The BN Expediter

Volume 20, Number 1 *January 2012*

BNSF SM

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway

The official publication of the *Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad*, the historical society focused on the *Burlington Northern Railroad* and the *BNSF RAILWAY*

BN SD70MAC 9917

BNSF 9917 started out as an Overland Models unpainted SD70MAC which I painted, decaled and weathered. Shown here on the Hills Model Railway Society Springfield HO layout.

Regards, Rodney Dunshea from Sydney Australia

GP50s For Sale

Three mint condition, HO scale Overland Models GP-50s, one each of the first two deliveries and one of the extended cab versions. All unpainted, mint condition, never run, original boxes.

I would like to sell all three as a group and not split them, $1200 or best offer, for the 3.

Overland No., model and road numbers:

OMI-5126 BN GP-50 3100-3109
Phase I (Frisco ordered-BN delivered)
OMI-5143 BN GP-50 3110-3157
OMI-5144 BN GP-50 3158-3162
(5-man crew cab.)

If interested contact Dennis Popish,
qchooch@aol.com

Sustaining Members

The Board of Directors would like to take this opportunity to thank our Sustaining Members for 2011. Their extra contributions to the finances of the FOBNR has helped us to continue bringing you the quality and quantity of BN/BNSF related information.

John Adams, M.D.; Doug Andreason; John Baker; Joseph Beasley; Tom Bentley; R. L. Blaisdell; Joe Boeltl; James Bradley; Jay Burkgart; Robert Carlson; Bill Chapple; Kent Charles; Gayle Christen; Craig Connell; Earl Currie; Charles Davis; Rodney Dunshea; Duane Durr; Peter Ferch; Roger Field; John Flodin; Wade Griffis; Gerald Grossman; Thomas Hawley; Robert Heninger; Mark Herrick; Kristopher Johnson; Jesper Kaae; Steve Koberstein; James Kreger; Mark Lembersky; Joe Lewis; William McCafferty; Donald McKenzie; Alan Meyer; William Miotek; Allen Moore; Gary Muehlius; David Obetz; Dave Poplawski; T Michael Power; Anthony Raimondi; Richard Rehn; Kim Saign; Gary Seymour; Patrick Slater; Bryan Smith; David Smith; Joe Snider; Lawrence Stephens; Frederick Theiss; Aric Van de Vord; Konstantin Wacker; Craig Wilson; Gary Wlodarczyk; Dick Worth

New 2012 Convention Date

The board decided to change the date of the FOBNR 2012 convention in Amarillo, TX to June 13-16, 2012.

Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad
PO Box 271, West Bend, WI 53095-0271
www.fobnr.org
A Not-For-Profit Corporation
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The Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad (FOBNR) was formed to gather, preserve, and share information about the history, current operations, and future development of the Burlington Northern Railroad and its successors. It follows the evolution of the railroad from its inception in 1970 with the merger of the Great Northern; Northern Pacific; Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy; and the Spokane Portland and Seattle Railroads, along with the 1980 acquisition of the Frisco. We are a 501c (3) non-profit corporation.

The purpose of the FOBNR is educational. We wish to perpetuate the history of the Burlington Northern Railroad and its successors. We seek to collect and preserve any materials which help establish or illustrate the life, conditions, events, and activities of the railroad. We will disseminate this information through the publication of a newsletter, establishment of a web site, by maintaining an archive, and by conducting an annual convention somewhere along the lines operated by the railroad. We may also publish information in other media and may restore and operate historical railway equipment.

Regular membership is $25.00/year; Sustaining membership is $50.00/year; Junior membership (16 and under) is $10.00/year. The Membership year is from January 1 to December 31. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above for more information.

The FOBNR is not supported by, nor affiliated in any way with, the BNSF Railway Co., its subsidiaries or affiliates.

The BN Expediter

The BN Expediter is published four times a year and is included with membership in the Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad. Manuscripts, photographs and information are welcomed for publication. Materials are submitted with the understanding that no monetary compensation will be paid upon publication. Items will be returned only if requested. Otherwise they will go into the archives.

Anything published in *The BN Expediter* (including the classifieds), must be focused on the Burlington Northern Railroad, from the 1970 merger on. Information and/or pictures that give historical perspective or context are acceptable (e.g., pre-merger road numbers). The disposition of a locomotive, other piece of equipment or property is also acceptable. Further information is available from the Editor.

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Congratulations

FOBNR member Burr Stewart had an article published in the LDSIG magazine "Layout Design Journal: 43" in Summer 2011, on the Everett Bayside yard portion of his BN layout.

During the 2008 Seattle Convention Burr opened his layout to the group for an operating session.

