine, he explained to me its various mechanical functions. After the inspection, oiling, and a short visit with the roundhouse foreman, we were ready to proceed to La Grande Station (Santa Fe's L.A. depot prior to the 1939 opening of Union Station) about 2 miles away. After coupling onto the train and charging the brake line, Slonaker would climb down to check timepieces and train orders with the conductor. Finally, at the set departure time, we were on the way to Pasadena.

During the 1930s and '40s, senior enginemen typically would arrive at the Redondo Junction roundhouse looking like bankers and stockbrokers. They were impeccably dressed in tailored business suits, neckties, polished shoes, and hats. They were professionals in their field and always dressed as such. But after changing in the locker room, they looked like locomotive enginemen: in grimy overalls, with cap and gloves tucked under their arm. Slonaker was different. He simply removed his coat and vest and slipped his overalls over his dress shirt and trousers, leaving his necktie in place, changing his shoes, and transferring his watch from vest to overalls.

Because of my interest in trains, especially steam locomotives, I believe I sort of became Slonaker's adopted son. His own son, Galard Judson Slonaker Jr., was not at all interested in railroading. He was an excellent vocalist and became involved with a popular quartet that sang on various radio stations in Los Angeles during the 1930s and early '40s.

In all the time I spent with Slonaker Sr., whether in his home, in the roundhouse crew room, or in the cab of a locomotive, I never saw him smoke or heard him speak a word of profanity. He always had a very kind and positive attitude. What a role model!

As we were browsing through his photo album one afternoon, we discussed the many new locomotives that had joined the Santa Fe fleet during his tenure in engine service. Looking at the pictures brought back memories for him. He recalled that shortly after his promotion to engineer in 1911, the short-lived Mallets

The Road Foreman said, "Slonaker is a master at running a locomotive, steam or diesel, and can get more out of a locomotive than anyone would think possible. He'll be on time."

—3000-class 2-10-10-2's and 3200-class 2-8-8-0's—arrived in San Bernardino for helper service on Cajon Pass. The following two years saw the delivery of the swift 1300-class 4-6-2's, and shortly thereafter the heavier 3500-class 4-6-2's appeared. The workhorses of the fleet, the 3700-class 4-8-2's, first appeared in 1918 and were delivered over a six-year span. Delivery of the heavy 3800-class 2-10-2's began in 1919 and continued into 1926. The 3751-class 4-8-4's began working on the Coast Lines and into Los Angeles in 1938, after being rebuilt and converted to oil burners.

Also in '38, the 3765-class 4-8-4's began running between La Junta, Colo., and L.A. on high-speed passenger trains. More 4-8-4's, the 3776 class, were delivered in 1941, and the 2900's came on-line during the World War II years of 1943–44. A tremendous change in motive power took place over a few short years, including the biggest change of all—the introduction of the diesel locomotive—and Slonaker saw it all.

Firemen enjoyed working with Slonaker, as they were given the opportunity to learn many train-handling techniques from the expert. Frank Norwood worked with Slonaker many months on the *San Diegans* and spoke highly of him, as an engineer and as a person. Clyde Pace was with Slonaker on his last run and said, "He was one of the easiest engineers I ever worked with. He was always at home and comfortable in the cab."

Much to the pleasure of dispatchers, Slonaker had an uncanny way of getting a train over the division. Dispatcher Jack Berry told me, "We could always count on Slonaker. We set a meet and he was there on time, and it sure made us look good as dispatchers." One day on the station platform in Pasadena, while waiting for No. 23, the *Grand Canyon Limited*, I was talking with Road Foreman of Engines Jim Love, and I mentioned that I believed Slonaker would be on 23. Love replied, "Slonaker is a master at running a locomotive, steam or diesel, and can get more out of a locomotive than anyone would think possible. He'll be on time." A measure of the respect Los Angeles Division dispatchers had for Slonaker is the nickname they gave him: the Flying Irishman.

FLETCHER H. SWAN COLLECTION

Slonaker saw great changes in motive power during his 46 years in engine cabs. At Barstow on April 2, 1920, he stands with Santa Fe 1368, a balanced compound Pacific.

SLONAKER AND THE SUPER CHIEF

A drastic change in motive power began in August 1935 with the delivery of high-speed passenger diesel units 1 and 1A. Santa Fe ran a number of test runs with the "One-Spot Twins" between Chicago and Los Angeles during September, October, and November, and Slonaker was at the throttle for several of them ["Crafting the Lightweight *Super Chief*," STREAMLINER PIONEERS 2005]. There were two additional test runs in April 1936, and on May 12 the diesels were on the first run of train 17, the *Super Chief*, out of Chicago.

On the evening of Wednesday, May 13, my father and I met the eastbound *California Limited* at the Pasadena station to talk briefly with Slonaker. During our conversation he told us he would be bringing the inau-

FLETCHER H. SWAN

In 1938, Slonaker oils around 4-8-4 3751 on the *Grand Canyon* at San Bernardino. After years on display at the station here, 3751 was restored for fantrip duty in 1992.

LOS ANGELES TIMES, FLETCHER H. SWAN COLLECTION

FLETCHER H. SWAN

Having brought the first *Super Chief* into L.A. (above), Slonaker poses with actress Eleanor Powell in front of its box-cab diesel. A 1944 picture at LAUPT (top right) shows him with fireman Frank Norwood, conductor Gus Taylor, and E1 No. 3 before a run to San Diego.

gural trip of the *Super Chief* into Los Angeles the next morning. With my parents' permission (I was 13 years old), I was late to school that day so I could observe the historic event. The train arrived several minutes early, and hundreds of people were there to greet it.

The arrival of the *Super Chief* in Los Angeles was a large media event, with radio and newspaper reporters interviewing Santa Fe dignitaries and movie notables who were passengers on the inaugural run. Slonaker was interviewed and photographed with actress Eleanor Powell in front of the locomotive. After the fanfare subsided, Slonaker climbed back into the cab and took the 1 and 1A to Redondo Junction. The next evening, my father and I were again at the Pasadena station to watch the inaugural eastbound *Super Chief* with Slonaker again at the throttle. As before, hundreds of people crowded the platform to get a good look at the new diesel locomotive and the super-fast train.

During an eastbound run in October 1936, the *Super Chief* was supposed to have received orders at San Bernardino advising that a portion of the eastbound track east of Hesperia was out of service and that trains would be crossed over to the westbound main. A few days later, Slonaker related the incident to my father and me. He said that neither he nor the conductor had received any orders regarding the track closure. Not long after the helper was cut off at Summit, Slonaker had the train up to about 95 mph on the downgrade when a yellow signal came into view—the distant signal for the 25-mph crossover that would put the train on the westbound track. As soon as he saw the yellow signal, he made a heavy brake application, suspecting he'd probably enter the crossover somewhere close to 60 mph. As Slonaker hit the crossover, he thought the locomotive might derail; instead, the 1 and 1A rocked and rolled, then settled down nicely. No passengers were injured during the severe jolting as the train went through the crossover. Slonaker's fast thinking and quick reaction undoubtedly avoided a possible derailment. The dispatcher's office had a lot of explaining to do about the missing train orders.

