The BN Expediter

Volume 29, Number 3 *July 2021*

FRIENDS OF THE BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAILROAD

The official publication of *The Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad*, the historical society focused on the *Burlington Northern Railroad*, the *Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway*, the *BNSF Railway and the Montana Rail Link.*

Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad

PO Box 271,West Bend, WI 53095-0271
www.fobnr.org
A 501(c)3 Not-For-Profit Corporation
Registered in the State of Idaho

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.

The purpose of the **FOBNR** is educational. We wish to perpetuate the history of the Burlington Northern Railroad, its successors and the Montana Rail Link. 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.

Directors

John Adams, MD; Peter Ferch; Ben Hucker
John Parker; Dave Poplawski

Officers

President . . . . . John Adams, MD
Vice President . . . . . Dave Poplawski
Secretary . . . . . Kent Charles
Treasurer . . . . . Jeff Hendricks

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.

*The **FOBNR** is not supported by, nor affiliated in any way with, the BNSF Railway, 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 welcome for publication. Articles are compensated at $25/page of text; contributors of photos will receive one free copy if an **FOBNR** member, two if not.

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

Send material for publication to:

Dave Poplawski, Editor
7733 Copper Corner Drive SE
Caledonia, MI 49316
pop@mtu.edu

Copyright 2021 by the Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad. All rights reserved.

In This Issue

New Members

Robert Siik 21-033
618 Maury Ave
Norfolk, VA 23517

Brian Grant 21-034
(address withheld by request)

Alan Sewell 21-035
16 The Avenue
Hertford, HERTS SG14 3DR
United Kingdom

Kenny Thies 21-036
605 South Douglas Street
Randolph, NE 68771

Caleb Williams 21-037
Kenneth Edmier 21-038
Robert Economos 21-039
Thomas Harris 21-040
(addresses withheld by request)

Patrick Keim 21-041
1350 Deer Meadow Drive
Helena, MT 59601

Robin Hornstra 21-042
(address withheld by request)

Matthew Greenwood 21-043
636 Logan, PO Box 622
Grant, NE 69140

Danny Bass 21-044
412 William Street
Brooklyn, IA 52211

Melissa Welsh 21-045
Bruce Friedman 21-046
Timothy Mauery 21-047
Michael MacLatchy 21-048
Eric Wollan 21-049
Mike Miller 21-050
William Skulley 21-051
(addresses withheld by request)

Michael Paul 21-052
33 Broome Court
Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 2RB
United Kingdom

Aaron Waldorf 21-053
Bryan Waldorf 21-054
(addresses withheld by request)

Mohawk-Design.com 21-055
203 Woodhaven Drive
Lexington, NC 27295

Brian W Lengel 21-056
Clifford Wilson 21-057
Curtis Richards 21-058
(addresses withheld by request)

Board of Director's Election Results

Peter Ferch, Ben Hucker and Dave Poplawski were re-elected to two-year terms. Thanks to Gary Seymour for crafting the ballot and receiving and tallying the votes.

Cover Photo: The Hastings-McCook local speeds out of Holdrege, Nebraska on its way to Cambridge and work at the Nebraska Corn Processing plant on January 7, 2021. Photo by Joel Poland.

Membership Renewal Information

We have many members who renew their memberships for more than one year at a time. But if you are like me, you may have a hard time remembering when that multi-year membership ends. If this applies to you, just look at the mailing label on the envelope each issue of *The BN Expediter* arrives in. After your name you will find your membership number followed by the year your membership remains valid, in parentheses. For example, (2021) means that your membership is good through the end of 2021 and you will have to renew for 2022 in order to continue to be a member.

In case you are curious, your membership number is two values, e.g., 21-055. The first value is the last two digits of the year you first joined the **FOBNR**. The second number is assigned sequentially as new members join; in the example the member would be the 55th person to join in 2021. You can see this reflected in the New Members list on the previous page.

Sustaining Members

On behalf of our members, the **FOBNR** Board of Directors would like to thank our sustaining members for 2021. Their generous support is helping us achieve the goals of our organization.

John Adams
Tony Aegerter
Tom Anderson
James Archer
Robert Bach
Danny Bass
Thomas Bentley
Timothy Bernaden
Rodney Black
Jason Boren
James Bradley
William Brown
Michael Bruno
Jay Burkgart
David Burns
Jeffrey Bushman
Kent Charles
Kenneth Cocherell
Jon Cole
Earl Currie
Mark Dennis
Scott DeVries
William DeWitt
Randy Doman
Vasyl Domashevsky
Martin Dugan Jr
Christopher Dunbar
J. Allen Dunlap III
Rodney Dunshea
Kenneth Edmier
Jeff Ellefson
David Ellis
Nathan Erickson
Peter Ferch
Roger Field
Melvern Finzer
John Fisher
Alan Gardiner
Mark Geiss
P. H. Gertsch
Bruce Gillaspie
Chris Heesen
Mark Herrick
Glenn Hoover
Raymond Horton
Matthew Hoyle
Benjamin Hucker
Thomas Jenner
Jeff Kahler
Patrick Keim
Richard Kilpatrick
Rick Kisinger
Joel Kluka
Steve Koberstein
Jason Kolb
James Koretsky
Arn Kriegh
Devyn Kukowski
Patrick Lana
Michael Lenz
George Luchs
Dennis Lutz
Michael MacLatchy
Alan Matchett
Keon McGarvey
Joseph McMillan
John McPhee
Paul Mendez
Alan Meyer
Thomas Miller
William Miotek
ModelWarships.com
Robert Murphy
Russell Nelson
Scott Pannicke
John Parker
David Peck
Dennis Popish
Dave Poplawski
T. Michael Power
James Ramnes
Richard Rink
Mal Risby
Kim Saign
Justin Sandlin
David Sauer
Harlan Schmidt
Gary Seymour
Dennis Shogren
Ewan Shortess
Christopher Slemp
David Smith
Fredrick Smith
Ronald Soder
Robert Stafford
Mark Steenwyk
Matthew Steinblock
Lawrence Stephens
Burr Stewart
Charles Taylor
John Tenerowicz
Daniel Thompson
Gary Van Aken
Aric Van de Vord
Brian VanCamp
Michael Vitt
Todd VonStup
Bryan Waldorf
Richard Walker
Scott Watson
William Webb
Melissa Welsh
Jeffrey Weymouth
Robert White
David Wick
Otto Wick
Richard Wilder
Don Winn
Gary Wlodarczy
Eric Wollan
Charles Zeiler

April 2021 Issue Corrections

Credit for the cover photo was inadvertently omitted. The photo was taken by **Mark Demaline**.

Author credit for the article entitled *Rail Service to Moore, Montana: A Short History of a Short Subdivision* omitted Mark Demaline. The authors should be both **Mark Demaline and** Dave Poplawski.

Looking for a New Associate Editor

With Mark Demaline stepping away from the Associate Editor position recently, we're looking for his replacement. For more information, or if you feel an urge to help out, contact the Editor (contact info on Page 2).

In the interim, Aric Van de Vord has volunteered to help by proofreading each issue. He helped with the April issue and now this one, too. More recently, Timothy Mauery also volunteered to help proofread, with an eye to getting more involved with the editing process as he gains experience.

Production and Mailing of *The BN Expediter*

For years it was our goal to get each issue into our members' hands sometime during the month that is shown on the cover (i.e., January, April, July, October). The post office was pretty consistent, delivering issues approximately two weeks from the time we dropped them off. Hence we would work with the printer to finish production and get the issue into the mail a week or so before the end of the previous month.

The January issue is a bit of an exception, as we try to avoid mailing the issue before Christmas when the post office is the busiest. Our printer also generously gives their employees the week between Christmas and the new year off. Hence the January issue is mailed on the first working day in January.

As will come to no surprise to most of you, the unusual events of 2020 caused a myriad of problems in the delivery of mail by the USPS. This resulted in delivery times anywhere from four to six weeks, and in some cases even more than eight weeks. We've been trying to adjust by getting each issue to the printer, and then to the post office, two to three weeks earlier than usual. Then wouldn't you know it, the post office delivered the April issue to many of you in a single week!

So, in an effort to keep you informed, and help you deal with the unpredictability of delivery times, we will now display the mailing date of each issue on our web page (`www.fobnr.org`), just below the image of the cover on the right side of the page. As soon as each new issue is delivered to the post office, the cover image and the mailing date on the web page will be updated.

FOBNR Freight Car (HO Scale)

On Bryan Smith's "Chicago and Iowa" Layout in Fernley, Nevada

Bryan's 9' x 16' point-to-point switching layout in his garage is named after BN's C&I line but models part of BN's 8th Subdivision of the Chicago Region of the early 1970's between Amboy and Compton. It has a mixture of BN and fallen flag locomotives and freight cars. Bryan painted and decorated most of his BN locomotives and re-stenciled locomotives from previous owners. He also kitbashed a lot of the structures on the layout. All photos by Bryan Smith.

If you are a modeler and interested in having your own **FOBNR** covered hopper on your layout, we sell decal sets for O, HO and N scale cars. A version of the decal with all white (no black) lettering is also available. Just go to the company store webpage and put in your order: `www.fobnr.org/decals`

Once you've completed your car, send us a picture or two in a scenic location on your layout, and we'll put it on our website.

< A BN freight with FBNX 1993 arrives at East Amboy to make a setout for the Green River Industrial Park. East Amboy is both a yard and staging until Bryan can expand his layout past the wall behind the caboose.

The local rolls past the yard office on its way to Compton, Illinois. The yard office (light blue) is a Pikestuff kit, modified to make it appear that it is a two story building with the addition of a staircase. >

< The train rolls past a soybean field before crossing the Green River. Look closely to see Walther's "weeds" and a few corn plants growing in the field, volunteers from the last crop rotation.

The local arrives in Compton, and after running around the train, will spot the empties at the elevator for loading. The locomotive is a Kato GP35 that Bryan painted and detailed, and the caboose is an Atlas model that he painted and weathered after installing a Plano walkway. >

< The covered hoppers wait to be loaded at the elevator. The Burlington covered hopper is an Atlas model that Bryan added a Plano walkway to and then weathered. The GN covered hopper is from Tangent. Like a lot of pikes, Bryan's is a work in progress. Eventually he'll install a Walther's Farmers Cooperative Rural Elevator, a storage shed on pilings, two grain bins, a surge bin, and a grain dryer with an LPG tank to fuel it.

FOBNR Freight Cars (N Scale)

On the Moffet Modelers' Layout at the Forney Museum in Denver, Colorado

The Moffat Modelers Railroad Group has been an important fixture of the model railroad community in Denver with an enthusiastic and committed membership. The current 20′ x 100′ N Scale (1:160) model railroad layout at the Forney Museum in Denver was started about 20 years ago. It represents the Denver and Rio Grande Moffat Line between downtown Denver and the Moffat Tunnel.

The group has 15 active members. Weekly work sessions are held on Tuesday evenings, with monthly run days on the 2nd Saturday and monthly business meetings on the 4th Saturday. See their website at

`www.moffatmodelers.org`

or their Facebook page at

`www.facebook.com/MoffatModelers`

Here are photos of **FOBNR** cars 1994 and 2020 taken by railfan/photographer Larry Landes.

I found the **FOBNR** cars at the Cargill grain elevator, on the northwest corner of Denver's North Yard. The cars were being filled with wheat grain for milling.

Yard switcher DRG #5307 pulled the **FOBNR** cars from the elevator and spotted them in North Yard where they were picked up by the Moffat Station Industry Local.

The local dropped the **FOBNR** cars at the Harrison flour mill where the wheat was milled into flour, which was then loaded onto the box cars seen at the left.