Front Cover

BN 4240, an ALCo C-424, is the former SP&S 300, still moving freight north through its old stomping ground of Vancouver, Washington, along with C-424 4246 (SP&S 306) and EMD GP30 2214 (GN 3014). All three locomotives were built between 1963-4, with the ALCos going off the property towards the end of 1980 for a second life in the short line world. The North Bank Road rostered seven of the C-424s built for the U.S. market (out of total of 98). An additional 92 units were built at the Montreal Locomotive Works for the Canadian market. BN 2214 soldiered on after being rebuilt by BN into a GP39M.

-J.A. Phillips, III collection

Back Cover

BN 4185, an ALCo RS-11, built in July, 1958, as NP 905. Shortly after merger BN sent most of its ALCos to the former SP&S territory, where they could be seen throughout most of the 1970s. The 4185 went off the property, along with the two C-424s on the cover of this issue, in August, 1980. The NP rostered eighteen RS-11s, and they spent most of their time on the Main Street of the Northwest working on the east end of the system, especially in the Twin Ports area in the run-up to the BN merger. Today, not only the RS-11 is long gone, but the former SP&S engine facility at Hoyt Street is nothing but a memory as well.

-J.A. Phillips, III collection

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You Name It!

Views of the Portland Region as from the pages of the Columbia Hot Line, *Part One*

J.A. Phillips, III

Employee newsletters are an unsung resource of a railroad history. Tragically, they often have a very short shelf life before being consigned to the dustbin of history. The information in this article is drawn from a small collection of the Portland Region's Columbia Hot Line *starting with Volume 1, Number 1, from October, 1971, and ending with Volume 6, Number 1—December/January 1975/1976. The collection, and thus the information available, is by no means complete. If you have copies of this newsletter you would be willing to share with others, please contact the editor.*

The No Name Newsletter

In October, 1971, more than a year-and-a-half after M-Day, Burlington Northern's Portland Region debuted a new employee newsletter. The first issue, which bore the uninspiring title, "Portland Regional Publication," clearly noted that the official title had yet to be determined. In fact, the title was being left to the 3,875 full-time employees on the region, as the only other information on the masthead, apart from the BN logo, was a question in large type—"What's My Name?"

Editors Roy F. Dahlgren and Tom A. Burke, working out of the former Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railway Freight House at 1101 Northwest Hoyt Street in Portland, included a large write-in box on page one—You Name It! The winner would win a $25 U.S. Savings Bond. (BN President Lou Menk was actively involved in promoting U.S. Savings Bonds at the national level; into the 1980s employee contests, employee newsletters, even private citizens who helped BN prevent an accident, involved some sort of savings bond tie-in.) In the November issue the editors rolled out the newsletter's new name—*The Columbia Hot Line*. The winner was Donald E. Ohman, a clerk in Pasco, Washington, with four years' seniority.

While the newsletter carried a great amount of dated information of less interest to the history of railroading in the Pacific Northwest, almost every issue also included a little insight into the people and business of the Portland Region. Once the public service announcements were cleared away (each issue carried the standard reportage on Savings Bonds drives, blood drives, company picnics and golf tournaments, Explorer's posts and the founding of BN Veterans chapters), readers were left with one to three good pieces of information about the operations of BN in

Portland ,OR November 1977.
-J.A. Phillips, III collection, K.M. Ardinger photo

general and the Portland Region in particular. Oddly enough, lists of recent retirees—a traditional staple of employee newsletters such as the Burlington's *Bulletin*, the Great Northern's *Talking it Over*, the Northern Pacific's *Tell Tale*, and the SP&S *Dope Bucket*—was not begun until the publication of the February, 1975, issue.

Dahlgren and Burke noted there was a heavy request for a retirement announcement service as early as January, 1974, and it was stated such announcements would be carried beginning in February, 1974. Unfortunately, more than a year passed before a roll of honor started to appear regularly in *Columbia Hot Line* issues. Two of the veterans retiring early in 1975 included long-time NP Agent Jack Flagg (January 6, 1975, from Kalama, Washington), and Robert E. Leifeste, manifest clerk at Klamath Falls. Leifeste had an wide-ranging career, having started out on the GN as an ore dock laborer at Superior, Wisconsin, in 1936, before transferring to Bieber, California, as a yard clerk in 1949. Promoted to manifest clerk at K Falls in 1949, he retired at that point on January 3, 1975.

East Washougal,WA February 1978.
-J.A. Phillips, III collection, K.M. Ardinger photo.

Meet Harry J. Surles…

In October, 1971, Regional Vice-President Harry J. Surles was ensconced in the American Bank Building in downtown Portland. (American Bank had rail offices well before merger—the NP's freight and passenger agents were both headquartered in the building, along with the NP's wire-relay services, keeping track of the railway's traffic out of Portland and Oregon.) Born in Everett, Washington, the 56-year-old Surles joined the GN as a track laborer in June, 1931. A graduate of the University of Oregon, the GN sent Surles to the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School in 1959. Attending AMP was heavily promoted by the GN, and later the NP, a tradition which continued after merger. Prior to Portland, Surles' career included such diverse jobs as brakeman out of K Falls in the midst of the Great Depression; assistant to the division superintendent at Minot; service in the U.S. Army during World War Two, then terminal trainmaster in Spokane, and just before merger, general superintendent of transportation at St. Paul. Wife, two kids, Shriner.