The original *Super Chief* of May 1936 consisted of the box-cab diesels, Nos. 1 and 1A, and heavyweight passenger cars. This changed in mid-1937 with the arrival of streamlined E1 diesels and lightweight stainless-steel cars. The preview run of the new train, led by diesels 2 and 2A, rolled into La Grande Station on May 10, 1937, with, yes, engineer Slonaker at the throttle. After a two-day display in Los Angeles, the train moved to San Diego for display there. Following several other display stops, the new train replaced the original *Super Chief* in June.

LESSONS IN SCHOOL AND A 4-8-4 CAB

Slonaker asked me frequently if I was enjoying school. During one of our visits I asked him if he would speak to my seventh grade class at South Pasa-

dena Junior High about his occupation, steam and diesel locomotives, and the new *Super Chief*. He was a person of quiet dignity who seldom spoke about his private life or railroading exploits, but he was delighted to accept my invitation. After we checked with the principal, it was decided that the entire seventh grade would attend the presentation. Thus in the school auditorium one morning in January 1938, Slonaker talked to almost 200 students about his life as a locomotive engineer. The students received his presentation with great interest, and he answered many questions regarding the new *Super Chief*.

Early one Sunday evening in March 1939, I received a phone call from Slonaker. He was calling from the telegraph office at La Grande Station preparing to leave with the *California Limited*. He said, "We have a big engine tonight. Train orders call for a meet at Olga and a message to stop at Upland to pick up passengers; would you like to ride along?" Of course!

It was decided that I'd wait for him at Olga siding in South Pasadena and ride to Upland. As the train approached, I saw that the engine was 4-8-4 No. 3754. When I climbed into the cab, Slonaker adjusted the seat-box so I could sit alongside him. With the meet accomplished, he released the brakes and told me to slowly open the throttle. Starting up the grade toward Pasadena, a scheduled stop for passengers, I opened the throttle more and he told me to blow the whistle when we approached the grade crossings.

After pausing at Pasadena, we were soon winding our way slowly through the city. As we approached Lamanda Park, Slonaker leaned over me, grabbed the throttle, and pulled it wide open. We were soon gaining speed downgrade through Arcadia and Monrovia, the buildings flying by us, and it wasn't long until we started to slow for the stop at Upland. As I descended from the cab, I told him how much I appreciated the chance to ride with him and gave him a big wave as the train pulled out. What a great and lasting experience for a 16-year-old!

Slonaker's days of going to work at the Redondo Junction roundhouse ended in late 1939 when he bid in one of the *San Diegan* runs. These went on duty at the new Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal, the locomotives being moved between Redondo Junction and LAUPT by hostlers. It was at this juncture that Slonaker began wearing the white coveralls and white caps that became his trademark.

In late January 1942 Slonaker asked me if I intended to make a career in railroading. World War II had just begun, and he told me the railroad would be hiring a large number of people. He knew I was attending Pasadena Junior College, but suggested that I might be able to do both: go to school and work for the Santa Fe.

After some weeks of thought, I decided I would give it a try. I called Slonaker and told him of my decision. He told me to meet him at the roundhouse next morning, where he would introduce me to the division foreman and his chief clerk. After a short interview, I was hired as a crew caller, reporting to work two days later in the roundhouse office. Thus began my employment with the Santa Fe, which lasted until 1950.

Slonaker was one of the nerviest yet most careful engineers on the division, which was probably why he was called upon to handle test runs and the inaugural trips of the Super Chief.

TWO PHOTOS, FLETCHER H. SWAN

Clad in his trademark white hat and overalls (top), Slonaker waits for a meet at San Juan Capistrano on an E1, which he soon wound up to 108 mph. On another *San Diegan* run, he rode E1's 2 and 2A through a gasoline truck crash (above).

Slonaker had a close call on the afternoon of May 11, 1942, while running First 73, a Los Angeles-bound *San Diegan*, with E1 diesels 2 and 2A. On the outskirts of L.A., just west of Hobart Tower while traveling at 50 mph, he struck a gasoline truck at the Downey Road crossing, killing the truck driver and the occupant of a car at the crossing. Luckily, Slonaker was not injured, but his fireman suffered severe burns on both hands. The two diesels, damaged from the impact and ensuing fire, were towed to San Bernardino Shops the following day for repairs. With the diesels out of service for an unknown period of time, the *San Diegan* would revert to steam power. That didn't make any difference

FLETCHER H. SWAN

Senior Los Angeles Division enginemen reported to work in the 1930s dressed like bankers, as Slonaker demonstrates in 1937 (above). During World War II he donned a uniform as a Red Cross volunteer (center).

to Slonaker—he didn't miss a trip. Meeting that fast schedule with a steam engine was a challenge, but as a rule he never ran more than 10 minutes late.

Slonaker was known as one of the nerviest yet most careful engineers on the Los Angeles Division, which was probably the reason he was called upon so many times to handle test runs of diesels 1-1A and the inaugural trips of the *Super Chief*. His expertise in handling those early diesel-powered trains undoubtedly played a part in the Santa Fe accepting the diesel locomotive into the motive-power fleet.

On another occasion, Slonaker was removed from his regular run on September 25, 1942, to handle the lead engine, 4-8-2 No. 3703, of a doubleheader taking President Franklin Roosevelt's "top secret" train from Los Angeles to San Diego ["A Day of Excitement and Mystery," Winter 2007 CLASSIC TRAINS].

ALWAYS "ON DUTY" FOR OTHERS

On his days off during the war, Slonaker donned a Red Cross volunteer uniform and drove a station wagon taking Red Cross workers to visit families of servicemen who needed assistance. With an acute shortage of engineers during that time, he would also accept calls to work on his days off. He always felt that he should be doing something for someone else.

Just prior to my entry into the Army Air Corps during World War II, Slonaker gave me a fountain pen with my name engraved on the barrel and asked me to write him occasionally. In one of my letters I told him I was being transferred from the East Coast to the West Coast, would be off duty Saturdays and Sundays, and would probably spend those weekends at my parents' home in South Pasadena. Those free weekends led to several diesel cab rides with Slonaker on the *San Diegans*.

One Sunday in April 1944, *San Diegan* 73 departed San Diego at 11:30 a.m. with two E1's en route to Los Angeles. As was customary, we backed out of San Diego to a wye north of downtown, assisted by a switch engine coupled to the observation car. After we headed out of the wye and onto the main line, our first station stop was at Oceanside, at 12:32 p.m. The next stop was for a meet at San Juan Capistrano with Extra 3743, a slow-moving San Diego-bound troop train, where we lost about 8 minutes. We were more than halfway through the 128-mile trip. If Slonaker was going to make up the lost time, he was going to have

FLETCHER H. SWAN COLLECTION

FLETCHER H. SWAN

Slonaker's grandchildren look on as he climbs down from Alco PA diesel No. 51 in September 1947, as a symbolic ending to his long career.

to do it soon. Nearing El Toro, he opened the throttle wide for the 10-mile downhill run to Venta. With the scenery blurring past, he motioned for me to look at the speedometer: 108 mph! At the time I was in my Air Corps uniform, flying in the cab of diesel No. 3. Slonaker got the train to Los Angeles on time.