The empty **FOBNR** cars were added to Train #15 behind Rio Grande SD40-T #5342 & #5347 and headed west towards Ogden, Utah. They can be seen here traversing the Big Ten Curve just west of Denver, Colorado.

A Taste of 1994 to Kick Off 2021: The Hastings-McCook Local

by Joel Poland

Growing up along the BN/BNSF Sand Hills Sub in Nebraska during the 90's allowed me to see a very wide array of power and paint schemes on passing trains. Green was my favorite color, so naturally BN's Cascade Green paint schemes were my favorite. Even after the merger, Cascade Green was still a common sight and something I thought would last forever. Twenty-five years later seeing a Cascaded Green locomotive is an increasingly rare treat, let alone an entire consist.

In January 2021 I was fortunate enough to photograph a local on the Hastings Subdivision in south central Nebraska with BNSF 3132 (GP50) and BNSF 1958 (SD40-2) both still in BN whiteface. I saw photos of the lash up on the Thursday, January 7th Hastings-McCook local on a Facebook post and it mentioned the local would run back east to Hastings on Friday. Since I had an appointment in Kearney on the following Monday I knew it was worth a shot to photograph this duo.

The chase on the 11th started by picking up fellow **FOBNR** member Nathan Erickson in Central City and then heading south to Hastings. We were going into this pretty blind not knowing if the local ran back west to McCook over the weekend. On the east side of Hastings we caught a local crew working industries with a pair of orange GP39-3's. We took a few photos of BNSF 2698 and 2660 switching Equalizer Midwest at Halloran before we headed to the yard in Hastings. When we arrived at the yard and did not find any other sets of power we continued west on US Highway 6. The Hastings Sub was quiet for several miles as we only saw a track inspector outside of Axtell. Our luck would change at Holdrege, however. We spotted the 3132 and 1958 setting out cars for the Nebraska, Kansas, & Colorado Railway in the small yard. After snapping a couple side shots of the power we set up on the west end of Holdrege to shoot the train departing town. A few minutes later the train sped out of town [see this issue's cover photo] with an empty covered hopper and six empty

GP39's switching the Equalizer Midwest plant in Halloran, Nebraska.

The venerable pair, with paint fading and rust encroaching, setting out cars for the Nebraska, Kansas and Colorado in Holdrege.

A trio of green. SD40-2 1958 started out as C&S 903 in March, 1972 and is more than seven years older than covered hopper 448745.

ethanol tanks. The hopper was most likely just being used as a buffer car and was also still in BN paint.

Our next photo location was a county road bridge west of Atlanta. The crew was very friendly and gave us a wave and a couple horn toots on the way by. For the next several miles the tracks are away from the highway and drop into the Republican River valley. With the maximum freight speed at 60 mph, it was a challenge to stay ahead of the train. We still followed on county roads to Oxford Junction the best we could, but we weren't able to get far enough ahead to get photos. We attempted another shot west of Edison then it was a struggle to get back in front through Arapahoe and Holbrook. About halfway between Holbrook and Cambridge we were able to take another photo of the train again as they hit an "approach medium" signal and began slowing into Cambridge.

Passing under a country road bridge near Atlanta.

Approaching Cambridge.

At Cambridge we set up by the NE highway 47 crossing and watched the crew get lined into the lead for the Nebraska Corn Processing facility. Once they cleared the derail the crew cut away the six ethanol cars and pulled up to clear the switch into the plant. Then they shoved back to pick up four loads of ethanol and did a quick air test before departing. The brief switching gave Nathan and I several opportunities to photograph the power in front of the Cambridge station sign.

Next we headed to West Cambridge right on the west end of town. The siding in Cambridge is on the north side of the main and the lead for the ethanol plant is on the south with hand throw switches on each end which meant the local would have to get authority to enter the main. The dispatcher already had another train lined through the control point which ended up being the daily Z CHIDEN. After the Z raced by the local was able to enter the main and highball to McCook to finish up their day.

Both of us wanted to continue the chase, but unfortunately time would not allow it. Overall we were more than satisfied with our collection of photos and felt very fortunate to catch a couple of BN relics within the sea of orange.

Lining up to work the Nebraska Corn Processors plant.

Posing by the station sign after dropping the tank cars.

Swapping loads and empties.

Waiting for the Z CHIDEN to pass.

Highballing out of Cambridge for McCook.

HENRY FRICK

An Essay by Earl J. Currie

This is an excerpt from a more complete work about Henry's career, which includes more photos, newspaper and newsletter clippings, interview transcripts, and some photos taken by Henry. The complete (free) PDF can be found on the **FOBNR** website at:
www.fobnr.org/fobnr-company-store

Following military service (including combat duty in Viet Nam) Henry Frick sought employment in the rail industry. From 1975 to 1979 Henry found that good jobs were hard to find in the area of the eastern part of the country where he was living. Friends advised Henry to "go west." He made a week-long unsuccessful job search trip on the Union Pacific. He decided to take a chance and call Burlington Northern. Henry wrote, "After a couple of calls a pleasant gentleman in the Denver office told me they were taking applications at Alliance, Nebraska. He put my call through to Alliance and the personnel person said, 'Yes.' I made my way there and the next morning, I filled out the forms for employment and the physical.

"After all of that, I went back home on a 'red eye' flight to New York. Shortly after I got home I got a letter for the Brakeman training class in Alliance. I loaded my VW "bug" at my parents' house in Connecticut on the July 4 weekend and headed west. After the Brakeman class I drove to Gillette, Wyoming to go to work. When I got to the highway exit for Gillette my first impression was that I wanted to turn around, but I didn't have a choice. I found the depot and checked in. The next morning I made the first of three student trips and marked up.

"After about three weeks on the extra board, six of us were called and forced to Guernsey. We worked the yard jobs and the night work train. The work train took ballast and supplies to the contractors working on the new Orin line. I got to ride over the entire line before it was open for service. The job was an unusual crew situation. The poor Conductor had almost 40 years and had to work with people who had only 40 days. He was very patient with us."

The crushed rock ballast was loaded at a quarry at Guernsey and used in the construction of track on the new line of 111 miles between Orin and Belle Ayr. The day and night work trains hauling ballast worked 12 hours per day on a seven-day basis. Elven Marshall, a Brakeman on the crew that switched the quarry recalls, "(We) worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week, spotting and pulling cars at the ballast pit three times a day and then having the train built and ready to go. They were on a very tight time-frame and there was a minimum amount (80-90) of cars per train."

Crews working those trains had no days off due to the shortage of qualified employees in either train or engine service, and pressure from the construction company building the track and BN's Engineering Department to get the new track ready for service without delay for any reason. Henry recalls being in the depot at Reno when Jolene McIlravy, the Operator, copied the order issued by the Dispatcher to authorize movement of the first train to be run after the last spike was driven on the new line.

Henry soon qualified for the Locomotive Engineers training program. He established March 11, 1980 as a seniority date for engine service, and was promoted to Engineer in October 1980. He then worked on the extra board covering mine loading jobs and regular train service on the new Orin line. On July 23, 1981, not long after starting to work as a Fireman, Henry encountered the kind of incident that never leaves one's mind. Henry wrote, "Early that morning we were called for a Gillette ballast train. We had two GE road units. The lead unit was almost brand new. All went fine until we got to the Cassa siding. We took the siding and pulled all the way to the signal since we had a short train. My engineer and I, both feeling a bit sleepy (it was around 4:30 A.M.) stepped off the engine for a break and a smoke. Shortly after we stepped off, our coal train meet showed up. He had a 10 MPH slow order so we didn't hurry to get going. We highballed the coal train and the Dispatcher got the reverse switch."

"Then, within only a few seconds comes this crane and flat cars in the siding. It hit our engines and a fire started. We saw it all, so we called the Dispatcher. Needless to say, he was surprised. He said he had trouble with the switch. He asked if we were okay and we said yes. A few years later the Dispatcher who worked that night told me he thought something was wrong. Trainmaster A.B. Cross was the first to arrive. By then it was daybreak, so we got a good look. The lengths of rail had punctured the fuel tank from the impact. Mr. Cross said it was a miracle nobody was hurt. After that when we would see Mr. Cross, he would always give us a little wink." In a very short time a derail was placed on the track where the crane had been tied up.

At the time there was no operator on the crane, as it had been shut down at the end of the work day, several hours before the accident. One could surmise that the crane had not been secured adequately by setting a hand break or other means, allowing vibration from the passing coal train to set it in motion. Without knowledge of the result of an investigation following the accident by the company and possibly the FRA, this statement should be viewed only as conjecture on the part of your author.

At the time of his hiring, it was expected that newly-hired employees would have work on the Alliance Division for about 20 years. As it turned out, the amount of coal

Henry at work on the Casper Subdivision desk in 2003.

moved by BN and the Union Pacific far exceeded that projection made in the 1980's. It was predicted that by about 2000, electric power generation would convert to atomic energy or hydrogen. For about 30 employees each at Alliance, Gillette and Edgemont, their careers with BN were suddenly interrupted in 1984 when the C&NW (with support from the UP) succeeded in raising the money needed to acquire 50 per cent ownership on the new Donkey Creek-Orin line, and with it, the opportunity to serve any and all of the new mines already producing coal, or that were planned for opening within a few years.

Immediately, the C&NW and the UP jointly negotiated lower rates with the power companies than BN was able to charge at the time. This outcome was unfortunate for BN, its shareholders and its newer employees, for having taken a risk by investing huge amounts of capital to serve the mines and their customers. The employees had taken a great risk as well by moving to a vastly different environment than they had grown up in, and in most cases, given up the jobs they had held elsewhere before committing to work for BN.

In recalling those times, Henry wrote, "When the C&NW came in mid-1984, job cuts and bumps caused me to be set back to Fireman. Soon, I was forced to Edgemont where they needed Engineers for about two months. When the new updated Engineer seniority roster came out, I was number 600 out of 630. That sealed the deal to make a change. I applied for the Dispatcher training program and was accepted in October 1985 to work in the Alliance office. After six weeks of school and learning all of the dispatching positions, I worked all of the Powder River lines including those on which I had run trains. I was one of the first Train Dispatchers who had not been an Operator or Clerk. I assume they were short of people. I worked there until June 1995 when the jobs were moved to Fort Worth. I was the last person to work the final shift in Alliance. That morning, after I had transferred the information to Fort Worth, it was 'lights out.'

"When I got to Fort Worth, we initially worked the same desk we had worked in Alliance. After a year the seniority rosters were all changed, giving everyone 'system seniority.' This allowed anyone to bid or bump on any desk. I eventually worked several territories including the Fort Worth commuter lines, the iron ore lines and former GN line. The last desk I worked was Grand Forks. When I started on that job I had the least seniority—21 years. If I remember right, the night man told me the desk was the third largest territory in terms of miles. It had a lot of branch lines. I retired in February 2013."

A BNSF employee newsletter reported that Henry was given a rousing send-off. The title of the article in the newsletter read, "Frick Makes Trains More Than a Career." The writer began the article with a quote from Steve Jobs, 'Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do." The article continued, "There is perhaps no greater example of this than recent BNSF retiree Henry Frick." Henry recalls that he had been a "fan" of Burlington Northern ever since it was formed in 1970.

Mike Lunak, one of the Locomotive Engineers working in the territory that Henry dispatched, says that Henry was an exceptionally fine dispatcher. Even with his dispatching desk very remote from his territory in North Dakota, Henry worked very well with the train and engine crews. In his retirement Henry has become recognized as an expert photographer and rail historian, having written several articles and provided photographs for rail-oriented publications. Among those articles was "The End of Train Location Lineups" written for *The BN Expediter*, the newsletter of **The Friends of Burlington Northern Railroad** [Ed: the January 2007 issue], a railroad historical group. Henry covered the evolution from the historic use of train location lineups for occupying a main track for inspection or maintenance work to today's greatly improved system for authorizing such work.