Surles was very much an exemplar of the GN and BN way of doing business. In contrast to the us-versus-them mentality which developed during the disastrous Penn-Central merger, BN officials made a conscious decision to mix up the operating officers of the company. People from one line and one career path suddenly found themselves confronted with new challenges, usually in a new locale on a new line. In Surles' opening remarks in the *Hot Line*, he touched on one of the basic tenets of the old Hill Lines. "In some respects we are still a new family, brought together by the merger. In other respects, we are an old family, in that our associate predecessor lines did work together as a family, and additionally, all rails are kin to one another." It is difficult to fathom today the fierce company loyalty employees had to their predecessor lines, or the depth of familial relations spread across those systems. Surles' also included a very informal touch in his opening statement. "I am making my best effort to

meet each of you personally, but I am outnumbered 3,800-to-one, and I would be very appreciative if you would collar me on the first chance you have."

…and the Portland Region

BN's far-flung empire in the Pacific Northwest was redesigned several times as St. Paul struggled to get it right in the early years following M-Day. In the 1971-2 period, the Portland Region included a conglomeration of lines, most inherited from the Northwest's Own Railway, the SP&S. Included in this part of the "head of the rake," as James J. Hill liked to call it, was the SP&S/NP line from Portland out to Astoria; the former SP&S/Oregon Electric line from Portland down to Eugene via Cornelius Pass; the former NP main from Portland up to Centralia; the former NP branches from the Centralia-Chehalis area out to the Pacific Coast at Hoquiam and Aberdeen (Grays Harbor) and Raymond and South Bend; the former SP&S main from Portland to Vancouver and east to the Tri-Cities of Washington via Wishram; the SP&S/Oregon Trunk from Wishram south to Bieber in California; the former NP from the Tri-Cities into Yakima; the NP and SP&S mains from the Tri-Cities east toward Spokane at Connell; and an assortment of associated branch lines around the region.

In addition to the branches, the Portland Region was also responsible, in part, for several joint operations. Included in this portfolio were the Camas Prairie Railroad, 255 miles of former NP-Union Pacific operation with trackage in Idaho and Washington; the NP's Walla Walla Valley Railway (Walla Walla and Milton-Freewater, Oregon); the Oregon, California and Eastern (63 miles from Klamath Falls to Bly, a joint with the Southern Pacific); the Portland Terminal; the Longview Switching Company; and finally 34 miles from Lookout to Hambone, California, operated by the McCloud River Railroad on behalf of BN and the Western Pacific.

Every week the Portland Region was operating between 85,000 and 95,000 freight train miles—a statistic which put the region at "the highest level of activity for the mileage involved." The traffic moving across the region included 60 percent of the plywood, 47 percent of the potatoes, 43 percent of the frozen food, 42 percent of the lumber products (other than plywood), 36 percent of the logs, pulpwood and chips, 29 percent of all other food products, 26 percent of the paper products, and fifteen percent of the apples on the system. Summing up in the first

Mishap on the OE Line in NW Portland in August 1979. -J.A. Phillips, III collection

Southbound at Kelso, WA in May 1977.
-J.A. Phillips, III collection.

issue of the *Hot Line*, Surles wrote, "Our 2,357 miles of track do a lot for the company. We generate fourteen percent of BN's total revenue, although our trackage represents but ten percent of the system total, and we have the largest division in the entire company."

At this point in BN's brief history, the railroad was not only struggling with its basic integration of plant and personnel, but also the infant stages of a coal boom in the heart of its system. Though the NP started unit coal runs out of the Powder River Basin in 1968, the flood of coal out of Montana and Wyoming was traffic the merger had neither anticipated nor planned for. The build-up of former Q and NP lines to handle this traffic was just beginning and take an entire decade to come to terms with. While this was going, the Portland Region handled its traditional flow of forest products to the Middle West and East Coast. In addition to this, the region handled an ever-increasing movement of bulk grain down the Columbia to large export elevators at Portland, Kalama-Longview, Tacoma and Seattle. In the 1960s, this traffic, formerly moved in single box cars equipped with grain doors, began moving in newly purchased covered hoppers. After M-Day grain traffic would march steadily towards solid strings of covered hoppers moving in dedicated unit trains.

COMPASS

From an operational standpoint, tracking this traffic was something done by hand well into the 1960s. Yard clerks, manifest clerks, assistant superintendents of transportation, general superintendents of transportation, vice-presidents of traffic used a myriad of forms, telegraphing and telephoning endless lists of cars to offices in far-off St. Paul to track shipments, re-route shipments, and take care of the voluminous amount of paperwork involved in shipping a single car by rail. The NP alone almost half a dozen offices across its system dedicated to just *moving* this flow of information—by Morse!