On the morning of September 16, 1947, his 70th birthday, Slonaker walked into the Redondo Junction roundhouse office and turned in his rulebook and switch key to the chief clerk, signaling his retirement. He was No. 2 in seniority, having served 46 years and 4 months in engine service. His last run had been on a *San Diegan* the day before. But, being the private person that he was, Slonaker hadn't even told his fireman that he was making his final trip. A few days later, he was lured to the roundhouse office on the pretense that he had to sign some documents. Fellow enginemen and friends had gathered to present him with a Lord Elgin wristwatch honoring his years of Santa Fe service.

With the scenery blurring past, Slonaker motioned for me to look at the speedometer: 108 mph! At the time I was wearing my Air Corps uniform, flying in the cab of a diesel locomotive.

During his retirement, Slonaker enjoyed "tinkering" around his home and helping people in his neighborhood. He and Emma did quite a bit of traveling, spending time with their grandchildren and devoting time and service to their church. They volunteered countless hours in various ways to their community.

Galard Slonaker passed away on March 9, 1961, at the age of 84. His wife told me he died while doing what he enjoyed most, tinkering at his garage workbench. At his funeral four days later, the large hillside church at Rose Hills Memorial Park in his adopted hometown of Whittier was filled to capacity with family, railroad officials, fellow enginemen, and several hundred others whose lives had been touched by this talented and kind gentleman, a true professional in every respect. ■

The 80-mph restaurant

Anyone who has worked in a successful restaurant is familiar with the controlled chaos of the dinner hour. To produce a pleasant dining experience for the patrons, great feats of timing, dexterity, and artistry are required of the staff. It's demanding work in a conventional eatery, but imagine a 48-seat restaurant in a 10x85-foot area that includes pantry and kitchen, mounted on wheels, and hurtling at speeds of 80 mph or more over distances of hundreds or even thousands of miles. That's the tall order dining car crews were expected to fill routinely as they produced meals that were meant not merely to satiate but to be of such quality as to entice customers to the trains. This post-World War II publicity photo of a Chicago & Eastern Illinois diner shows the ideal: The steward beckons us in, cheerful waiters are ready to serve, and passengers dine in relaxed elegance. Unseen behind the camera is the galley, where a team of cooks worked culinary miracles.

CHICAGO & EASTERN ILLINOIS

CHARLES WHIPP PHOTO, COURTESY CHUCK GELETZKE

Looking like a Pontiac–Oxford gravel train is GTW's "Salt Line" local north of Durand, Mich., in the 1970s behind a former passenger GP9, similar to the power on the last "Mud Run." The three hoppers of scrap behind 4930, though, have an interesting Mud Run history.

The last MUD RUN

How Grand Trunk Western hauled aggregates from "the World's Largest Gravel Pit"

BY **CHARLES H. "CHUCK" GELETZKE JR.**

TWO PHOTOS, J. DAVID INGLES

In August 1959, the last summer for GTW steam, 2-8-2 4070 nears the mainline junction north of Pontiac yard with loads on the return leg of an Oxford Mud Run.

As a youngster, I lived with my grandparents on Kenilworth Street in Royal Oak, Mich., and from the time I was about two or three years old I was aware of the railroad. By the time I was four, it was my major focus. While I was not cognizant of it, of course, this awareness gradually expanded. From an exploration of geography, commerce, and history, these interests eventually coalesced into a career path.

At the end of our block, where the street dead-ended at the tracks of the Grand Trunk Western Railway, was the Ferris-Gardner Coal Co. One of my earliest recollections is of watching one of the coal yard's workers using a bar and a sledge-hammer to dislodge frozen coal from a hopper car. Eventually he tired of the attempt, and I watched as he placed a stick of dynamite in one of the car's pockets . . . and with a tremendous *BOOM*, the coal was blown out of the car. This was quite a spectacle for a small boy.

Years later, after I went to work for the Delray Connecting Railroad on Zug Island in "downriver" Detroit, I had another revelation of how hopper cars took a continuous beating. I noted how the hoppers of coal, coke, limestone, and iron ore that we delivered loaded to Great Lakes Steel Corp. would be returned to us with all the gaskets and rubber diaphragms burned out of the air-brake system because the cars had been allowed to sit in the thawing shed for too long.

Meantime, shift your attention northward and back in time. Forty thousand years ago, as the last Ice Age subsided and the glaciers receded, they deposited some of the finest and cleanest gravel in the world in the vicinity of what now is the little town of Oxford, about 35 miles north of the Motor City. In time, Oxford billed itself as "The World's Largest Gravel Pit." Moreover, a point many people today are unaware of is that north and west of there, in the Saginaw Valley, Michigan also has

TWO PHOTOS, J. DAVID INGLES

Three-pocket, 70-ton ACF hoppers just a few years old dominate a Mud Run as 2-8-2 4070 (renumbered from 3734) readies a scale-track move at Oxford in August 1959. The Mike survives, in Cleveland, after an excursion career including on the Cuyahoga Valley.

vast deposits of steam coal.

This region extends roughly from the Tri-City area of Bay City, Saginaw, and Midland southwest as far as Jackson and Albion, and from the east side of Flint west to St. Charles, north of Owosso. The major roads here in the 20th century—Michigan Central, Pere Marquette, Ann Arbor, GTW, and Detroit & Mackinac—all served coal mines. Most of the mining subsided early in the Great Depression, though some continued through World War II. This included mines near Corunna, which friend, artist, author, and state mine expert Mike Delaney says were the last on-line coal mines served by GTW. Among the firms were Corunna Coal Co., Barry Mine, Middletown & Fraser, and the Hedges Mine.

In 1927 the GTW was building its belt line around Pontiac, Mich., and gravel, or "aggregates," traffic would benefit. An ICC document of the time states, "In 1927 there was an average of about five gravel trains a day southbound and that traffic seems to be increasing . . . from Oxford into Pontiac daily." From Pontiac most of this gravel was forwarded to Detroit, where it was used for road and building construction. At the same time, GTW was also transporting a considerable amount of gravel out of New Hudson and Kalamazoo, Mich.

To handle these vast amounts of coal and gravel, GTW had acquired 2,003 hopper cars and 100 general-service gondolas, the majority being 1,983 USRA-design 55-ton hopper cars. While these cars carried the railroad through the 1920s, the Depression, and World War II, by the mid-1950s those cars still remaining were worn out.

A GRAVEL TRAFFIC BOOM

We can only imagine GTW's surprise when the U.S. Air Force announced in the early 1950s that it intended to upgrade the runways at Selfridge Field Air Base near Mount Clemens, Mich., to accommodate the larger and heavier four-engine jets. The base was served exclusively by "the Trunk," and the gravel for the concrete was to come from the pits at Oxford.