All in all, Henry had a good career with Burlington Northern and the BNSF Railway. We are fortunate that Henry is willing and able to "give back" by sharing his knowledge and experiences through his writings and the photographs he has taken.

continued on page 31

Wow, What a Ride!

Pat Keim: Oral History (Part 2 - Government Relations)

Interviewed by Dave Poplawski

We continue Pat's story after he left Havre and his job as Superintendent of Transportation for a new adventure in government relations in Helena.

Dave: So now what did you do in government relations?

Pat: There were two aspects to BN's Government Relations Department. There was federal relations which were all handled by a vice president in Washington, DC. And then there was the state relations which were managed out of Fort Worth by the person who I was replacing in Helena, and that turned out to be the position I reported to. I originally handled just Montana only.

The job basically was to maintain communications between the railroad and the state government, and to head off anything that might be bad for the railroad, like killing all the bad legislation and securing the good legislation. It also included maintaining relationships with state officials so that they would have somebody to talk to and so that the railroad could have access to them. And that was fundamentally what my job was. Then I also had to work with different communities—the county governments and the city governments. There was also a little bit of crossover into the federal area in that every senator and congressman had a local office, and I had to maintain relationships with the staffs in those offices.

Montana was noted to be a particularly tough place to work in government relations because of its long history of poor relationships between farmers and shippers and the railroad. There had always been accusations that the railroads charged too much and they didn't provide good service, and that spilled into politics. The unions were also very active in politics and, in my opinion, poisoned the water. They were constantly using the tension that existed between the agricultural community and shippers and the railroads to their advantage. The result was that Montana had a caboose law because the unions wanted it. They also got a law on the books (the agency law) that required that an agent be maintained at every town with over a thousand people that the railroad ran through, and in every county seat. That amounted to about 60 railroad employees. There were a lot of other friction points. All those factors mixed and my job was to work with the union lobbyist, state government and local legislators to try to solve whatever problems I could.

BN eventually expanded my territory to include Idaho, and then expanded it again because of the death of BN's guy in Washington state, which coincidentally was during the merger with the Santa Fe. The Santa Fe wanted to show what were called "synergies" of the merger, which at my level would mean job reductions, so they figured out that they could just add to my territory and not hire a replacement. So that's how I got Washington, British Columbia and Oregon added to my territory. But we worked it out. I had some good people working for me, and I was allowed to hire some good lobbyists to help me. So my job evolved into working with the lobbyists. I had good lobbyists in Helena—one of them helped me find my current home. So I had good help.

Dave: Any major successes that you remember?

Pat: Oh yes, I think so. I felt that during the time I was here for various reasons, not just me, that the tensions kind of subsided a little bit. The caboose law was going through federal courts and that eliminated that union aspect. We got the state to rescind the agency law, but they put it back on the books. Federal legislation that I worked on got that taken care of. I also think I was able to bridge the divide with the legislators and governors I worked with. Ultimately, everything's never completely quieted down. But it quieted down quite a lot which was good because it allowed me to put time in on my other problem areas.

I think we made good progress here for combination of reasons. First, some union problems got set aside, one way or another. Second, the unit grain train thing became accepted, but not happily by all. Eventually it just became a matter of rates, and those were more or less negotiated between us and the grain companies. The rate problem kind of disappeared, although there is still some of it going on with the farmers.

Here's a great story that I love, and tells you kind-of how things work. I was told this by my predecessor:

> There was an old gentleman on the Hi-Line near Havre who had been farming for 50 years. This year was going to be his last crop, and then he's going to retire and turn the farm over to his son. During those 50 years something always happened—droughts or grasshoppers, or the fertilizer wasn't right, or the rain didn't come at the right time. It was always something. But this year

everything seems to have gone right. The seed went in right and the fertilizer was right. No bugs. The rains came at the right time and the rains quit at the right time. He's got the biggest yields ever seen in his 10,000 acre wheat farm and the markets were at record highs. He's got the machines ready, the sun is out, and the wheat is dry. As he goes to the machine shop to get the combine, he looks at the sky and there's a tiny little puffy white cloud out in the distance. He throws open the doors, climbs up on the combine and starts it up. Just as he's driving out of the shop that cloud explodes. The sky is black, the wind is howling, there's sheets of rain and lightning and hail. In five minutes his entire 10,000 acre crop is wiped out. The perfect crop. Gone. Destroyed. He shuts off his combine and climbs down looks up at the devastation, clinches his fist and yells "God damn you Burlington Northern!"

Dave: Neat story.

Pat: It illustrates the historical problem we had. But we developed some good relationships with the grain groups and we were able to work with them. We were able to work with the Grain Growers Association and brought in some programs to help their members do better marketing. The top people in the grain associations knew that they had to get the farmers away from thinking only about farming and get them to think like businessmen. Some of them, the ones that stayed in business, really got it to work that way.

There's a great, true story about Jerry Grinstein being invited out to a North Dakota wheat farm. The state of North Dakota had the same problems as Montana. Jerry Grinstein went out to meet with his one big grain farmer at Minot. He spent the day touring the farm and the machine shops and the machinery, and then went for lunch. Jerry thought the day was over. But the farmer says, "No, I'm going to take you downstairs and show you how this thing really runs." They went downstairs, which was set up as a computerized trading center with six women trading grain on the markets. "This," he said, "is where the farm really runs."

We helped to bring in professionals to meet with grain growers to help them move their thinking toward the business aspect of farming. I think that worked well. Yes, tensions were still there, tensions will always be there, but working relationships developed and I feel I had a part in it. I felt good about that.

I also worked on a lot of things over in Washington state, like helping to set up their commuter rail operations, and again working with the farmers.

Dave: What was the timeframe here? You picked up Washington with the Santa Fe Merger, right?

Pat: Yes, and also Oregon and British Columbia.

Dave. Were there any big changes other than you picking up this new territory?

Pat: Yes, things really did change a lot. I had a whole different management culture to work with. At the time of the merger, Montana Governor Racicot was just leaving office and Judy Martz had been elected governor. I had been closely involved with a group of businesses that helped put her in office. With the change of management after the merger, there came a different style of management of government relations. Jerry Grinstein, chairman of BN before the merger, had always been personally very active in government relations in a way that centered on developing relationships over a period of time. Rob Krebs was also very active in government relations but had a different approach to it. He seemed to believe that if he flew in to meet with somebody on an issue everybody would be impressed and things would move on from there. That left it to his VP of Law and Government Relations to fill in the gaps. His name was Jeff Moreland and he had quite a different operating style than his predecessor due to the different management culture. But that was fine. I think he perceived that I had some idea of how the railroad really ran out here. So he would call and ask questions and solicit my thoughts when Krebs wasn't around. I think we ultimately worked well together.

The new management had a need to show savings from what I call the synergies of merger. Part of that involved consolidating positions by combining two into one. So it was decided at higher levels to consolidate the jobs in Seattle and Helena into one by having me cover both. But Moreland recognized the enormity of the job and different sets of challenges faced at each place. He allowed me to contract back the same person whose job we had just abolished to help me by being my presence in Seattle itself, which was a great help. She and I worked well together and made for a good team approach. So it all worked out.

Dave: So what was next?

Pat: Well I think the next for me was dealing with capacity expansion problems.

Dave: What timeframe?

Pat: Starting in 1995 to the end of my career. This was a time when it was decided that we needed to fix the intermodal hub in Portland to make it more functional. One of the problems we had there was the highway accessibility, with the truckers having to make a left turn off a busy highway. I worked with the state of Oregon and the DOT and developed some partnerships.

At the same time the Union Pacific was going through its merger with the Southern Pacific. They were having some problems, like congestion issues, that were backing up the whole railroad industry. This time we were able to play the good guy for a while and say hey, we can help you with this problem, but we need a little help too. So we got some of that done.

The states of Washington and Oregon both wanted to put in rail passenger systems, which would largely run over BNSF tracks. The trains started in Eugene and ran over the Union Pacific (ex-SP). Then from Portland north they ran over our tracks, so we had to work with them on integrating them into our traffic. We would rather not have had passenger trains, to be honest. Not because we dislike them—personally, I like them very much. But they cause a lot of interference with freight trains. So we had to figure out how to bring capacity issues into the negotiations with the states, including who was going to pay for the kind of improvements needed. A fella named DJ Mitchell, who reported to Jerry Grinstein down in Fort Worth, and then subsequently ran the passenger side of operations, had a good understanding of the issues and laid a good foundation for what was needed. And so we pretty successfully integrated the passenger trains, and what you see now on the west coast passenger operations is a result of that work.

The west coast ports were also having real capacity issues stemming from large growth in China trade, not only in California, but in Portland and Seattle too. We had to bring on additional rail capacity, which meant a lot of double tracking. But actually the biggest capacity improvement was the reopening of Stampede Pass, the old Northern Pacific line. I was heavily involved in that project. There were lots of meetings to assess the impacts with local communities like Kennewick, Prosser, Yakima, Ellensburg, and Auburn, and with the state to get their cooperation as we needed access to the right-of-way.

Dave: As I recall, the city of Auburn wasn't happy with the reopening.

Pat: I remember nightmares about what was going on over there. There were some of the old former Northern Pacific union guys who were still mad at the BN along with some Livingston guys who still wanted to fight, so this gave them another way to do so. The tracks were still in place, but there hadn't been train traffic through the neighborhoods for 20 years. We made some concessions, including track changes, but we got through it, partly because we had strong backing from the state.

It was that way in the other big project that I was involved in, at Hauser, Idaho. Earlier I said that Hauser yard was put on the back burner. Well, former Santa Fe management wanted to change the way trains were fueled. At the time, trains running from Minneapolis to Seattle or Portland were fueled at Minneapolis, then again at Havre, then again at Portland or Seattle for the return trip, and then fueled again at Havre on the way back to Minneapolis. They wanted to refuel westbounds at Hauser so trains could go all the way to Portland or Seattle and back to Hauser without having to refuel, and then all the way to Minneapolis after refueling at Hauser. They particularly didn't want to refuel in Seattle because in Seattle the fueling facility was at Balmer yard, north of downtown Seattle, the intermodal hub and the ports were all on the south side. There was a tunnel that you had to run through to get from one to the other. They would cut the engines off, run them up through the tunnel to Balmer for servicing, then bring them back down through the tunnel to their trains. The tunnel had limited capacity, and in addition to freight trains there were passenger trains going through there. A set of engines takes up as much capacity on a track as a freight or passenger train, and so it was a bottleneck.

So the initial idea was to refuel them at Spokane. But there was no place to put a fueling facility in Spokane, and so Hauser became the choice. The problem was that there was a heavy opposition in the area by the environmentalists because of the aquifer. Spokane was in the height of the environmentalist movement at the time and Hauser yard sits right on top of the sole-source aquifer for drinking water for Spokane. They thought they could stop the facility from being built. I remember getting a call from our legislative vice president in Washington DC telling me that there was going to be a meeting about some sort of a fueling facility that was supposed to be built in Spokane and he didn't know anything about it. I hadn't heard anything about it either. So he wanted me to go to the meeting and just listen. I got out there and the BN engineering people scoped out how they were going to build the facility. Our company environmental engineer from Seattle was there, and he and I were sitting together. We both raised our hands and said, "Have you considered that anywhere you build this facility it was going to be over the aquifer. "Yes, but so what?" was the answer. We were able to point out to them that they were going to run into a lot of opposition because of the environmentalist activism about this sole-source aquifer. I knew this from my time in Spokane, from our environmental manager in Seattle, from my experiences operating out of Havre, and from dealing with the pollution cleanup in Livingston, Montana. We were able to get them to relook at the design of the facility and make sure it got gone done right.