Thus, it should not be surprising that the second article in the first issue of the *Hot Line* was dedicated to COMPASS. BN's Complete Operating Movement Processing and Service System (COMPASS) was a computer system designed to take over the flow of information that railroaders handled with pencils and telegraph bugs for more than a hundred years. Based on a system developed by Stanford, IBM and the Southern Pacific's Total Operations Processing System, COMPASS was designed to link the empire with St. Paul via a computer network. BN spent $8 million on the system, and the first region to go live was Portland. Starting with an installation at K Falls on June 30, workstations were quickly opened at Bend, Wishram, Eugene,

Albany, Astoria, St. Helens, Portland, Willbridge, Vancouver, Longview, Centralia, Hoquiam, Yakima, Toppenish, Pasco, Connell, Wheeler and Walla Walla.

Two IBM System 360 Model 65 computers in St. Paul were linked to IBM 2770 and 1050 units in outlying offices. The Model 65 was the main frame in St. Paul; the IBM 2770s were interactive terminals in the field, the IBM 1050s was the teleprocessing system—reader, punch and console typewriter. BN ultimately planned to operate 160 workstations across the system, providing information for yardmasters, dispatchers, superintendents, as well as the Transportation, Marketing and Mechanical departments. The great novelty of this, the *Hot Line* noted, was that employees would now have the information "now" in "real-time," rather than waiting for hours (or days) for a reply via telephone (or more likely, telegram). Such was the effect of being able to sit at the IBM 1050 terminal, type in a request for information, and get a nearly instantaneous message back from the main frame in St. Paul. For the first time, railroaders were going "on-line." (As a historical note, the Model 65 debuted in November, 1965, and featured about sixteen megabytes of memory; the only Model 65 computers left today are in the hands of the Smithsonian and the Computing Science Department at Stanford.) With COMPASS, yardmasters could get instant condition reports showing the number of loads, empties, and tons on hands for each destination to help smooth out operating schedules. A superintendent could pull a list of delayed cars or trains to determine trouble spots. The Marketing Department could now trace individual cars, get their complete waybill information, even *find* the exact location of a box car.

In the current era of digital information via the Web and e-mail, the inability of an S&P 500 company to locate a box car—a piece of equipment worth tens of thousands of dollars *empty*—may seem incredible. However, in this same period Alfred E. Perlman, ousted as vice-chairman of Penn-Central as that road slid into bankruptcy, was installed as chairman of the struggling WP. Perlman, who cut his teeth in civil engineering positions on first the NP and then the Q, asked for the number of cars on the 1,000-mile WP system. The answer received—*16,000 cars*. Not only incredible—*impossible*—said Perlman, who knew 16,000 cars on a 1,000-mile system translated to instant and complete gridlock. To get the correct answer, Perlman ordered a hand-count of every car in every yard and every siding on the Feather River Route. Going back to the century-old by-hand system gave the WP's leadership a far more reasonable (and far more fluid) answer of about 7,500 cars.

Eastbound at Lake Yard (Portland ,OR) in August 1978. -J.A. Phillips, III collection

"Increasing the utilization of the 100,000 freight cars and 2,000 diesel engines in use daily on our 25,000-mile network," Harry Surles stated, was a primary goal of the huge amount of money being spent on COMPASS. The increase in freight car utilization was all-important. "With 100,000 cars on our lines on any given day," increased utilization had the same effect as "adding 15,000 cars to our fleet." In the 1970s the investment in a single box car typically

translated to, at the best of times, one revenue trip per month. Facing huge capital outlays for the build out in the Powder River Basin, increasing trips for an average box car had the immediate benefit of increased revenue to BN, as well as freeing up scarce resources for investment elsewhere. With luck, spotting the box car at a shipper's door satisfied what at times seemed like an insatiable demand for equipment from BN's customers. Given the amount of work involved in, and the capital investment in, and the low return on investment a single box car load produced, is it any wonder that railroad management became enamored with handling bulk commodities in large unit train shipments?

Edward M. Berntsen of the BN's Transportation Department noted in the *Hot Line* that the Seattle Region at Tacoma and Auburn would cut over to COMPASS in October, 1971. Seattle and Everett would follow in November. Vancouver, B.C., Bellingham and Spokane would be up and running by Christmas. From Spokane, the COMPASS installation teams would work their way east, with the goal of reaching St. Paul by August, 1972. "The Chicago and Omaha regions, and the Colorado and Southern and Ft. Worth and Denver railways will be cut over during 1973. In the meantime," Berntsen stated, "advanced phases such as COMPASS car distribution will be started on the Portland Region."

6609 and 4246 in Pasco, WA in June 1977.
Transfer at Lake Yard in May 1978.
-J.A. Phillips, III collection, K.M. Ardinger photos

North Dakota Flooding

photos by Al Christianson

In June 2011, the Souris River in Minot, ND saw the worst flooding in the last 130 years. The Souris River crested at six and a half feet over flood stage impacting the entire city; around four thousand homes were under water and eleven thousand people were evacuated.