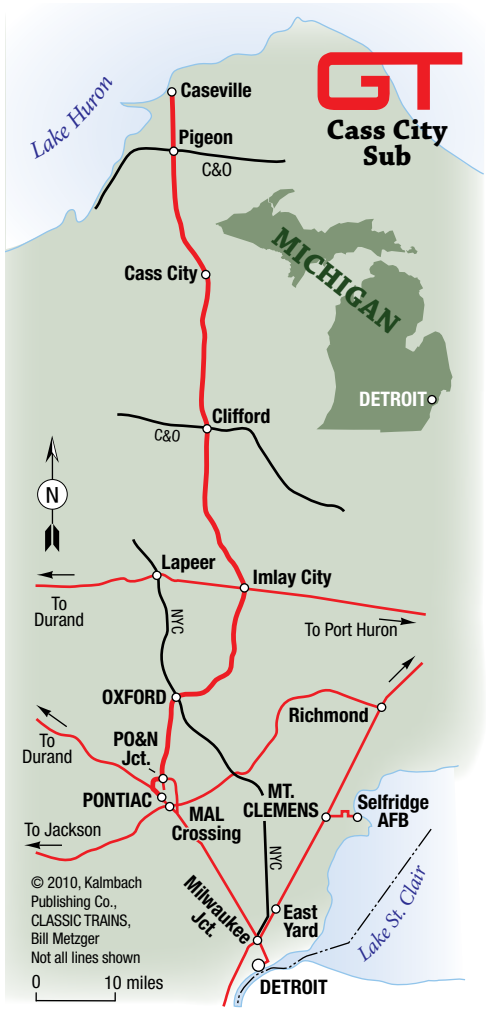
Grand Trunk Western immediately realized that it could not provide enough suitable hopper cars for this traffic, so its management asked the board of directors of owner Canadian National in Montreal for relief. The result would be two lots of three-pocket, 70-ton hopper cars from American Car & Foundry. For the next five years, these cars made the round trip from Oxford to Mount Clemens, via Pontiac and Milwaukee Junction in Detroit, in this service. Operating six days a week through the warmer months, these trains of 40 to 60 cars would load at the two remaining Oxford pits, American Aggregates Corp. and Koenig Fuel & Supply Co. (KAY-nig). A third pit, the Ward Sand & Gravel Co., had closed after World War II.

Oxford is 14 miles north of Pontiac on what otherwise was GTW's lightly trafficked Cass City Subdivision, the old Pontiac, Oxford & Northern that extended all the way up through the central Thumb region of Michigan to the waterfront town of Caseville, about where Saginaw Bay widens into Lake Huron. Some railroaders still called the line "the PO&N."

With the Selfridge gravel traffic coming, GTW upgraded the 70-lb. rail on the Cass City Sub to 100-lb. between PO&N Junction on the northeast side of Pontiac and the yard at Oxford. Additionally, because traffic on the Cass City Sub was still dispatched by telegraph, the Detroit Division dispatcher's telephone line was extended from Pontiac to Oxford.

Trains of empties were assembled in the yard at Pontiac. When one was ready to depart, a "Mud Run," as railroaders called them, would be ordered for a morning departure, usually about 8 o'clock. While the Caseville Local was handled by a 1912 Baldwin hand-fired class J-3-a light Pacific in the 5030 series, Mud Run power was one of Grand Trunk Western's 58 S-3 class 3700-series Mikados, built at Schenectady circa 1920. Supposedly at least once a 6300-series Northern was utilized, but this has never been confirmed.

Upon arriving in Oxford, the train would yard itself in the eight-track facility. The crew then would pull loads from both



I. E. QUASTLER, COURTESY CHUCK GELETZKE

Mikado 3747, a class S-3 1920s Schenectady grad, has just left Pontiac yard July 2, 1959, as she heads around the wye to the belt and the old PO&N, Oxford-bound with empties.

"the Agg" and Koenig. Each of these plants had its own small diesel locomotives, which worked the pits and handled the loading of empties. My father, who grew up in Oxford, recalled steam in the pits, but I have never seen photos. In the '50s, Koenig switched its pit with a pair of GE 45-tonners, while American Aggregates had an interesting roster of a GE 45-tonner, several Whitcombs, at least one Porter, and two former interurban box-cab electrics the had been re-equipped with diesel engines and generators. (The Agg had other southern Michigan pits with similarly exotic power.)

The GTW crew would take the loads back to the yard and then distribute the empties to the pits. In mid-afternoon, they would again "pull" and "spot" the pits—but then the *real* work would begin. Each load had to be switched out and lined up in blocks for its destination. Yes, the majority of the cars were bound for Selfridge Field, but additional blocks were lined up for Koenig's Mack Avenue yard as well as its Seven Mile Road facility, and for Ernst Fuel & Supply Co. and John R Fuel & Supply Co., all in Detroit. Other cars were destined to Lakeside Building Products Co. in Mount Clemens. A final block of "OCS" (Own Company Service) ballast was built for GTW's own use.

Once separated, the cars were weighed—every one of them. Each had to be spotted individually on the scale; then it was allowed to roll free, northward down the main track toward the caboose. One brakeman would ride the hand brake to control the speed as the train's length and tonnage grew. After the entire train had been weighed, the crew would go to dinner while the Oxford agent-operator typed up all the waybills. The train, with the 2-8-2 wyed, would depart for Pontiac later in the evening and, after arriving in Pontiac, the head-end crew would take the locomotive to the roundhouse and the crew would tie up for the day. It probably doesn't need to be mentioned that these were generally 16-hour trips, the maximum allowed then by the Hours-of-Service law.

The next morning another crew would take empties from East Yard, just east of Milwaukee Junction on the line to Mount Clemens, to Pontiac and return with the loads; sometimes they would make two round trips. Later, a third crew would take the loads from East Yard to Mount Clemens, spot them for unloading, and return with the previous day's empties. This routine went on six days a week, eight months a year, for about five years. All these jobs utilized a 3700-series Mike, though occasionally a pair of 1500-series road-service EMD SW1200 switchers would be substituted (GTW bought four in 1955 and nine in '60, to help kill steam).

SHIFTS TO TRUCKS, DIESELS

When the Air Force project was completed in the late '50s, Oxford gravel business returned to normal, and gravel continued to move to various firms in metropolitan Detroit. However, much of this traffic began to move by truck.

Being in an auto-oriented state, the Michigan Legislature has always listened to the automotive and highway lobbyists, so it should be no surprise to learn that since the mid-1950s Michigan has allowed the heaviest trucks in the nation on its roads. Originally 13-axle doubles were allowed for a few years, but after a trial period, a limit of 11 axles was specified, which still is in effect today. While most states allowed a maximum gross vehicle weight of 73,280 lbs., Michigan's trucks—

CHUCK GELETZKE

CHUCK GELETZKE

J. DAVID INGLES

Until succeeded by GP9's, GTW's "steam killer" SW1200's with road trucks handled the Caseville Local on the old PO&N out of Pontiac. The 1516 (above) is at Pontiac in October 1966, while 1512 (top) is light-engine with caboose as northbound train 549 at Cass City in July '67. Hopper 112148 in June '81 at Nolan Yard, Detroit, shows the cars' low status.

called "Michigan Specials"—may weigh 164,000 lbs. Within a few years, GTW's aggregates business began to decline sharply. When I talked with railroad marketing people in the late 1960s, the consensus was that the railroad could not make money hauling sand and gravel.