Dave: They being the BNSF?

Pat: Yes, BNSF and their consultants. It became an issue of getting permits for the project, and my job was to get them. BNSF could've said that the federal law preempts local laws, but it wanted to keep good relations and be perceived as working with the communities involved.

The communities in this case were Rathdrum and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and Spokane. At one point BNSF was ready to hold a county hearing, but I called a halt. I said, "You know, engineering hasn't done a good job working with the communities over here on this. If you go to the county right now, you're going to get turned down by the county commissioners and this project would be dead unless you rethink it." They didn't want to stop but I told them we had

to restart how we approached this thing, and we needed to bring in community relations and government relations and give us some time to work on this project. And they did.

It took about two and a half years of redesigning, building models, and meeting with the local people. Much of the environmental opposition was actually in the planning department of the county at that time. We had to find ways to get to the commissioners on our side. It became very political and we held a lot of community meetings—a lot of meetings. I drove from Helena to Spokane two or three times a week. I'm damned proud of the work I did on it because we overwhelmingly got the permits approved. We agreed to 33 conditions on the facility that gave the citizens of Spokane, the cities on the Idaho side and the Idaho state government, a feeling that they had done a good job on protecting themselves.

I actually had to get in the middle of a fight between the governor of Washington and the governor of Idaho because the governor of Idaho came out that he was for it and the governor of Washington, who was listening to his environmental staff, was in opposition. The governor of Idaho said that the governor of Washington wasn't able to control his staff and that Washington should "Get out of my state." Literally. It got to be that bad at that level. But ultimately we got the job done and the facility got built.

And then it leaked.

Dave: Yes, I remember that.

Pat: We had to have a wastewater collection system built and it was supposed to be totally impermeable, but the contractor didn't double jacket the wastewater return line to the treatment plant. The way the contractor decided to test that pipe was to dump a whole tank car of fuel oil into the pit at the fueling facility and pump it through with a mixture of water to test the recovery system. But during construction they had driven heavy equipment over that pipeline and damaged it which caused the recovery line to leak.

So I had to get in the middle of that and was involved very closely with the response. Matt Rose was chairman of BNSF at that time, and he was a prince to work with on that project. He called me up one day and said. "I'm going to personally tell you that I'm going to spend whatever it takes to get that done right–it should not have happened." And he did. The whole event wound up positive because BNSF was seen as a company that stands behind its word.

Dave: When was that?

Pat: 2007 and 2008.

Dave: Did you end your career in government relations?

Pat: Yes.

Dave: How many years had you been with the railroad by then?

Pat: Just slightly under 50 years. And I tell you I would do it all over again. As with any career, you have good moments and you have, well, other moments.

Dave: Would you have done anything differently?

Pat: I think I would have paid a little more attention to maintaining old relationships. We moved around so much, and when I left I would not maintain the relationships, the old friends and that kind of thing. I got to be a pretty private guy, more than I should have, and I learned that after I got to Helena. And yes, so there are things that I look at that I would've done differently, but I have no regrets. I really don't. I got to do things working for the railroad and experienced many different things, and got involved in a lot of different areas. It was fascinating.

Dave: What was the biggest risk you took?

Pat: There were a couple. I think the one I remember most was standing up to the company and telling them than they were making the wrong decision to close the diesel shop in Havre. I told them I thought from an operational standpoint it made no sense, that it was the wrong thing to do, and that they would regret it.

Dave: Was that when you were still in Havre?

Pat: No, I was in Helena in government relations by then. I told them that it was going to create problems when you've got a governor who just took office who is from Havre. It's going to affect him. It's going to affect his investments in Havre.

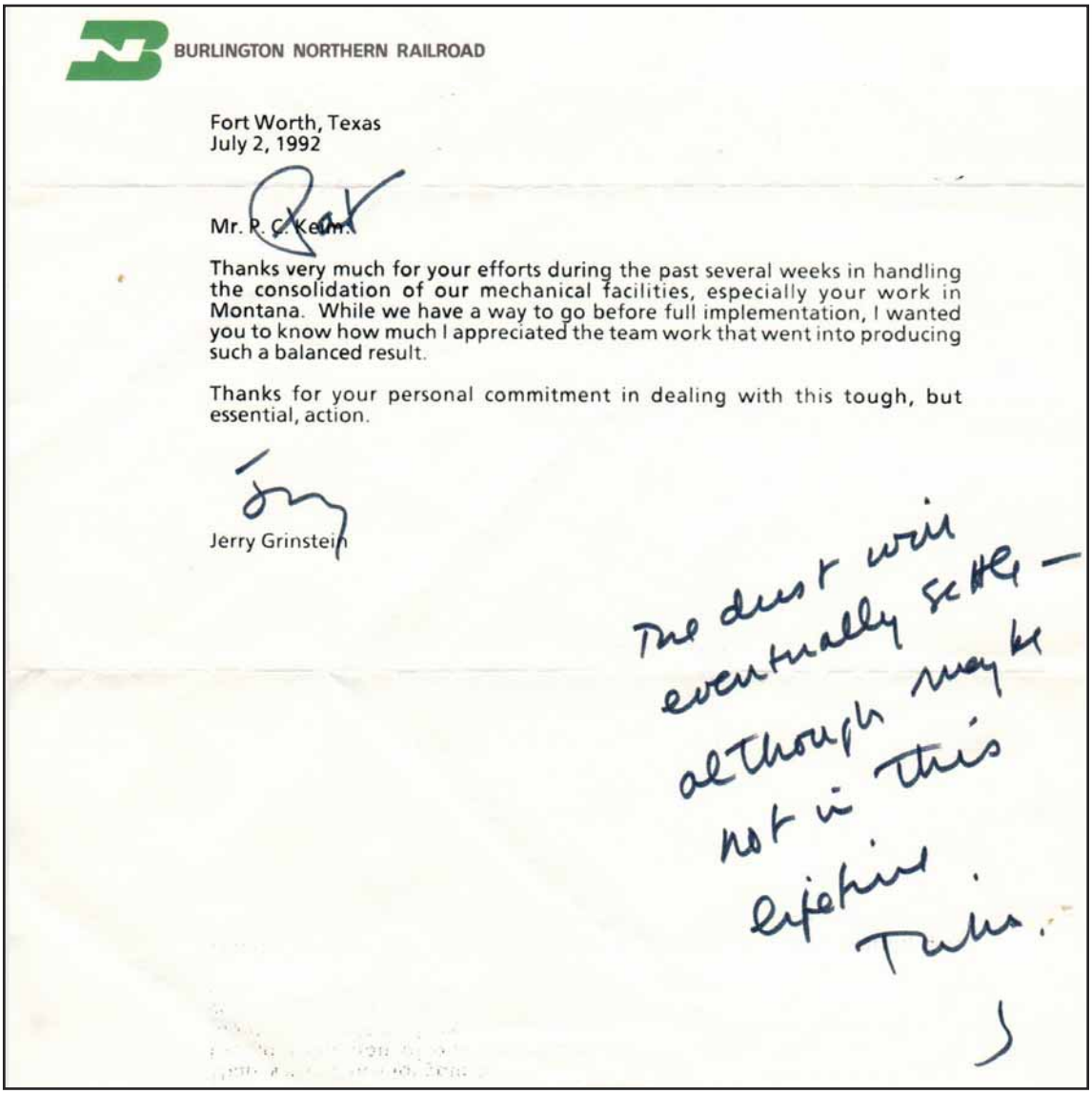
I got in a lot of trouble with management in Fort Worth about that. I didn't take my arguments public, but I argued privately. I was told not to speak to the press about it, but there was going to be a meeting in Havre. And I asked "Well, when is this meeting?" They said there will be a press conference. So I said, "Let me see here. You already posted notice on the board in Havre that you are giving the union a 90 day notice that you are closing the facility. You're going to fly into Havre in the company jet and have a press conference, and that nobody is going to notice, right?" Well, the head of Corporate Communications in Fort Worth said that's exactly what we're going to do, and that we were going to keep this quiet. I said, "Well, if you put a notice up in the town of 12,000 people that you are laying off 600 of them, and that doesn't get enough attention, that jet roaring over town certainly will. It's not like Dallas where there is a jet every minute." "Well, he said, "I'm just telling, don't talk to the press." So I thought I better go home.

I went home to dig a hole for a big spruce tree in my yard. When I'm out planting this tree my son brings me the phone: "Hey Dad, Bob Anez from the Associated Press wants to talk to you." Anez grew up in Havre and still had relatives there. I got on the phone and said, "Bob I can't tell you anything." Bob said, "I understand there's a press conference." I said, "I understand that too, but I can't tell you anything." It came out in the news the next day that I confirmed there was a

press conference. The Vice President of Corporate Communications just went right off the wall, called me names and stuff, and I thought, I'm done.

Long story short, I kept my job and they ultimately reopened the diesel shop after the Santa Fe merger. Out of that came a personal letter from Jerry Grinstein confirming that I was right. I also got a letter from Matt Rose about the Hauser facility. I kept and still cherish those two letters

Dave: It isn't often you get a letter from the president.



BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAILROAD

Fort Worth, Texas
July 2, 1992

Mr. P. C. Keim

Thanks very much for your efforts during the past several weeks in handling the consolidation of our mechanical facilities, especially your work in Montana. While we have a way to go before full implementation, I wanted you to know how much I appreciated the team work that went into producing such a balanced result.

Thanks for your personal commitment in dealing with this tough, but essential, action.

Jerry Grinstein

The dust will eventually settle — although may be not in this lifetime. Thanks.

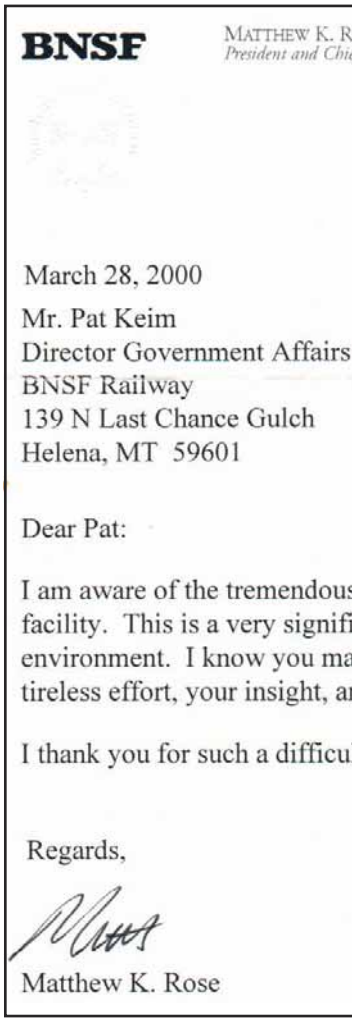
Pat: Not only that, I got commended for taking a stand. I'm proud of the railroad because it demonstrated to me that I could speak my peace and take my stand and they would be big enough to listen to it.

Dave: Who influenced you most in your career?

Pat: I think my father. My father was proud of me going into the railroad and was also proud of my career in the railroad. He actually became BN employee of the year one time. He kept very close track of what I was doing. He was very proud of me and of what I was doing. I thought it was my biggest influence.

The second biggest influence was my wife. I'm proud of her because of the things she did for the railroad. When we were getting ready to move to Lincoln, she hired out as a clerk and ended up being the chief clerk of the freight yards. She was the crew caller—the trainmaster's clerk. She was actually Bill Greenwood's clerk when he was in Lincoln. He went on to become president.

An interesting thing happened back then. The terminal superintendent in Lincoln was a man named Nick Carter.