The BNSF engineering team built a berm around the Amtrak station and other facilities to keep them dry.

A berm was constructed around the Amtrak station in Minot to keep it dry. After the flood waters receded, it was a broken water pipe that kept it closed.

The BNSF office and crew change at Minot. Top flooded, bottom high and dry.

The Souris River over takes Soo Tower in Minot. The levees in Minot were built to withstand around 9,000 CFS from the Souris River, at its peak the rivers was at 29,000 CFS.

The BN Merger: *An Encouragement that Perseverance Can Prevail*

By Dave Burns

Not everyone is familiar with the fact that it took three-plus attempts to create Burlington Northern out of the Burlington, Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and the Spokane, Portland and Seattle. Among the first was the Northern Securities case in 1904, the first merger to be rejected by the federal government under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. The second was a protracted effort from 1925 through 1931, when the merger application was withdrawn in the face of seemingly implacable opposition.

The third began in 1955 and was even lengthier. The first six years were consumed in a massive study by Wyer Dick and Company—not just as to the feasibility and benefits, but also to identify and satisfy in advance as many of the anticipated objections as possible. From 1962 to 1964, extensive public hearings were conducted by Interstate Commerce Commission Examiner Robert H. Murphy, who recommended approval in his report to the full commission on August 24, 1964. The full commission entertained the subsequent filings of exception and opposition another two years until their surprising decision on April 27, 1966 to reject the merger application by a six-to-five vote.

Rather than give up, the northern lines promptly petitioned the ICC for reconsideration, and set out to address even more of the oppositional concerns. Indeed, by year's end the Chicago and North Western and the Milwaukee Road, plus four states and the Province of British Columbia, had withdrawn their opposition. After further lengthy hearings in 1967 the ICC, on November 30, 1967, reversed its previous rejection and gave its approval. May 10, 1968 was set as the date for actual unification.

Detailed merger planning now took on a new urgency. While there had been lots of groundwork done, there is nothing like an actual deadline to focus one's mind on the nuts and bolts of just how to consolidate four lines into one seamless Burlington Northern Railroad. Even non-railroaders can appreciate the hurdles every department faced: not just Operating, but Accounting, Engineering, Mechanical, Labor Relations, Personnel, Marketing and the fledgling Information Technology departments. As one of those actively involved, I assure you this was a mind-boggling affair, full of peculiarities, surprises, snags and complexities that at times could seem overwhelming. It is that effort I wish to describe from my vantage point as a GN staff officer, initially in Labor Relations and then Operations.

I joined the GN in September, 1959, then fulfilled my military obligation, after which I resumed GN's innovative Management Trainee Program in February, 1963. By 1966, I had worked my way up to a coveted trainmaster position in Great Falls, Montana. Imagine my concern and consternation after only *three months* there to be reassigned as a staff officer at the St. Paul headquarters! My fear was that I was being sidetracked into a position from which I might never escape back into line operations. Instead, however, I found myself involved in the very hotbed of merger implementation planning. I kept a diary of what I got involved in, and experienced some of my reactions and observations, which I hope you might find as interesting and informative as did I. The merger clock was ticking away toward M-Day, May 10, 1968, and failure was not an option.

My diary entry for October 1, 1966, the day I reported to St. Paul, reads "Arrived at Bastille 0700." It reflected my premonitions of captivity—a feeling akin to arriving at the Bastille Saint-Antoine—the notorious French state prison. The first two days opened my eyes to the complexities of Labor Relations—thirteen different labor unions and agreements, complicated work rules in each, an endless stream of claims of improper pay or improper application of agreements, settlements to be negotiated or submitted to the National Railroad Adjustment Board for arbitration—all while trying to get ready for a merger in nineteen months. I quickly shed my prejudice that staff officers enjoyed cushy eight-hour days in contrast to the long and uncertain hours in line operations. I also quickly discovered my writing and speaking skill levels had to grow greatly in order to function in this environment. Fortunately, I had excellent teachers, and these improved skills were to be of immense help to me when I did get back out into the field in 1969.

One way we got ourselves and line operating officers into very detailed (and ultimately invaluable) merger planning was a questionnaire developed for use at each common point (where two or more of the four roads touched). It was divided into three basic sections: what are you now operating sepa-

rately, what do you wish to combine on M-Day, and what needs to be changed or arranged to do that (notices, pay rules to apply, seniority roster dovetailing, on and off duty points, etc.). While simple in concept, filling it in and then making actionable sense out of it was extremely difficult. It became apparent this could best be done face to face in the field.

Because I had some operating experience, I found myself frequently included in these working sessions. Thus, I met a lot of people on all four roads whom I likely might never have, and from that developed not just some firm friendships, but a valuable network I otherwise never could have constructed.