Oxford gravel trains continued on a small scale, however, and the Mud Run was among the last holdouts for steam as the Trunk operated 0-8-0's, 2-8-2's, 4-6-2's, and 4-8-4's through the 1950s on its Detroit Division. As steam waned, the Detroit–Pontiac–Durand main line got most railfans' attention, but the Caseville Local, with its ancient and attractive Pacifics, and the Oxford gravel runs, with their 2-8-2's, did not escape the spotlight. GTW's well-publicized end of steam came officially in March 1960.

I joined GTW in 1967 as a roundhouse laborer at Pontiac ["My First Day on the Railroad," Spring 20008 CLASSIC TRAINS], and by 1968 I was in train service, working the brakemen's extra board out of Milwaukee Junction. (The place got its name from the early Detroit–Durand–Lake Michigan railroad, the Detroit, Grand Haven & Milwaukee; GTW ran cross-lake carferries, later from Muskegon, Mich., to Wisconsin into the 1970s.) Throughout early summer I would frequently receive a call to deadhead to Pontiac to work a Mud Run, which by this time was operating only two or three times a week.

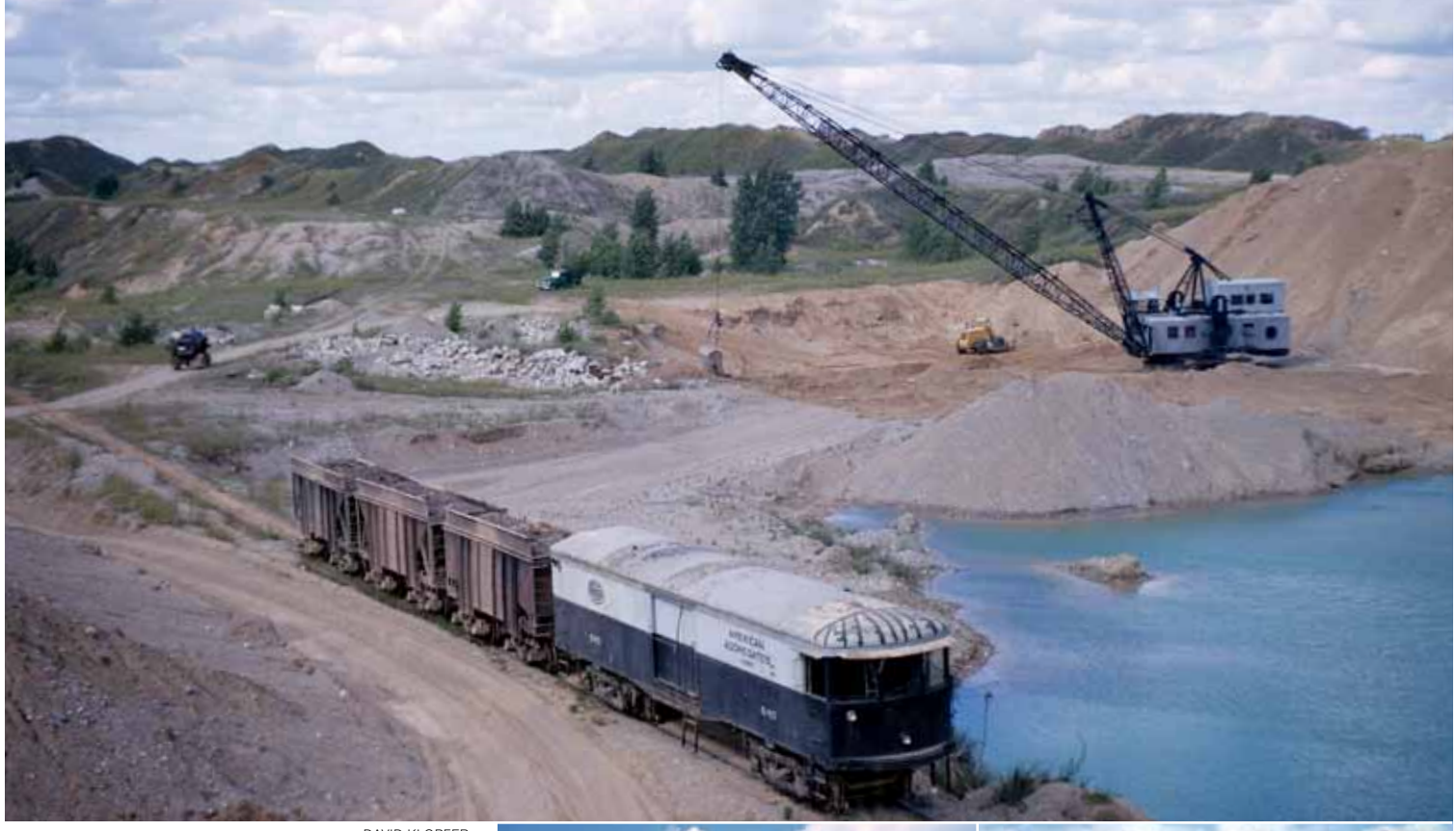
One particularly hot morning up at Oxford, while we were buckling air hoses on the loaded hoppers that we were preparing to pull from American Aggregates, it dawned on me that these 18-year-old boxcar-red GTW hoppers were in much better condition than most of the coal railroads' hoppers that I was used to handling. I assumed it was because these cars spent their lives in aggregates service and during winter were usually stored, so they were not subjected to the rigorous removal of frozen commodities.

On the morning of Friday, August 9, 1968, the crew dispatcher called and said I was ordered to deadhead to Pontiac to work an Extra Mud Run called for 8 a.m. When I arrived at the Johnson Avenue yard office in Pontiac I found I would be working with engineer Tom Lyon, flagman Frank Tejkl, and conductor Roy Lab. I would be the head brakeman. Frank and Roy both deadheaded down from Durand. None of us knew then that this would be the last Mud Run ever called.

After steam was gone, pairs of the "road-switcher" SW1200's (with Flexicoil trucks) were the usual Mud Run power. This day, though, was a rare exception, as we left Pontiac with a single passenger GP9, 4908, and about 50 empty hoppers. As it turned out, we got a message to pick up another GP9, 4539, off train 552, the southbound Caseville Local, which had died on hours of service the previous evening at Oxford. That would certainly be enough power to bring the gravel home.

At Oxford, we went about our usual routine, pulling the loads from the pits and then weighing them. We then discovered that each car was filled only with enough gravel to just cover the hopper pockets. None of us, not even agent-operator Mel Shrontz, knew why. There was one other rarity—each car was billed to the "Agent Pontiac." We assumed they were waiting on disposition and that final billing would take place later, which was not uncommon.

With the billing completed, we departed



DAVID KLOPFER

DAVID KLOPFER

CHUCK GELETZKE

For fans of "critter" units, southern Michigan gravel pits were like gold mines. American Aggregates' Oxford pit stabled two former interurban box-cab electrics (that's No. 640, top, in July 1962) re-equipped with diesel engines and generators; at least one Porter (above left); some Whitcombs; and GE 45-tonners like Koenig Fuel's nearby (above right).

Oxford in late evening with 89 cars, including the Caseville Local's cars, and strained our way back to Pontiac. There we yarded our train and headed for home.