BNSF

MATTHEW K. R
President and Chi

March 28, 2000

Mr. Pat Keim
Director Government Affairs
BNSF Railway
139 N Last Chance Gulch
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Pat:

I am aware of the tremendous
facility. This is a very signifi
environment. I know you ma
tireless effort, your insight, a

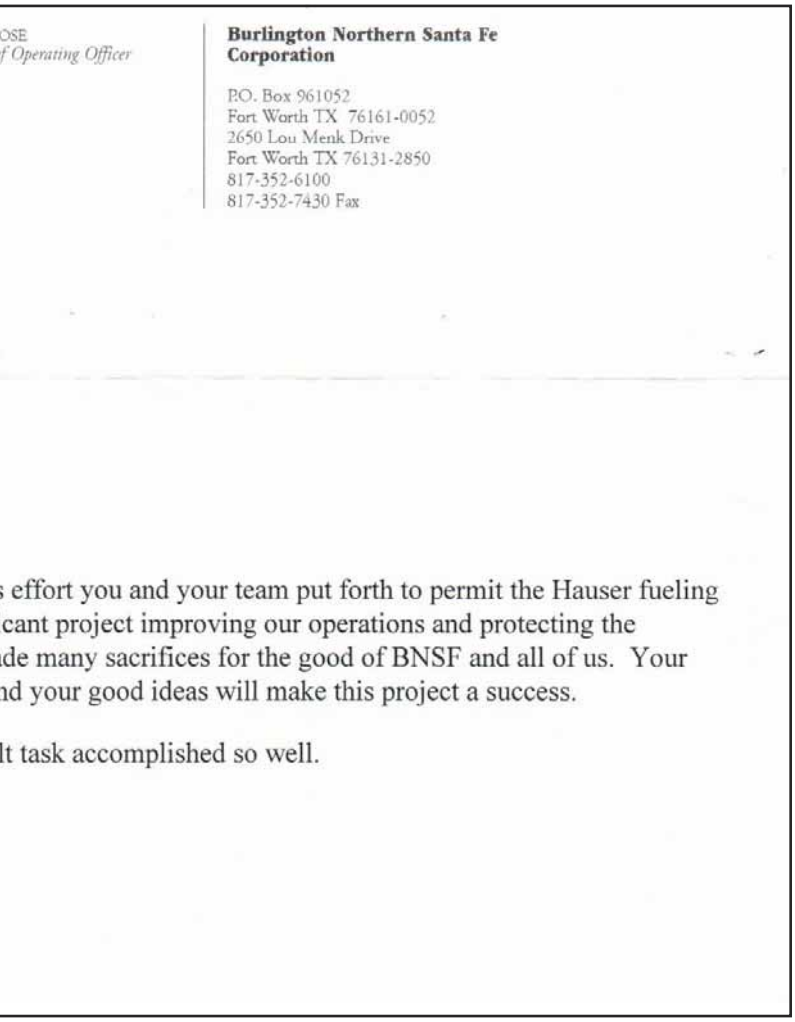
I thank you for such a difficu

Regards,

Matthew K. Rose

Carter was a crusty, hard nosed guy but a good superintendent. They had a chief clerk's position open up in the freight yard. The deal was, you bid on it but the bid had to be approved by the management, and in particular, the superintendent. It was a management position, and women in management didn't exist at that time. Walker Johnson, who happened to be Carter's boss, called Linda into his office one day and told her this position was opening up and thought that it would be a good one for her. He wondered if she wanted to put in a bid on it, so she did. A couple of days later she got a call from the agent out in the yard who worked for Carter and told her that Mr. Carter wanted her to withdraw her bid. She asked me what she should do, and I said, "I don't know

but I'll tell you this. Mr. Carter's boss was the person who told you to put the bid in." I was still a brakeman at this time so there wasn't much I could do. Somehow Walker Johnson found out about the request to withdraw her bid. I didn't tell him, and I don't know how he found out. Anyway he called Carter and he said, "I understand you object to Mrs. Keim putting in a bid out there. Why?" Carter didn't want to say it was because she was a woman, but that was the issue. He said that this job had to deal with the



OSE
f Operating Officer

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation

P.O. Box 961052
Fort Worth TX 76161-0052
2650 Lou Menk Drive
Fort Worth TX 76131-2850
817-352-6100
817-352-7430 Fax

s effort you and your team put forth to permit the Hauser fueling
icant project improving our operations and protecting the
ade many sacrifices for the good of BNSF and all of us. Your
nd your good ideas will make this project a success.

lt task accomplished so well.

switchmen and the switchmen's' board and keep track of the bids. Walker asked him how many switchmen he had out there. Carter replied about 200. Johnson said "She's been dealing with 1,200 trainmen and 700 engineers here for me, including crew calling and marking the board, and I think she can handle it. What else?" Carter said she would have to deal with claims on their payroll. Johnson replied "She's been working with the timekeepers office and all these trainmen and she's had no problems, what else?" Carter said this job had to take care of all the investigations. At that time investigations were like mini-court, and a clerk had to take all the testimony down in shorthand and type it all up. And Johnson said "That's what she's been doing in my office for the last four years there's been no problem. Anything else?" Carter noted that there was only one restroom at the yard office and there was no door on it. Johnson said, "B&B will be out tomorrow to hang a door."

Dave: So Walker Johnson took care of it.

Pat: Yes, he took care of it and she got the job. So Linda gets out there and Carter's on vacation. He came back after a week and called her into his office and said, "Well, I understand your my new chief clerk and you and I have to get along." And you know, they did. He let her reorganize the office and she was kind of one of the women in the cutting edge of management in the railroad. She broke a glass ceiling. I'm proud of her.

Dave: Cool story. Suppose you had to go back into railroading for five years. Assuming age or health were not a problem, what would you go back and do just for the fun of it?

Pat: Brakeman and conductor.

Dave: Really, why is that?

Pat: Well as I told you I really love being outdoors. I love being on trains. I love being able to kick the ballast. But the job has totally changed from when I was in it and I'm not sure I would like it. My heart has always been with the gang in the locomotives. Always.

Dave: Do you ever get a chance to get back in a locomotive now that you are retired?

Pat: No, I haven't been in the cab of a locomotive for 20 some years. The rules are, even when I was in government affairs, that I couldn't be allowed there. I do still have my old BN pass says good on any train and on any locomotives. Try to exercise that now!

Dave: So what do you do in retirement?

Pat: When I retired from the railroad I didn't fully retire. I got to thinking about it, I thought well, I have had a great career, but I'm not ready to call it quits. I'm not the type that can sit around at home. But I thought there was nothing more to gain by staying on the railroad. I had a nice letter from Matt Rose, and could go out at the top. He often hiked in Glacier National Park, and he always invited me to go along. As we were walking along, I said "Matt, this will be my last hike with you." He asked me why and I said I was going to retire. He said, "I just want you to know that you're welcome to stay as long as you want."

When I retired from BNSF I set up a part-time lobbying practice. I thought, why waste good contacts that I had built up. And it turned out basically successful. I wanted it to be 50% time, and it turned out to be about 50%. I started out representing a museum out of the Missoula area. I ended up representing the US Chamber of Commerce, Altria, Columbia Grain, a prison inmate rehabilitation center, and several others. I just kept it local, and I enjoyed it. I stayed with it for ten years and then decided to retire again.

I've been on the volunteer fire department ever since I came here, and I still am, but I will be retiring from that soon. I

can't run the hills as well as I used to. I was a runner much of my life. I figured I ran around the world at the equator in terms of mileage but now my knees are talking to me about that. I do stay active. Both my wife and I sing in the Helena Symphony. I love that. We have a very good symphony here. It has been recognized as one of the top three small symphonies in the country by both Symphony Magazine and the New Yorker Magazine. I'm now the president of the symphony. That's a challenge.

Linda and I have raised horses for over 50 years. I also still ride horses almost daily. We have two beautiful Tennessee Walkers and I love them.

The county just appointed me to its landfill commission so now I am in charge of both arts and garbage. I've lived in this neighborhood for 33 years, have great neighbors and I'm head of the neighborhood association. I also have a couple of pieces of rental property that I manage. And, I have fun being a grandpa.

Dave: How many grandkids?

Pat: We've two sons and four grandchildren. Our oldest son and family live in Portland, Oregon. Their son just graduated from the University of Oregon as an art and advertising major. Where art came from I have no clue. His sister got accepted at one of the top art schools in the continent in Vancouver, BC, and she will graduate in two or three years. Our other son and his wife live in Moscow, Idaho. Their oldest daughter starts college this year and their younger daughter will be a junior in high school. They keep me happy. .

Dave: I see you have a model train layout. Do you do much with it?

Pat: It's nothing to be very proud of. I don't do much with it. Quite frankly, I do more work on it than running it. I made a mistake and decided to computerize it, so it is in a state of disarray.

Dave: So let's just wrap this up. You've been around and you've done a lot of stuff and I really appreciate you taking the time to share it with me.

Pat: I'm happy to do it. It was a wonderful career. It really, really was.

Dave: I've heard a lot of people say that the Burlington Northern was a great railroad to work for.

Pat: I'd say it was the best and I've been around the management of a lot of different railroads. We went through difficult times with transitions of presidents and a lot of changes. It was challenging. The best thing was that all told, BN was made up of good people to work with, at all levels. I mean I don't care if they were a section hand or a vice-president. I've known them all and they were great people.

Dave: Thank you very much Pat. I'm sure a lot of our members will enjoy your story.

Before & After

2003 / 2020

(above) BN/BNSF rotary snowplow in Glendive, Montana on October 5, 2003. Photograph by Mark Demaline.

Burlington Northern inherited Northern Pacific rotary snowplow #42 on M-Day. It was built by Alco in 1937 and rebuilt by NP in 1965. BN renumbered and repainted it into its standard mineral red MOW paint scheme soon after the merger. Electric power for the blades came from a converted F9 (Remote Snowplow Power Unit, or RSPU). It provided many years of service before BNSF had it rebuilt by Relco in Albia, Iowa, in July of 2013 as an "RSP38-2." It is now self-propelled, with a 2000-hp power plant that primarily drives the rotary blade but also powers the traction motors in the front truck.

(below) Rebuilt version in Glendive, Montana on May 30, 2020. Photograph by Al Christianson.

Plattsmouth, Nebraska: A Forty Year Coal Line Project

By Gary Seymour, FOBNR Web Site Contact (contact@fobnr.org)

This expanded Contact Corner Story is the result of a rather mild sounding request:

> "I am interested in obtaining a photo of the cut made to re-route the BN mainline at Plattsmouth, Nebraska. There was a very tight turn at the west end of the Missouri River Bridge that was eliminated by a new cut with a sweeping curve through the bluffs west of the bridge. This was a big project, done perhaps in the 1980s [actually 1976-GS]. The cut was featured in the annual BNRR calendar.
>
> I'm a civil engineer, and I did a study regarding some maintenance needs there a few years after the cut was made. I would like to describe the project to the younger people I work with.
>
> Chuck Easton, P.E"

I got in touch with Mr. Easton to find out more information about his experiences and decided that the project at Plattsmouth had more areas to explore.

We found the picture he sought in the 1978 BN calendar and sent a copy to him. That initiated an email exchange extending over several months. The correspondence and research from several other sources helped develop this story and Mr. Easton's explanation of the soils issue on page 25.

A Bit of Background

Interest and legislation regarding reduction of air pollution in the United States began to develop in the 1950's and 60's. The big step forward came with the Clean Air Act of 1970. This piece of legislation mandated development of regulations and standards to reduce polluting emissions from industry and transportation sources. Coal-fired electric plants soon reached the decision that they needed to search for alternative energy sources and/or find a source of less polluting coal. Subsequent follow-up legislation was passed in following years to increase pollutant reduction, and this and further stimulated that search.