Traditional relationships between rail management and labor have usually been more adversarial than cooperative. Many of the general chairmen maintained this stance regarding the proposed merger, but some slow shifts started occurring on both sides from *Us Versus Them* to *Us*. We encouraged joint local labor-management meetings at regular intervals to avoid surprises from either group and to encourage more joint planning. Rapturous reception was perhaps too much to hope for, but there would prove to be fewer surprises and rumor mongering at those locations that held at least *some* joint meetings.

Not yet renumbered in August, 1970, an NP RS-11 from the 900 series leads a GP35 off the Q and an NP U-boat through Pasco, Washington. Like the many GP9s on the Main Street of the Northwest, the RS-11s acquired bells from retired NP steamers, making for a very distinct arrival!

-J.A. Phillips, III collection

Early in 1967, my writing and speaking skills had improved enough that I could now at least help write and argue simpler cases before the NRAB. In reviewing my diary, I was struck by the number of disputes still arising over the application of Board 282 Award in 1964, authorizing the gradual reduction of firemen. The unions did not formally accept this technological transformation until 1972, and it generated no end of contention and claims. The expansion of centralized traffic control and technological advances in communications were also making train order operations obsolete, eliminating the need for telegraphers at regular intervals to copy and deliver train orders. Their gradual reduction generated further disputes that had to be resolved through negotiation, if possible, or arbitration by submission to the NRAB.

The gradual disappearance of firemen, long the sole source for locomotive engineers, soon made apparent the need for some sort of training program to create qualified engineers, with experienced brakemen being the logical supply initially. The GN was one of the first to create such a program, an effort I found challenging but extremely rewarding in ways not initially envisioned. Because of my (meager) operating experience I was assigned to a task force to develop the pilot program. I shudder now in comparing that pilot to the present excellent training but, to the amazement of many (and the consternation of some), it worked. We kept continually improving it, of course, but the satisfaction of seeing our first graduating class take its seat on the right side of the cab, whistle off and uneventfully complete their maiden voyage was an emotion not to be missed. Since this was a GN creation, I won't go into further details, but point out that from this modest start the acclaimed BN program developed. It became

one of my proudest achievements. In 1975, I was BN's superintendent in Seattle, Washington, when our first female engineer finished her first trip over the road. Somehow, the local television stations heard of the event, and their first question was invariably "What can a male engineer do that you can't?" Our new engineer replied, "Well, there is one thing…" Hoping for some sensational expose, the camera crews crowded closer for her reply. I, of course, also somewhat nervously awaited her reply. "I can't pee out the side door of the locomotive like they can," she said, grinning. *You go, girl!*

About the middle of 1967 Tom DeButts, vice-president, Labor Relations, approached me about going to law school on nights and weekends while continuing work, and then making Labor Relations my career. I was obviously flattered, and I was finding the work interesting, significant and rewarding. But line operations ran too deep in my blood, and I declined his kind offer.

Merger operational planning coincided with further technological advances, making it possible for one crew to run over 200 miles in a tour of duty rather than the traditional 100 or so mile original crew districts. These inter-divisional runs, their negotiation, establishment and operation created a new source of controversy. But they also became one of the hallmarks of the ever more efficient BN operation after merger. They continue to be lengthened to distances unimaginable to my generation. Indeed, BN would lead the way in train crew reduction, and the elimination of the traditional red caboose, with train crews of just two people—engineer and conductor—both in the cab, rather than the four- to six-man crews of my generation.

As 1967 drew to a close, with the May 10, 1968, merger date drawing ever closer, I began entertaining hopes I might be reassigned to line operations. Instead, effective January 1, 1968, I found myself reassigned to the vice-president, Operations, as a staff officer there. Once again, I sensed I was being left behind. But once again I discovered I was now even more at the center of merger planning. I was assigned to the Operations Merger Committee, many of whom I knew from my Labor Relations tour of duty, and because of which I became a liaison between the two groups.

By now, merged operational planning was well along—or so we thought. Primary line operations plans appeared in place, and we began in greater earnest on secondary routes as well as revisiting common point terminals. The latter became like balls of tar—you got stuck in complexities that staggered the imagination. Our mantra became "It's hard to remember our goal is to drain the swamp when you're up to your ass in alligators." However, we were also now into productive determination of capacities—where we might be over or short in equipment or personnel, and from where and how we should reallocate the resources needed. The hope was we could utilize points where a surplus would exist, but often these were states apart.

One thing we pushed hard on was for each division and terminal to publish a narrative of just what would change, where, when, how, and even why. The merger committees discovered it was one thing to talk out the final plan, but quite another to reduce it to coherent and actionable written form. We weren't entirely successful in this endeavor, but later it was gratifying to see that the divisions publishing narratives merged more smoothly and uneventfully.