AN UNUSUAL EPILOGUE

It was not until the following Wednesday, August 14, 1968, when I was called to work the Jackson Local, that I got back to Pontiac again. I happened to notice that many of the hoppers that we'd brought back from Oxford the previous week were spotted on the rip track. What I witnessed I had never seen before, nor have I since. Trackmen were inside the cars, leveling out the piles of gravel, while underneath the hoppers, carmen were bolting and welding steel channels to permanently keep the hopper pocket doors from opening. Additionally, carmen were installing "S" irons in the pocket latches to assure that no one would ever try to open the doors again. What were they doing? In about a week I got my answer.

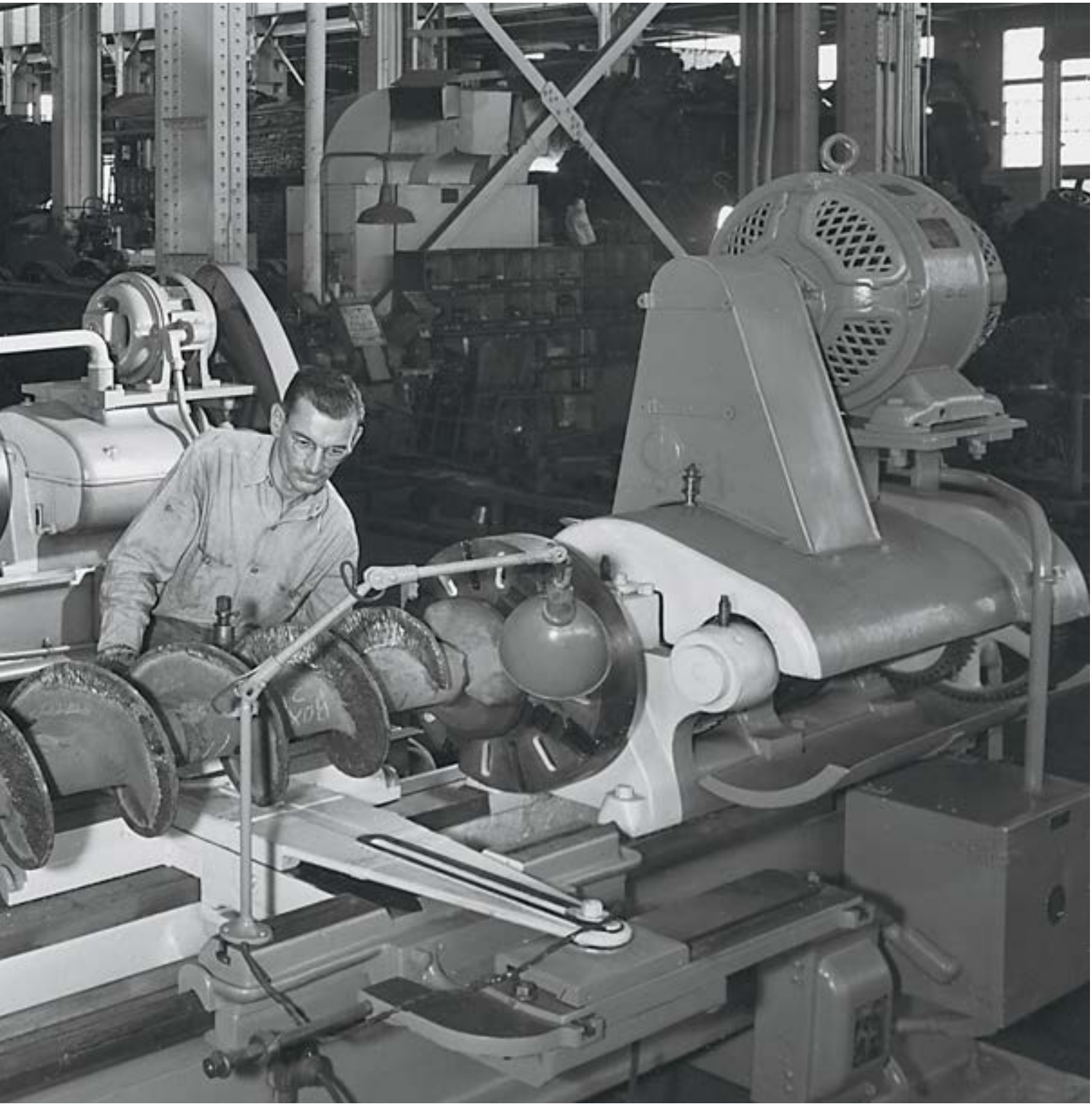
From the 1920s through the 1990s, General Motors was the Trunk's biggest customer, and from the 1940s through the '80s GM provided roughly half the company's annual business. In addition to shipping tremendous quantities of finished automobiles and trucks, the auto companies also shipped large amounts of parts. In making and fabricating the parts, thousands of carloads of scrap were generated. Because scrap was considered a recyclable material, and was not subject to damage, it did not require special handling. It was a heavy commodity that moved on a low freight rate. Therefore, the railroads claimed they did not make much money on hauling scrap, that it was mainly a service they performed in order to participate in handling the higher-revenue freight. Logically, GTW did not want to invest money in new cars that would not produce an adequate return on investment, and so elected to convert the gravel hoppers to scrap-metal "gondolas." This decision left only a handful of company hopper cars available to haul aggregates, and the small amount of stone that was hauled out of Oxford after this change was handled by the Caseville Local, officially trains 549 and 552.

Between 1968 and 1980, these cars shuttled between General Motors and Fisher Body plants in Detroit, Flint, Lansing, Kalamazoo, Pontiac, and other points to the GM foundries in Pontiac, Saginaw, Cleveland, and Defiance, Ohio. In addition to roaming GTW, they were routed over Detroit & Toledo Shore Line, B&O, C&O, Penn Central/Conrail, and other roads. In scrap service the cars deteriorated quickly, and by the late 1970s, those left in service were on their last legs. In 1979 when I was transferred for two years to DTSL ("the Shore Line," owned half and half by GTW and Norfolk & Western, the former Nickel Plate), we had to embargo the receipt of these cars from GTW. I will never forget on one of my first days at Lang Yard in Toledo, one of these rickety, oil-dripping pieces of junk went over the hump . . . and literally disintegrated on impact with a cut of cars down in the bowl! That was the last GTW hopper in assigned scrap service I ever saw.