The low sulfur coal of the Powder River Basin was available in vast quantities. This coal was highly suited to the need to reduce pollutants. Midwest utilities at first, and then eastern utilities, created a huge demand for it. The Burlington Northern was uniquely positioned to access and ship the product, but a huge investment would be needed across the railroad to ship it expeditiously in the vast quantities demanded. Heavier, continuous welded rail, sturdier roadbeds, expanded capacity, and line rebuilding all had to be done quickly and constantly. BN spent many billions of dollars on such projects as part of what was called the "Coal Plan" beginning in the mid-1970s and continuing thereafter.

The Coal Line in Nebraska

By 1900, the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy had built a main line across central Nebraska, southwestern South Dakota, northeastern Wyoming, and into eastern Montana, ending at Billings. This line was constructed for moderate traffic in grain and other bulk agricultural products.

By the mid-1970s, BN's eastbound Powder River coal shipments using this line increased dramatically. Loaded trains from the mines in Wyoming ran through Edgemont, South Dakota, and used pushers to get over Crawford Hill and into Alliance, Nebraska. From Alliance to Grand Island the trains ran parallel to Nebraska Hwy 2 through the beautiful Sand Hills of western Nebraska and then roughly parallel to US Hwy 34 to Lincoln. From Lincoln trains headed northeast toward Omaha before turning to the southeast and crossing the Missouri River into Iowa about four miles south of the confluence of the Platte and Missouri Rivers near Plattsmouth, Nebraska.

In order to carry the ever-increasing number of heavy coal trains, the line needed to be significantly rebuilt in many locations. The Missouri River Bridge area at Plattsmouth was one of those locations.

The Plattsmouth Project

There are several features to this project and they did not take place all at once. The configuration and construction features present today are the result of about 40 years of construction. What are these pieces?

The Curve: In 1976, on the west (Nebraska) end of the bridge, there was a 12 degree curve in place that ascended eastbound at 1%. The sharp curve and steep grade created the danger of wheel lift and the possibility of derailments.

In her honors thesis, Joanna Moody writes: "In a curve, if the train is running over the critical speed, the vehicle weight shifts to the outside wheel, reducing the vertical force on the inside wheels and potentially causing wheel lift on the inside. This is consistent with the scenario in which a fast train overturns on the curve. Conversely, if the vehicle is moving too slowly, the vehicle weight shifts to the inside wheel and wheel lift occurs on the outside."

This was a serious and recurring problem. BN initially attempted to attack the issue with a kind of "watchdog" approach. A 10 MPH speed limit was imposed. Car inspectors

were assigned to the area 24/7/365 to watch for wheel lift. Floodlights were installed. A small building was built for the inspectors to shelter them from the weather. They used radios to alert the train crews if wheel lift occurred and to stop the train and prevent derailment. This stop-gap approach was expensive and inefficient. More aggressive action was necessary to improve the line.

The Cut: The obvious approach was to reduce the curvature and the grade. The project called for a 4,000 foot change. The bridge approach on the west side was cut through a portion of a geologic land formation called the Loess Hills. Loess hills are essentially windblown dunes of very fine soil created by prevailing westerly winds along the Missouri River from Iowa through Nebraska and Missouri. They are about 200 miles long and consist of many layers of this finely ground soil created over millennia of advance and retreat of the North American glaciers. The word "loess" (pronounced luss) is based on a German word meaning "loose and crumbly". When dry, loess is very hard. When wet, it loses cohesiveness and erodes quickly and easily.

In 1976, BN removed massive amounts of this soil (an estimated 1.2 million cubic yards) to create an 80 foot deep cut to reduce the elevation and moderate the curvature to 5 degrees. About 20% of this material was sent to the eastern end of the bridge to widen the roadbed there for a future second track between Pacific Junction and the bridge. Property had to be acquired, and gas pipelines had to be moved. The old US Highway 34 (now Livingston Road) had to be relocated and reconnected with its own bridge over the river. A short girder span needed to be placed at the west end of the BN railroad bridge to align the new track with that bridge.

Work began in April, and the track was opened to traffic on November 30th, 1976. Safer train operation was now possible through the area at 40 MPH and in 15 minutes less time than previously. The cost of the project was 4 million (1976) dollars.

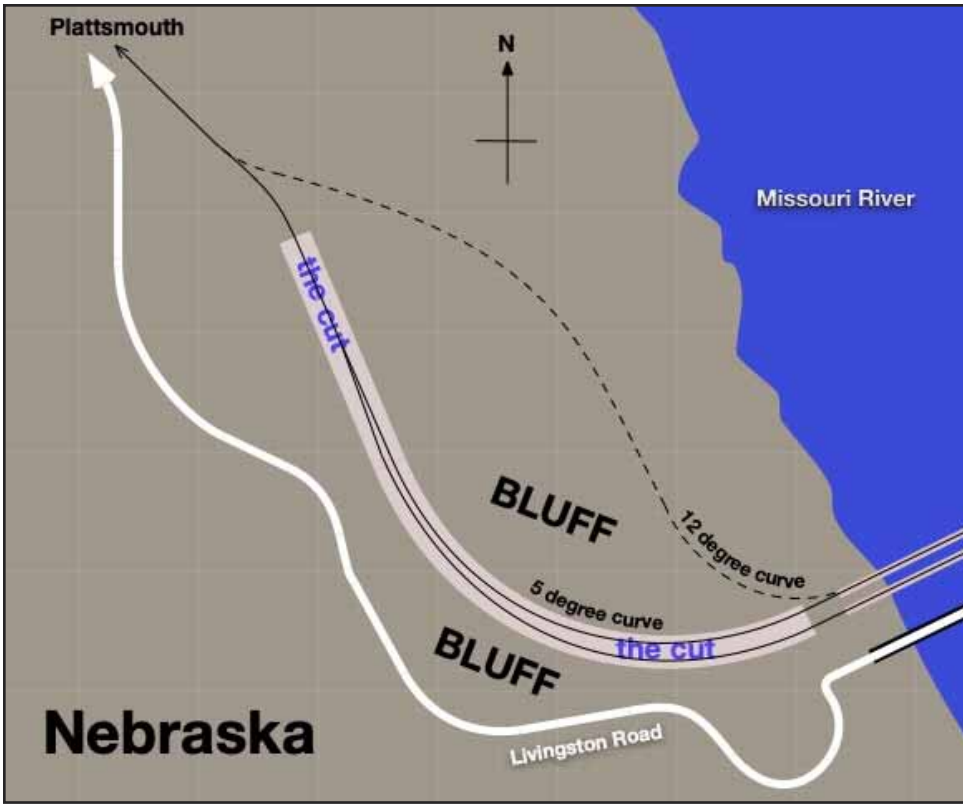
However, BN soon found that they had a continuing erosion problem. [See the sidebar written by Chuck Easton on page 25.]

The Bridge(s): In 1870, the Burlington and Missouri River (B&MR) built the first bridge over the river. The CB&Q leased this railroad in 1872 and constructed a bridge in 1879-1882. The CB&Q renovated this bridge in 1902-03 with a single 402' through truss. This bridge served the BN and was involved in the 1976 line restructure. It is still operational.

The rising demand for Powder River Basin coal increased the number of coal trains traveling over the Nebraska coal line crossing this bridge. The coal trains were longer than in previous years and kept getting heavier as coal traffic surged in the late 20th and early 21st century. Adding to that growth was increased traffic in intermodal and grain shipping. BNSF realized the situation could pose a strain on the load-bearing and structural integrity of the bridge. Planning began for a $46 million project that would improve capacity, add 2.3 miles of additional track, and build a new 11-span, 1,682 foot long bridge over the Missouri River immediately south of the existing bridge.

Construction Details: Darrell Wendt discussed the building of the new bridge in three excellent photo essays in prior issues of *The BN Expediter*. [See the print resources section at the end of this article for references.] His articles contain a large number of pictures, details of materials, and the sequence of construction. I suggest that the reader consult these articles for this information.

Again, the Soils: In order to do all this while maintaining BNSF rail traffic, the project required complex and simultaneous construction in this area already known for unstable soil. The cut had to be widened and deepened to 100 feet in places. Soil and construction materials had to be removed. Erosion was stabilized with 85,000 square feet of soil nail wall construction—an area about 1900 feet long and 45 feet high. [See Chuck Easton's Sidebar on page 25 for more on soil nail walls.] A second track was constructed, and the new bridge was built. After two years of construction, the new bridge opened to traffic on December 4, 2013. The new bridge carries the heavier traffic, and the older bridge carries coal empties and lighter weight merchandise traffic.



Dotted line - original line, removed 1976.
Inside curve - new line and cut 1976.
Outside curve - new line, improved cut, and new bridge 2013.

Summary

The Missouri River Bridge crossing at Plattsmouth was a problem area that needed to be addressed if railroad traffic was to be improved. It was the subject of two major line enhancements on the west end of the crossing. Each required a massive amount of unstable earth material to be removed, while stabilizing the remaining material. New track was laid. The approach tracks had to be made suitable to heavier and faster train movement. Finally, a new bridge was needed in the 21st century. In between these 1976 and 2012/13 major efforts, the railroad had a continuing issue of erosion in a geologic formation known for it. It was a project that cost millions of dollars and extended over four decades.

RESOURCES

Maps:

In Google Maps, enter "BNSF Railway Bridge at Plattsmouth, NE". Then switch to the satellite view. Alternatively, use the map contained in the John Marvin Bridges web site in the RESOURCES. Click on the map page and you can zoom in on and around the bridge area. You will see a nice overhead look at the curve, the cut, and the bridges using either source.

Video:

If you go to youtube.com/watch?v=gX4DYK_npo0, you can watch a drone-made video of a BNSF coal train pulling out of a Plattsmouth siding eastbound, going through the cut, and across the new bridge. The soil nail wall is clearly visible. The video is a little longer than 5 minutes and was produced by Tom Loftus on July 30, 2020. The added music is a nice touch.

Print:

Currie, Earl J., *Burlington Northern-A Great Adventure, 1970-1979*, Rails Northwest, 2019, p. 185, 187-97.

Currie, Earl J., *Nebraska Division-Challenge and Reward 1975-1977*, 2010, pp. 11-12.

Del Grosso, Robert C., *Burlington Northern 1980-1991 Annual*, Hyrail Productions, 1991, p. 9.

Wagner, Jr., F. Hol (Ed), *Burlington Northern 1976-77 Annual*, Motive Power Services, 1977, pp. 128-129.

A loaded eastbound coal train glides through the cut just west of the bridge. Considerable erosion, a forbearer of things to come when the lower step of the cut was removed to make room for the second track, is visible on the left (south) side of the cut. September 1, 1990. Photo by David P. Oroszi.

Walker, Mike, SPV's *Comprehensive Railroad Atlas of North America (Prairies West)*, Steam Powered Video Publications, 2002, pp. 30-37, 43.

Wendt, Darrell, *Plattsmouth Bridge*, Volume 20, Number 3, July 2012, pp. 18-20.

Wendt, Darrell, *Plattsmouth Bridge Update*, Volume 21, Number 1, January 2013, pp. 18-19.

Wendt, Darrell, *Plattsmouth Bridge Update*, Volume 21, Number 2, April 2013, pp. 12-16.