At this point in the process we had confidence we had systems in place to keep track of equipment, pay our employees and our bills, collect our revenue, and generally keep operations flowing smoothly come May 10. We now got involved in planning mergers of all the subsidiary companies such as truck lines and refrigerated car companies. While there were many thorn bushes here, the overall complexities did not seem as initially overpowering, nor perhaps the absolute necessity that everything click on Day 1—still May 10, was now only a few months away.

Along with all this, of course, each of us was still involved in running our respective railroads. GN, for example, started an administrative cost reduction effort, based upon identifying and eliminating paper work no longer really needed, and substituting in its place many of the more streamlined work flows developed in our merger planning. I was assigned as the Operations Department representative. Although I saw the need for what we were undertaking, and thought it quite consistent with the GN value of always looking ahead, my heart wasn't really in it. I didn't make it a top priority in the Operations Department's far-flung and already bare bones offices because I thought it had more immediate application in the large Accounting Department offices such as Payroll, Accounts Receivable, Payables, and so forth. I notice my diary has a number of "grumps" about this part of my duties.

In March of 1968 we began yet another round of updates with each division on its part of the master merger plan. Needless to say, we often came up with something we hadn't adequately foreseen, which was a bit disconcerting in the face of the now only weeks away merger date.

April found us receiving bulletins and notices in final form for issuance on M-Day (we had previously issued the 45-day advance notices of operational changes required by most of the labor agreements). One of the last things the Operating Merger Committee got into was that of passenger train crew uniforms, and it is a story I will never forget.

The presidents of each of the four merging lines had set up a President's Merger Committee, one representative chosen by each. They were to serve as a one-stop contact point for senior management wanting to be kept abreast short of having to contact several of the specific department merger committees. It also served the valuable oversight function of ensuring one group's plans did not countermand another's. But toward the end some of us thought they had too much time on their hands. Just before May 10 they sent a note asking what the "NuCo" passenger train uniforms would look like (right up until

BN 6458, an SD45 at the ready, with a host of former Hill Lines power, including former GN 3009, and GPs and SDs off the Q. The 6458 sports the infamous "Hockey Stick" paint scheme that the Burlington began using in the few short years prior to merger. The nose stripes and green body work came the closest to approximating BN's own Cascade Green and black scheme of 1970. The GN introduced the Big Sky Blue scheme in this era as well, though its lightl blue, gray and white paint colors quickly faded in the elements. The NP's contribution was a very light green caboose with yellow racing stripes. The NP's freight power, however, stayed in basic black.

-Keith Ardinger collection.

May 9, when the GN shareholders gave their final approval to the name Burlington Northern, that name was the official one). All internal documents up till then referred to the new entity as NuCo—the New Company.

We hadn't given that much attention, having previously decided crewmen would just continue to wear whatever uniform they now had. "Not good enough," came back the reply. "You need to determine what the new standard will become." Having little stomach for trying to design a new uniform, let alone getting it approved, and further thinking all of the current roads' uniforms looked quite nice, we flipped coins until the NP uniform emerged as the winner. We notified the President's Merger Committee that would be the BN standard, once uniforms needed replacement. "How did you decide that?" came the reply. Not wanting to say it was by coin toss, we bravely responded we had just decided the issue ourselves. To this we received a rather nasty note accusing us of "unilateral action" and not paying enough attention to important details. Our chairman, Worth Smith of the GN, had the wisdom to just file it away without further comment. And that's why BN passenger crews continued to wear their former uniforms until the advent of Amtrak in 1971, and the eventual adoption of official Amtrak uniforms.

May 6-10, 1968, was a rather calm week for us, indicating our planning efforts seemed successful. Enthusiasm was mostly high, along with some trepidation on May 9. My diary entry reads "GO signal received 6:16 P.M." I was assigned night duty in the Labor Relations command post. As we awaited an onslaught of anticipated calls, keyed up on endless cups of strong coffee, the phone rang with the shocking news that Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren had signed a restraining order at the last minute request of the Justice Department, staying the merger pending further court review. It was like an unexpected blow to the solar plexus—you could feel the air rush out of the merger balloon. I never knew who got to whom to engineer this unexpected and abrupt stop, and perhaps some others can elaborate.

What I do know is that the case wound its way around the federal court system through appeals and counter appeals until on February 2, 1970, the full Supreme Court finally ruled seven-to-zero the merger could go forward. The very next day the presidents of the merging lines announced the merger would occur 0001 March 2, 1970, which, thankfully, this time held up.

I recall a few months of disillusionment after the abrupt stay of the May 10 execution, but thereafter the various merger committees cranked up once again. We had come so

close to actually pulling the trigger we knew some glitches must have become apparent. With the customary turnover of any large company, even fresher eyes were now involved in looking and probing for weak spots. In some cases, even more efficient consolidation plans were devised. My diary continues with much the similar range of preparation duties. Some additional consolidated labor agreements were reached. I was further pleased to be sent to a month-long seminar at Stanford University the summer of 1968. There I learned much about better action plan methodologies and procedures, which I put to good use ever after.