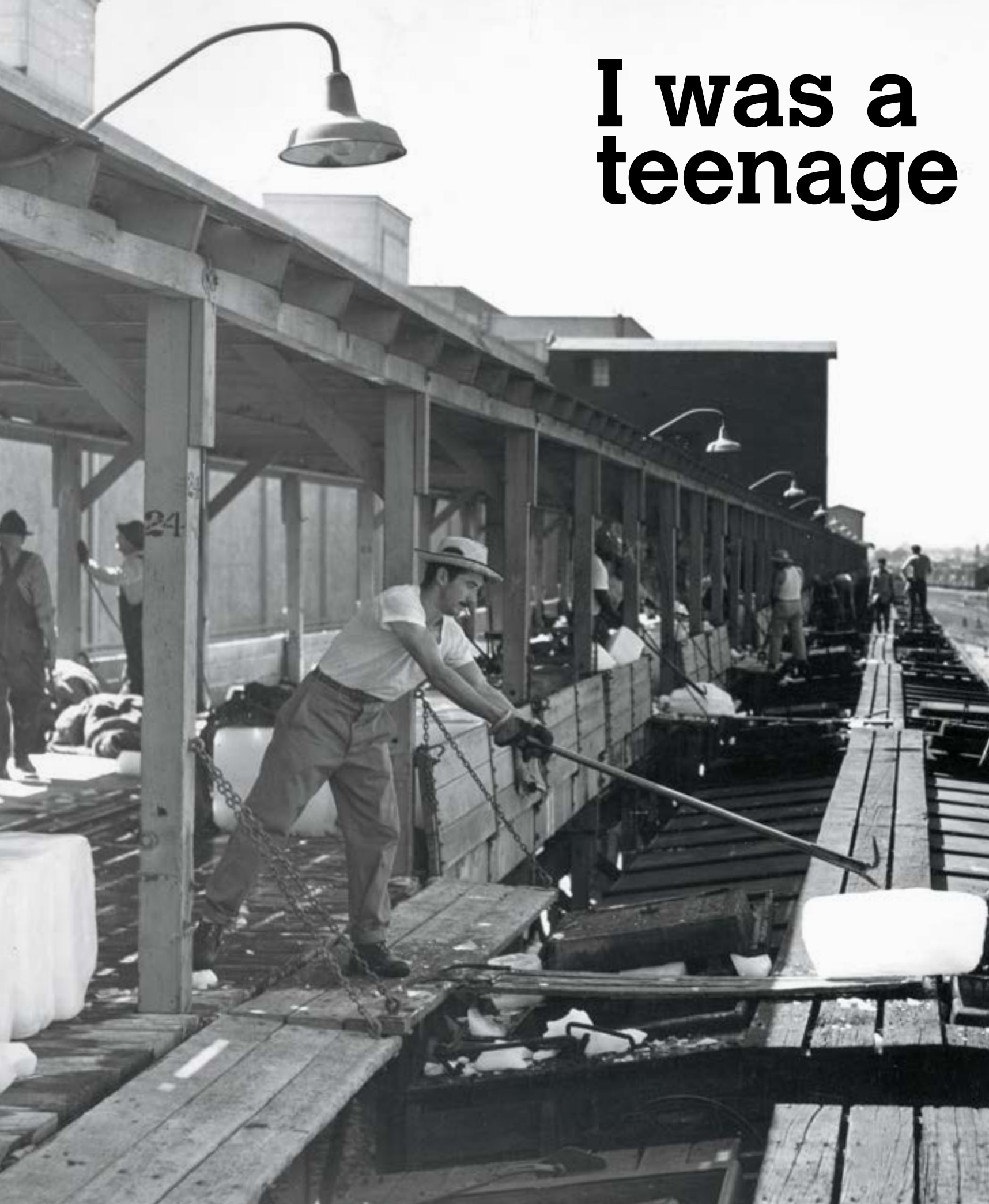
In 1986, the Cass City Sub was abandoned, meaning GTW would no longer haul aggregates out of the World's Largest Gravel Pit. Meanwhile, the "11-axle monsters with 42-wheels around" continue to roll down Michigan's highways.

The boys in the backshop

Steam locomotive fleets required armies of workers to keep them running. In this posed 1940s-era photo inside Chesapeake & Ohio's shops at Huntington, W.Va., two men at lathes are repairing stoker screws for engines like the ones in the background.



CHESAPEAKE & OHIO; JOHN B. CORNS COLLECTION



I was a teenage

ICEMAN

Keeping reefers cool meant dodging 300-pound blocks of ice, avoiding a nasty moving chain, and watching your step 15 feet above the ground

BY **L. GRAHAM "GRAY" DALES**

During the summers of 1949 and '50, before my first two years at college, I worked at the Pacific Fruit Express Co. ice dock in Omaha, Nebr. I was a young, green kid, probably weighing no more than 145 pounds, and certainly an anomaly among the permanent crew, who were considerably older and huskier. There was one other exception, a pre-med student at Brandeis University, who had worked there in previous summers and who was most likely attending college under the GI Bill.

My employment there was as a consequence of some intervention by my father, who was then "Car Distributor" for the PFE at Union Pacific headquarters on Dodge Street. Looking back, I wish I had known more about his position. The eastern railroads returned empty PFE refrigerator cars (which could not be used for other than perishables) to Council Bluffs, just across the Missouri River in Iowa. Then, once the cars were on UP rails, he determined where they would be needed in the produce-growing areas of the West. This involved constant contact with the local PFE agents in these areas as to their assessment of crop conditions, forecasts, and estimates of the supply of cars needed.

My first day began not too badly, assisting the local clerk as he inspected the "reefers" in the Omaha team tracks. He stood on the ground, and I, equipped with his ice pike (a tool very similar to those used by loggers assembling timber rafts) climbed atop the cars awaiting unloading to assess the levels of ice remaining in the bunkers. If the supply was getting low, the cars would have to be re-iced at the local PFE dock. Of course, I was hardly adept at the techniques used to pry open the various types of hatch covers, and really had to guess whether the bunkers were one-half, or three-quarters, or whatever full, plus learn to jump from one roof walk to the next without being overwhelmed by the empty space between the coupled cars. Meanwhile, the clerk waited impatiently on the ground, clearly annoyed at my slowness.

After that, I made my way to the local ice dock, located just

LEFT, JIM MORLEY; ABOVE, UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD MUSEUM

Icemen load reefer bunkers (left) at the big ice dock in Roseville, Calif., on the SP in 1948. Author Dales worked two summers at the Omaha dock, pictured in 1925 (above), before it was shortened.

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD MUSEUM

The Omaha PFE dock got its ice from the Council Bluffs plant, part of the big facility along the UP main line, shown in a late 1960s view.

north of the street bridge between Omaha and Council Bluffs, not far from the UP shops. There was a small yard there, with the dock at one side of it. On the other side were the leads to the shops and a connecting track to the Illinois Central. To the east lay the Missouri River. At the other side of the yard was an uneven track that provided access to Omaha Union Station for Missouri Pacific passenger trains, which circled downtown's west side from the south and actually entered downtown Omaha from the north.

The Omaha ice dock is not to be confused with the much larger and more active one in Council Bluffs. In the busy seasons, the Council Bluffs dock would see up to 100 reefers at a time on each of its two tracks and was capable of re-icing such a train in 30 minutes or so. The Omaha facility served only the local needs, re-icing the cars identified as needing work, or pre-icing the cars that would be used by the local Swanson's plant to ship frozen vegetables. I don't recall that we did any work for the packing plants in South Omaha.

By the time I went to work at the Omaha dock, it had been shortened considerably from its original configuration. The ice house had been cut back to only 25 or 30 feet, and was no longer used to store ice. Our ice was shipped over from Council Bluffs in reefers no longer suitable for revenue work, and the ice was stored in them until needed. There were once team tracks adjacent to the Omaha dock, but that function had been moved uptown to the edge of a manufacturing and warehouse district where it was more convenient for access by brokers' and wholesalers' trucks. This area of the city was served by a maze of street trackage to individual sidings, with very sharp curves and short, steep grades.