Online:

http://johnmarvigbridges.org, New Plattsmouth Rail Bridge on a Google search for New BNSF Railway Bridge at Plattsmouth, NE.

https://www.kleinfelder.com > Projects > BNSF Bridge 3.8 Over Missouri River (Kleinfelder Web Site).

https://journalstar.com/business/local/new-bnsf-bridge-at-plattsmouth-now-open/article_ef95e03f-419f-5f30-b005-51e4f3c0d81f.html, Lincoln Journal Star, December 12, 2013, updated January 22, 2015.

http:cs.trains.com/trn/f/507/t/100931.aspx, Missouri River Crossings, Trains Magazine {Number 16 on the list}.

https://pubs.usgs.gov/info/loess, Geology of the Loess Hills, Iowa .

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loess_Hills, Loess Hills.

http://scarab.bates.edu/honorstheses/107, Moody, Joanna Charlotte, "Critical Speed Analysis of Railcars and Wheelsets on Curved and Straight Track" (2014). Honors Thesis 107, pp. 20-21.

This September 30, 1993 photo of a westbound grain train with an eclectic set of locomotives, taken from the south side of the cut, shows signs of erosion. Photo by David P. Oroszi.

An eastbound loaded coal train crosses the approach portion to the main span of the first bridge on September 30, 1993. Photo by David P. Oroszi.

Something old, something new. Looking east from the bluff, it is interesting that the two bridges are quite similar in design and appearance, one simply more modern looking than the other. October 17, 2015 Photo by John Marvig.

The expanded cut with the second track and the soil-nail retaining wall in place to eliminate erosion problems. A westbound freight awaits passage of an eastbound coal train before continuing on to Lincoln. The dirt road on the right is part of the original line that avoided the bluff. May 5, 2021. Drone photo by Patrick Jones, Omaha Air Drone Service.

The Soils Issue at the Plattsmouth Railroad Bridge Cut

I have been practicing geotechnical engineering (a specialization within civil engineering) since graduating from Iowa State University in 1968. I lived in Omaha and worked for a geotechnical engineering company named Woodward-Clyde and Associates, providing soil investigations, designs of foundations for buildings and infrastructure, and inspecting foundation construction.

A few years after the Plattsmouth cut project was constructed, Henningson, Durham, and Richardson (HDR), an Omaha-based design firm specializing in engineering, architecture, environmental, and construction services, was hired to design repairs to some portions of the cut in order to create better drainage. Woodward-Clyde was called in by HDR to help investigate the problems. HDR relied on Woodward-Clyde for advice about the cause of the sloughing and instability of the slopes.

The cut was made through loess, the wind-deposited silty clay that is abundant in the area, with unusually steep slopes, 2 vertical to 1 horizontal, I believe. The cut had been designed by another firm, a good firm I respected. They selected the steep slopes based on published experience by the Bureau of Reclamation on deep irrigation canals in western Nebraska.

The main problem was sloughing of the lower part of the slopes. More material loosened and slid down each year, creating a cleanup problem and threatening to disrupt horizontal benches left to intercept rain runoff and carry it to the ends of the cut to prevent severe erosion of the bare earth slopes. I studied the problem for quite a while before I realized that the sloughing was caused by winter frost action. The soil froze about two feet deep into the slopes, and tiny ice lenses were formed in the soil. In the spring the ice melted, and the thin layers of soil separated by the ice lenses fell down the slope. The next winter the process recurred, penetrating deeper into the hillside and producing more spoil that had to be removed to keep the toe ditch open for drainage.

The reason only the lower parts of the slopes were affected while the upper parts stayed nice and stable was the lower soil was saturated (the voids between the soil grains were completely full of water), while the upper soil was relatively dry. When the dry soil froze, the ice lenses didn't form.

The loess in western Nebraska was drier due to the drier climate and different type of underlying soil, so the Bureau didn't have similar problems.

Simple problem; hard to fix.

BN decided to simply accept continued maintenance for the time being—mostly continuing to clean out the ditches along the track and on the benches to maintain drainage. I don't know how well that worked over time. They did construct some drop structures to move water from the benches to the ditches at track level. These were built mostly where the water had already cut a gully from the bench to the lower level. The drop structures would reduce the flow of rainwater longitudinally along the benches and thereby reduce the potential for formation of more gullies.

I remember that the north bank had stood up much better than the south, and I credited it to the fact that the north bank slope receives direct sunlight that reduces frost action and keeps the soil drier. I have seen this elsewhere, notably along I-29 between the Iowa/Missouri border and St. Joseph. The east-facing slopes deteriorated much faster after construction than the west-facing slopes, which probably stayed drier because they caught the afternoon sun.

I understand that the treatment of the new north-facing side of the recently widened cut is even steeper than before due to the space restriction caused by existence of a cemetery immediately south of the cut. I had forgotten about the cemetery. It appears that the cut is being supported with a retaining system called "soil nailing." Holes are augered into the bank sloping gently downward into the bank. Steel reinforcing bars are placed in the holes with centralizers, and then the holes are filled with grout, which is basically fluid concrete without gravel. A lightweight concrete facing is placed against the cut and attached to the bars. Often the facing is sprayed concrete called gunite. Soil nails may have been invented before I worked on the project, but they were not in common use. If I encountered a similar problem today, I would consider using soil nails and gunite with rigid foam insulation between the soil and the gunite to prevent the frost action.

Chuck Easton

Tuning Up My Atlas BN C30-7 #5112

Article and photos by Bryan Smith

The C30-7 is a 16-cylinder, 3000 HP 6-axle locomotive that replaced the U30C model. Over 1,100 C30-7s were produced between 1976 and 1986. Burlington Northern acquired 242 of them, numbering them 5000-5141 and 5500-5599, and had the largest fleet in the United States. [*Burlington Northern Power in Color, Volume 2: Locomotives #3000-6255* by Stephen M. Timko, 2014]

Stephen has written three volumes of books about Burlington Northern power that I highly recommend. Some of his photos of locomotives are still wearing their original paint for Great Northern, CB&Q, Northern Pacific, Seattle, Portland & Spokane plus Colorado & Southern and Fort Worth & Denver.

My original intention was to write an article about installing an ESU LokSound decoder in this Atlas Silver Series locomotive. As always, I test every locomotive on my test track before I install a decoder. Once I tested this locomotive with my MRC Tech II Railpower 1400 power pack it revealed it was seriously in need of a tune-up. This is the focus of this article, with a follow-up article of installing the decoder to come in a future issue.

One tip: I keep all of the exploded drawings of all of the locomotives I've purchased in a file folder to accomplish projects like this. It has part numbers listed for most things in case I break something in the process of dissembling a model.

Step 1: Removing the body shell

Removing an Atlas body is a simple operation, all you have to do is remove the front and rear couplers (photo 1).

Step 2: Removing the front and rear weights

The front and rear weights must be removed to access the clips holding the trucks to the chassis. There is one screw on the top of each weight toward the coupler end of the frame (photo 2). The other two screws holding the weights are directly under the rear axle of the front and rear trucks next to each air tank. Set aside the weights and screws (photo 3). Referring to the exploded diagram helps in locating these screws.

A word of caution regarding the two steps. Many of the parts are delicate so use extra care when removing them.

Step 3: Removing the front and rear trucks

There are two clips holding each truck to the frame. Gently pry and lift the clips off of the gear towers. Once these are removed, lift off the worm gears and slide the universal drive shaft from the flywheel (photo 4). Carefully, remove each of the side frames and wheel wipers from both sides of the front and rear trucks. I use a small straight slot screwdriver to pry apart each side frame. Work carefully, prying and lifting at each wheel of the trucks. Do not pry anywhere else to avoid damaging the detail on the side frames (I did this very thing once and had to order a new side frame set—be careful!). Leave the side frames attached to the wheel wipers and pick-up wires and to the frame.

Before separating the two halves of each truck, remove the two small screws on the side of each truck (photo 5). Lift the tab on top of the trucks and, with a straight slot screwdriver, carefully and slowly separate the truck halves. I sometimes use a #11 chisel blade to assist in this operation. There is also an axle retaining clip on the bottom of each truck with a series of tabs that have to be carefully loosened to separate the halves (photo 6).

Step 4: Cleaning and reassembling the trucks

Carefully wash the wheel sets, gears, front and rear gear cases and clips in warm soapy water. I do this in a large storage container so I don't lose any parts in the process. I have an old toothbrush I use to scrub off the stubborn old grease. Set all of the parts aside on a paper towel to dry overnight. The next day, reassemble the trucks according to the exploded parts diagram.

I use Labelle products for lubricating the gears (photo 7). During this step, I also clean each wheel with an abrasive track block that I use for cleaning my track. I use the same abrasive block to clean the wheel wipers, then add a drop of Atlas Conducta lube cleaner in each mounting hole for each wheel set (photo 8). Finally I check the wheel gauge of each wheel set, adjusting as necessary.

A word of caution is needed here. Take note of the size and gear arrangement in truck assembly. I mixed them up and had to dissemble and reassemble the trucks because one of them was binding when I tested the locomotive! Once I figured out what I did and fixed it the locomotive ran perfectly.

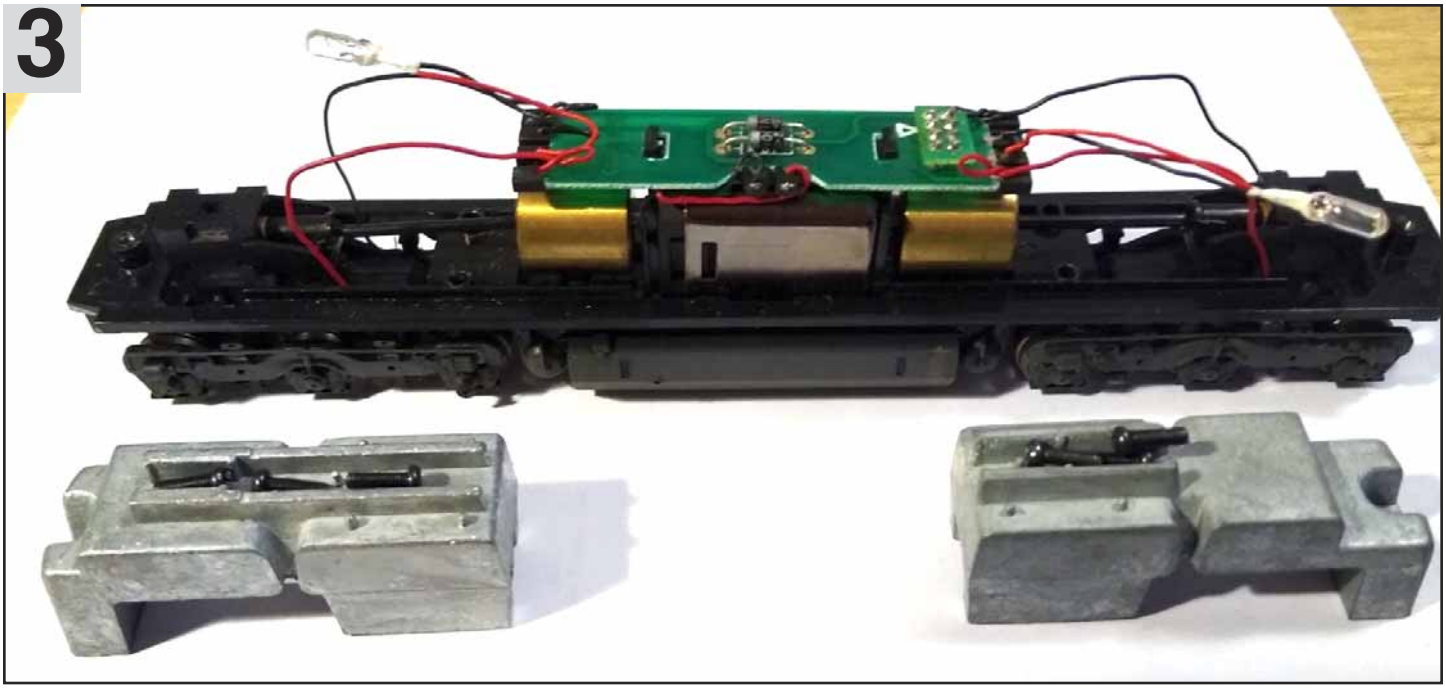
Run the locomotive forward and backward for a few minutes to ensure everything is seated and running smoothly. Reattach the front and rear weights carefully, routing the pick-ups wires in the grooves on each weight. One final run on the test track and the locomotive will be ready for installation of the ESU LokSound (photo 9).