Diary entries now reflect work on a run-through operation from Vancouver, B.C., to Los Angeles, California, between the GN, Western Pacific and the Santa Fe (perhaps a harbinger of the eventual, and extremely successful, merger in 1995 of BN and the Santa Fe). The run-through got up and running well, and the administrative cost reduction project picked up speed, with GN entering merger in 1970 with far fewer employees than it would otherwise have had to provide for. The Engineer Training Program was continually improved, graduating first-rate engineers who earned the grudging acceptance, if not admiration, of many of the old heads. The firemen off controversy flared up in a fictitious, but not to be ignored, claim that the absence of firemen was contributing to more accidents. My diary shows a lot of effort consumed to successfully and soundly refute this unfounded assertion.

I escaped the Bastille of staff duty early in 1969, with an unexpected promotion to terminal superintendent at Spokane, Washington, followed shortly thereafter with astonishment at being promoted to division superintendent, Dakota Division, Grand Forks, N.D. It was there I helped usher in the March 2, 1970, merger. My efforts and experience in on-the-ground implementation and execution is another story. But obviously my nearly three years staff duty in system merger planning was a big factor on how well merger went on the Dakota Division.

In any event, the long battle to finally merge the Northern Lines and the Q went off very well. Rush Loving wrote a commendatory article in *Fortune* magazine the summer of 1972, praising it as "The Merger that Worked." That was a well-earned tribute to the men and women of four separate and often competitive roads who came together to work out a better way to run a new railroad, stuck with it after the traumatic postponement, and brought it about. BN would be *no ordinary railroad* because these were *no ordinary people*.

BN 4184, the former NP 904, at Wishram, Washington, in June, 1975. Behind the RS-11's radiator we can see that the buildings have made it into the new BN paint scheme of white with green trim, but the 1958-built ALCo is still wearing most of its NP colors, right down to its trademark Monad. At this point the old 904 has a few more miles roll over the course of its last five years and one month on BN.

-J.A. Phillips, III collection.

Wrecker D-250

Text/photos by Ronald Holden

Wreck Crane D-250, No. 12234, was built in August of 1954 for the Great Northern Railway. The D-250 was assigned to the Montana Division and stationed in Havre, Montana. The D-250 is a diesel-powered derrick fitted with three lines for lifting. The No. 3 line has a capacity of 250 tons. The other two lines are rated at a lower tonnage. This derrick replaced a steam-powered derrick assigned to Havre prior to the D-250's arrival. The derrick is powered by two Cummins diesel engines that provide enough power that lets the derrick be self-propelled and work its three lines. This derrick has spent its tenure along the Montana High Line from Whitefish to the west, Minot, North Dakota, to the east, and Wyoming to the south.

This derrick was a workhorse of a machine, clearing many derailments off the side of the mountains along the High Line. I was fortunate to watch the derrick work on a head-on derailment just east of Havre in 1980. Each time this machine made a lift it almost seemed effortless. I was amazed by the ability the derrick had to lift the huge loads that it did. The last derailment the D-250 worked on was in Thermopolis, Wyo. The railroad dumped three locomotives in the Bighorn River. The D-250 derrick was Burlington Northern's last derrick capable of responding. The derrick lifted the locomotives out of the river while two Caterpillars pulled the locomotives up the bank and back to the rail.

In talking to one of the older D-250 engineers, I found that this derrick had a couple of mishaps over the years and had to have its cab rebuilt a few times. The first time the derrick rolled over. While swinging a set of locomotive trucks around, an engineer failed to get the boom high enough and over she went! The two Cummins engines that power the derrick have also been rebuilt. Even though the D-250 has not seen service since 1999, it is still capable of performing work today. Some upgrades would need to take place, such as new air pistons that control the line brakes and new batteries to start the engines. Structurally, the machine is in very good condition. In 1999, the Havre Car Shop looked for air pistons for the line brakes but was unable to locate anything that would work. BNSF Railway may have made a mistake in not keeping these big derricks upgraded. Someday a situation will rise where one is needed and none are available. Locomotives and railcars are not getting any smaller!

As a side note, in May of 1948 the Great Northern had department pictures taken by the equipment associated with the craft. The Havre Car Shop crew had their photograph with the old steam derrick. In 1978, the carmen tried to have a craft picture take by the derrick for a thirty-year picture. However, the general car foreman refused to allow it. In 1997, a new car foreman was in Havre—he was all for allowing a picture with the derrick. This picture featured a new generation of carmen at the Havre Car Shop. Now every ten or eleven years a new photograph is taken around the D-250. Sadly, this tradition may come to and end before the new era of carmen comes due, as BNSF is looking to donate the derrick to a museum.

See the January 2003 (Vol. 11,N0. 1) issue for an expanded list of BN wreckers. -Editor


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