I was "welcomed" in the office shack by the regular crew, who had pretty obvious scorn for a scrawny kid like me. I was given a brief tour of the dock, with pointed references to the hazards all about, which included a wicked endless chain with lugs on it, running in a slot in the flooring, and the narrow aprons that, hinged to the edge of the deck, dropped down to reduce the gap between the dock proper and the roofs of the cars that were spotted there periodically by a UP switch engine. While the dock was equipped to deliver ice from both sides, only the western side was used during my time there; the other track was often used for temporary storage of cars from the shops.

The most hazardous duty was saved until last. At the north end of the dock, a stairway led down to a small lower deck, at car-floor level, where the ice car from Council Bluffs was spotted. The car doors were kept closed, to keep the contents more or less intact in the heat of a Nebraska summer, and had to be pried open, often with the aid of the omnipresent pike; there was also a ramp of sheet steel, wrestled into position between the car door and the platform, also sheathed in steel. Five or six feet away was the lower cog mechanism for guiding and moving the ominous lugged chain, which ran level for a few feet and then climbed steeply in a trough to take the ice to the upper level. The area was lighted with only a single green-shaded bulb for nighttime use, and there was a switch to control the chain mechanism.

Ice was delivered to us in standard 300-pound blocks, about 2 feet by 4 feet by 16 inches, loaded on end, so that each block came up to my chest. On this, my first tour of duty, the car had been recently spotted and previously unopened, so ice blocks were "right there" when my tutor and I started work. He demonstrated the technique of using the hook of the pike to dig into the top of a block and tip it toward him so it would topple over and be in a position to be guided down the ramp and onto the chain. Simple enough, except that the metal ramp was no more than 4 feet wide, and quickly became slippery with melt-water.

However, with some impatient guidance, I was able to help clear a space about 6 feet wide and half the width of the car. Then, alone, I tackled one block of ice and succeeded in tipping it

toward me. Unfortunately, in the limited space, and with my limited skill, I was unable to evade its fall, so it crashed down against my right shin and foot, resulting in a painful injury and immediately ending my training session!

The boss sent me to the medical office at UP headquarters. After finding no fractures, the doctor sent me home via public bus, with instructions to show up for work the next day. So, I limped into the dock office the next morning, I think somewhat to the surprise of the regular crew. Within a week or two, there arrived several pairs of steel toecaps to be put over whatever footwear was being worn. The old hands generally scorned safety equipment, but I gradually won some degree of acceptance from them.

These regulars filled the time between active icing with maintenance chores and the rest of each shift at ease, telling tall and lurid tales and having smokes. They only grudgingly accepted the delivery of another cut of cars to be re-iced, and were not anxious to spend more time at the task than necessary. In the same sense of camaraderie, they did not relish being the one assigned to the remote end of the platform to "pull ice" from the ice car.

Thus that task usually fell to me. From experience, I knew of their impatience with a slow supply of ice along the chain, so I made an effort to get as much ice as I could, as fast as I could, down the steel ramp and onto the chain. Ultimately, I was able to supply ice faster than they could use it, and I was signaled, by the rapid stopping and starting of the chain, that they had enough. Upon climbing back to the upper level, I would find an array of ice blocks randomly pulled from the chain to avoid a pileup at the immediate work site. These would later be pulled together in a row and covered with burlap to be used later.

Most often, the ice delivered was "new"—clear and hard. Sometimes the blocks had probably been stored too long and had begun to deteriorate, changing to white, like hard-packed snow, and often melted together. These tended to break apart unpredictably into chunks that, while smaller, required more trips down the ramp. Another challenge was the fact that the ice-service cars, as non-revenue equipment, were often in poor repair. Thus one would encounter broken or missing planks from the floor racks, or even totally absent floor racks, with ice stored on the uneven and nail-studded sub-floor with the added challenge of having to raise the blocks over the door sill!

On the upper deck, the work was also inherently risky. One always had to be mindful of the open, moving chain, and of the size and weight of the ice blocks. The tools—the pike and the long iron bars with a U-shaped prong at the end used to break up the ice as it was pushed into the bunkers—were necessarily kept very sharp. Surfaces became slippery, and, after all, one was usually working 15 or more feet above ground. Moreover, when you were icing the bunkers on the far side of a car, a narrow ramp, probably no more than a foot wide, was placed between the apron and the roof walk of the car, so blocks of ice could be slid into place to be "barred" into smaller pieces by the "barman" standing on the car roof. Yes, danger was everywhere.

Then, on cars requiring salt as well as ice to reduce the temperature inside even more (like those destined to Swanson's to be loaded with frozen vegetables), wheelbarrows of salt had to be dumped into each bunker. Bulk rock salt, delivered in boxcars from quarries in Kansas, was kept in a bin beneath the upper deck. A chain hoist with a dragline was used to remove the salt from the car, an unpleasant task in the summer heat and humidity, and again to raise the salt to platform level to be loaded into wheelbarrows and thence along the platform and out on the apron . . . or even more challenging, along the extension plank to be tipped up and dumped into an open bunker. Now, a wheelbarrow is not a very stable vehicle when under way, particularly when loaded with a couple of hundred pounds of salt, usually unevenly distributed and handled by a skinny kid about half the combined weight of the load and wheelbarrow. Thus my ventures out onto the ramp, with empty space beneath me down to track level, and my skeptical co-workers looking on, were anxious moments, particularly when I had to take a step back to dump the salt into the bunker!

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Dales was often stuck with the lonely job of unloading blocks of ice and placing them on the chain for movement to the top deck.

Another frightening moment came in the dark of night when I was, typically, alone in the ice car and there was a sudden jolt, causing the blocks of ice to totter alarmingly. These cars were always blue-flagged, meaning that work was in progress and they were not to be disturbed. When I scrambled to the door, I found the steel ramp wedged between the car and the edge of the dock, and, sure enough, a switch-engine crew had shoved another car into the stationary ones!

Over time, I was more or less accepted as a reasonable facsimile of an iceman, and when I returned the second summer I was given a decent welcome back. One evening, the crew decided that a watermelon would be nice, so the youngest member of the regular gang, who had a motorcycle, was sent on this errand with me becoming the designated melon-carrier for the return trip. This left me with no handhold, but there was no way I was going to imperil the feast and embarrass myself by falling off! After a thorough cooling-off in a bin filled with salted ice, the melon was soon consumed, with the rinds disposed of in a nearby empty gondola.

It would be nice to report that this "basic training" at the Omaha ice dock led to a railroad career. However, such was not to be, for events led me the following year into the airline business, where I remained for 30-some years.

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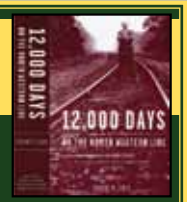

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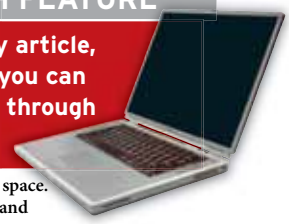

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