Stay tuned for the follow-up article in another issue. As a fellow model railroader Steve Brown is known for saying; "Rail on my friends!'

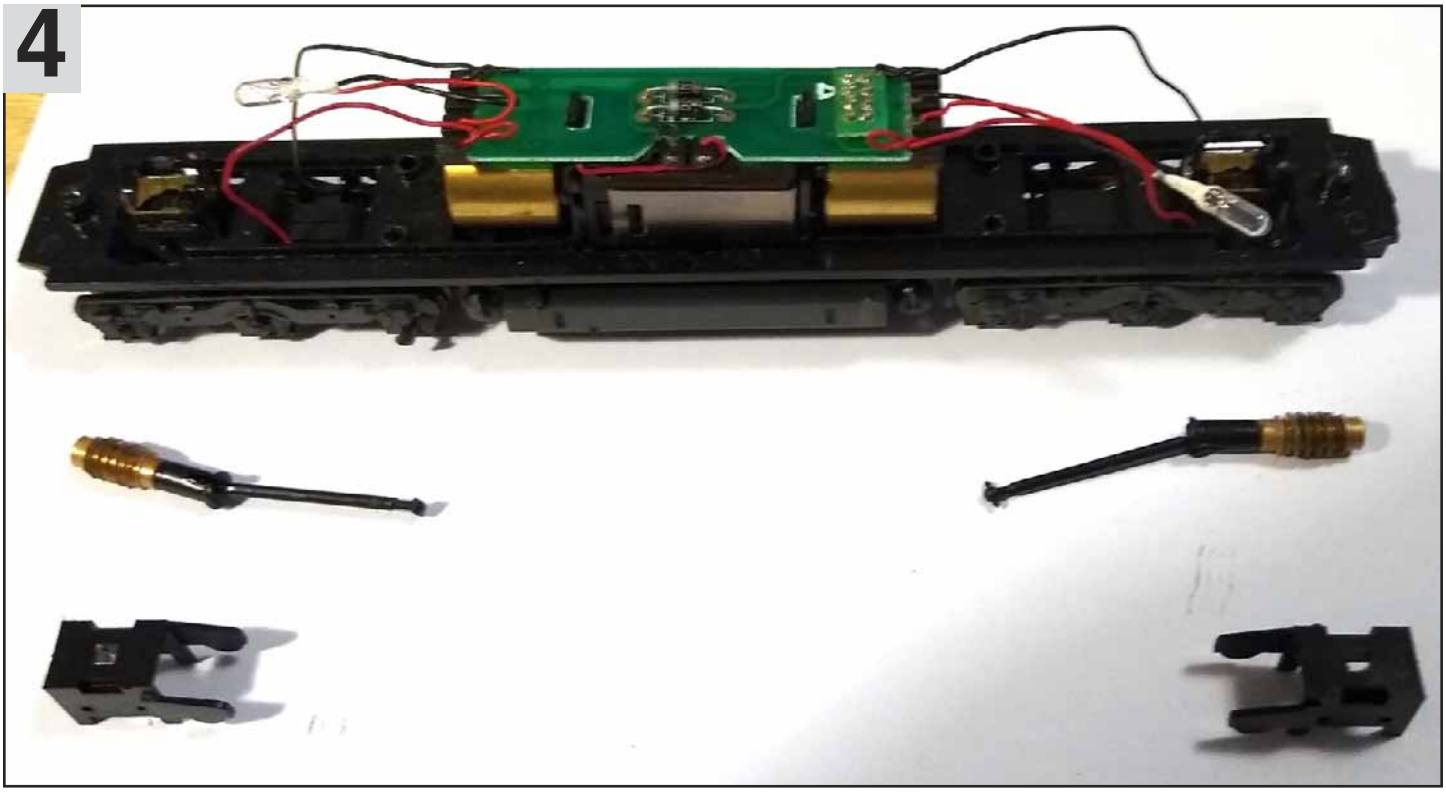
1

2

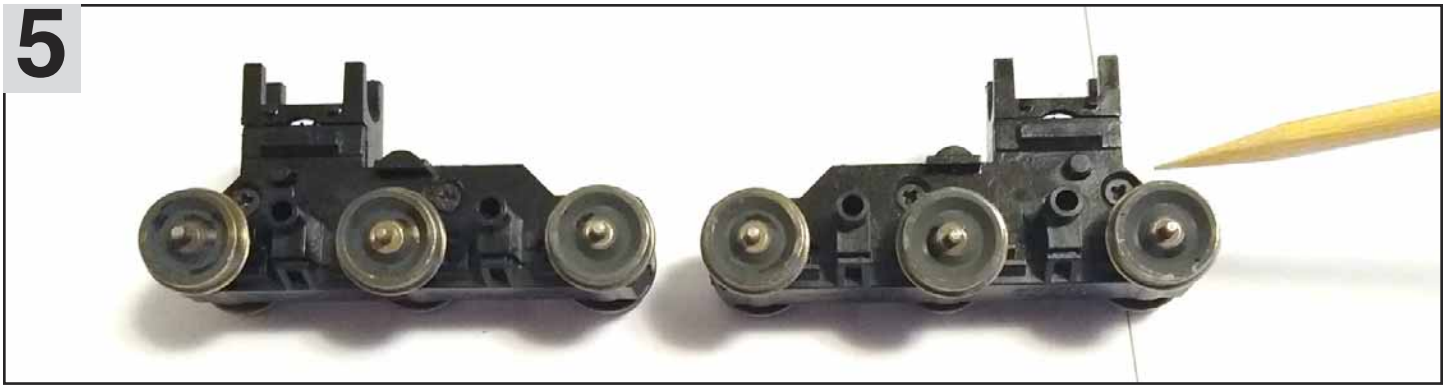
3



4



5



6

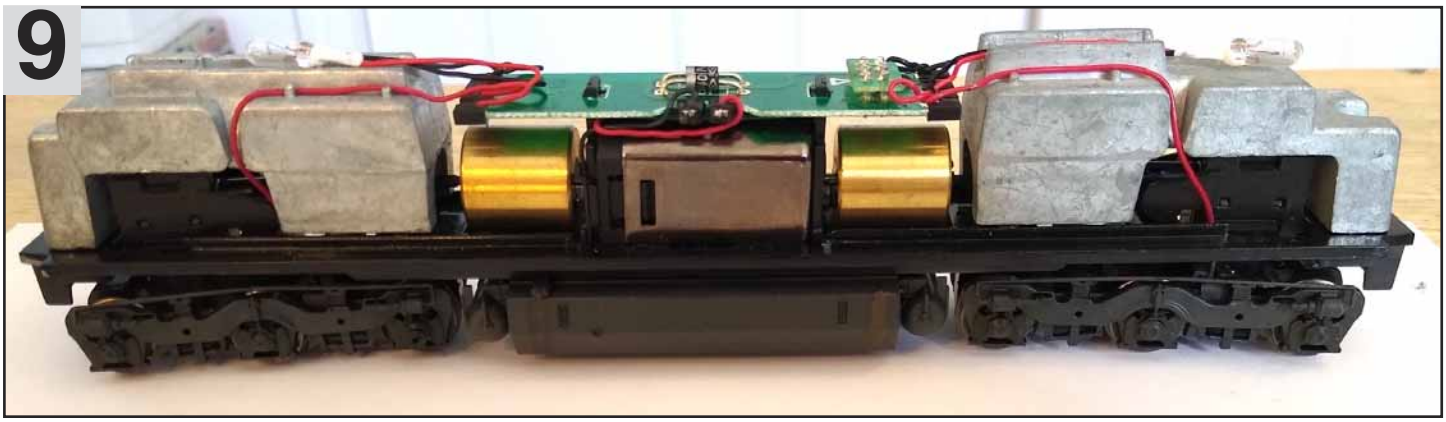
7

About Lubricants: I use the 106 grease on the main gears because it is thicker than the 102 lubricant, staying on the gears and not spreading to other parts. The 102 lubricant is thinner and works better on the worm gears on the top of the gear assemblies. It then works it way to the top of the gears in the assembly. Finally, I use Atlas Conducta-Lube Cleaner because it both lubricates and is electrically conductive.

I sometimes apply a drop of Conducta-Lube on the contact points of the turnouts on my model railroad to improve their electrical contact. All three lubricants have worked well for me over many years of model railroading.

8

9



Over the Top

We continue our series of roof detail photographs of BN and BNSF locomotives, a recurring feature in *The BN Expediter*. This time we examine two GP20s, 2001 and 2032, photographed in Minneapolis on April 4, 1980. These ex-GN units were designed to run long-hood forward, as indicated by the white diagonal stripes, and for cold weather, given the winterization hatch on one of the radiator fans and the all-weather window on the engineer's side. Note that the unit number on the long hood of 2032 appears to have been shifted to the left. Photos by Al Christianson.

Henry Frick

...continued from page 11

Henry passed away while work on this article was proceeding. He sent us a few more recollections about his career shortly before he left us.

The Orin Line:
Around 1989/1990 our Alliance, Nebraska union office chairman took a promotion and I wound up filling the position. I'm sure I will never make the history books but I did get one small positive improvement. I was able to get a helper job added to the Orin line desk. It started as a temporary job to assist and split the workload during track work in the summer. The job was a success so they made it permanent. I got the idea for the job after I watched NJ Transit dispatch office evening rush hour.

Seniority:
It goes everywhere with you and often will determine your fate. As I previously mentioned I was the lowest seniority person with 20 years when I went to the Grand Forks desk. Over the 20 years I had moved up. There was a time period when they didn't hire any dispatchers so they had to play catch up. When they changed the retirement age, several of the older ones left, allowing us to move up. One day when they posted the new roster—it was probably 10 pages—one of the new hires showed me his name at the bottom of the last page. I told him not to worry. I had been on three extra boards and started at the bottom of each one.

It pays to be a pack rat:
Shortly before I retired I stopped by the passenger desk to visit with my friend Chris. He was busy trying to research Amtrak delay details, so I went on my way. I had become friendly with Mr. Mitchell, the Assistant VP, Passenger Operations at BNSF. One day Chris asked me if I had Amtrak timetables for certain dates. Mr. Mitchell needed them to avoid approximately three million dollars in delay penalties that Amtrak was trying to charge BNSF. I got home and looked and found the ones he wanted. He was pleased and said they would be very helpful. I never heard if they won or lost but at least I hope I was able to help.

SP 4449:
I think it was 2011 when Doyle McCormack ran his steam engine from its west coast home to the NRHS convention in Duluth, Minnesota. They ran it on one of my shifts. The Transportation Notice instructed us: "Any problems call him on his phone." For a few hours I had Doyle McCormack's cell phone number.

Henry actively photographed the BN while in train service from 1979 through 1985, including this one taken in Guernsey, Wyoming on September 1, 1979. More of Henry's rail photography was posted on `rrpicturearchives.net` by Christopher Palmieri.

Rear Cover Photo: Westbound coal empties crossing over the Missouri River between Iowa and Nebraska near Plattsmouth, Nebraska. September 14, 1998. Photo by David P. Oroszi.