

A message from Bill Brodsky

While the traffic levels and associated challenges of 1995 are perhaps the obvious focal point of the year, the real excitement for me lies in all the issues that relate to being in the "People Business." This past year saw the launching of our *Delta* program to enhance the people skills of our management personnel. Listening, cooperating, working together seem like such obvious fundamentals, yet they often get ignored when facing our day to day challenges. But, with *Delta* and the reminders that "it starts with me", as we say, we should never stray from the course in our pursuit of excellence.

More business means more people — and 1995 certainly challenged our capabilities to hire and train new members of the MRL team. Hiring people is one of the most important functions we have and that responsibility transcends so many levels of the company. It is truly a team process in selecting the right applicants, providing the very best training possible, and evaluating performance on the job. It is especially pleasing to see so many of our employees taking a vested interest in the safety and training of our new hires. We have seen the demonstration of care and commitment in all departments and it has led to outstanding results. I'd especially like to recognize our safety committees for their continuing efforts in this critical area.

Of course people are responsible for the many critical staff functions that allow us to manage our business effectively. Often overlooked are the extremely professional and dedicated efforts of our accounting people. These people, day in and day out, provide the support necessary to know, in fact, exactly how our company is performing. Whether it is collecting the money,

(turn to Message, page 2)

Dan Watts named vice president operations

Daniel K. Watts, 52, will join us as vice president of operations on January 1. He comes to us from the Burlington Northern Railroad where he was general manager of the Central Corridor.

Watts brings with him wide experience in railroad operations having started his career as a brakeman with the Northern Pacific in Livingston, Mont. in 1963. While attending Eastern Montana College in Billings, he switched at Laurel Yard and later served as general yardmaster. In 1972, he was promoted to trainmaster and served at Omaha, Lincoln and Denver before being promoted in 1980 to terminal superintendent at Denver. In 1986, he was named superintendent of transportation of the Denver Region. In 1987, Watts did stints as service director of the Consumer Products Marketing group in Fort Worth, Tex., followed by service director for the Operations Design group at Overland Park, Kan. In 1989, he took over as general manager of Coal Operations and in 1991 moved to general manager of the Galesburg Division at Galesburg, Ill., before returning to Fort Worth.

Watts and his wife, Bev, have three grown sons.

"This is not only a significant career opportunity for me, but it is a coming home. It is indeed a dream come true," said



Dan Watts

Watts. In the coming months, Dan looks forward to meeting both employees and customers of Montana Rail Link. Mr. Watts' appointment was made following a Board of

Director's meeting held in Billings on December 12. **Bill Brodsky**, president of MRL, said, "I look forward to introducing Dan to our railroad. We are extremely fortunate to have Dan join our management team. His knowledge of our property and extensive railroad experience bring immeasurable value to our railroad and help to ensure our continued success in the future." ●

Newsbriefs

■ **Locomotive leasing update** In mid-November, MRL entered a new lease agreement with Burlington Northern Santa Fe that calls for us to furnish a minimum of 15 high-horsepower units on a net lease basis. Also, 10 to 12 units are on a short term lease primarily to power grain trains between Laurel and Spokane.

■ **Welcome new customers** Boyd Trucking in Livingston is now receiving pipe by rail that is distributed to points in Montana and Idaho. ■ Tabish Brothers Distributing of Missoula is distributing ethanol, received by rail, to Missoula area gasoline outlets. To meet air quality standards, all gasoline sold between November 1 and March 1 must have an oxygenator added. ■ With the completion of a new track in the Van Evans Industrial Park in Missoula, Cenex Supply and Marketing is all set to start receiving propane by rail.

■ **Wire thefts a problem** Since October 1, 17 miles of copper wire for the AC power line for the signal system has been stolen from our property. The most recent incident (turn to Newsbriefs on page 3)

Message (continued from page 1)

paying the bills, or reporting information correctly, this talented group of professionals does us proud.

The past year saw major progress in our handling of third party and personal injury claims. This important function benefited from the capable guidance of Mark Bjorlie until his most tragic and untimely death. We will continue to move aggressively in the direction that Mark set for our company.

Where would our company be without the people directly responsible for interfacing with our customers? The marketing group, our customer service group and information systems people all combine to put a friendly, personable face on the service offering we provide our customers.

And what about internal customers? I think our purchasing function has consistently demonstrated an ability to service with a smile, to manage a major element of expense and deliver internally that same customer service we expect of ourselves. People make the difference.

Administrative support is a term with a definition that broadens by the day. We simply could not function without this support. So often the impression outsiders have of our company is a reflection of the efforts of our administrative support staff. This wide ranging group of dedicated employees consistently coordinates, schedules, sorts, reminds and processes

thousands of tasks that ultimately provide the glue to hold our company together. Exceptional is just one of the thoughts that comes to mind in recognizing these people.

When it comes to technical expertise, team management and safety, who better personifies what we mean by "the People Business" than our excellent team of dispatchers. They are consistently challenged to balance the needs of so many different groups yet with a commitment to safety above all else. I can only say these people are true professionals. Their abilities to balance and perform paved the way to our great year in 1995.

So, in summary, it has been a great year to be in "the People Business." It is invigorating, it is rewarding, and it is fun. The results we have achieved in 1995 were simply not possible without the commitment and dedication of each and every member of the MRL family. Management, support staff, and field forces are all coming together in an effort to be the best of the best. It is easy to see why "Service Industry...People Business" fits our company so well.

My most sincere wishes to customers and employees that you enjoy a safe, healthy and happy holiday season. ●

Bill Rudy

Health insurance: ...we're in good hands

If we harbor any doubts as to the value of the health insurance coverage we enjoy as employees of MRL, this actual case should help to allay them. **John V. Ward**, a locomotive engineer based in Missoula, wrote to share his experience with us:

"(on) August 1st, I had triple bypass surgery at St. Patrick Hospital. I stayed 14 days because of complications. They released me and I was out for two weeks, but had to go back due to pneumonia and infected lungs. My stay was for 16 days, most of it in ICU.

Hospital and doctor bills are just under or over \$200,000. Now the good part. My responsibility for payment is \$962. Blue Cross/Blue Shield is taking care of everything else; even paying full to nonmember doctors. BC/BS has called me at home to check on my progress and to explain how much more they can do concerning home care.

Like everyone else, I don't like making various insurance payments, but when the chips were down, BC/BS came through and are taking care of me. I am happy about BC/BS and I think we are very fortunate to have them as our health care providers."

John is recuperating and hopes to be back at work soon. Thanks for sharing this with us, John.

In Memoriam

MARK C. BJORLIE
1951-1995

We are saddened by the loss of **Mark C. Bjorlie**, 44, manager of injury prevention and claims, who was killed in an automobile accident in Townsend, MT, on November 1, 1995. Mark had deep understanding and compassion for others and was always willing to do whatever necessary to fulfill his role at work and in his personal life. He will be remembered for his constant optimism and wonderful sense of humor. Our sympathies are with his family.

**BlueCross BlueShield
of Montana**

Health Insurance Claim Questions?
**Call Blue Cross/Blue Shield of
Montana**
in Helena, toll free at
1-800-447-7828
or for preauthorization of treatments,
call
Managed Care Montana
1-800-635-5271

MRL News needs you!

We can use information and photos of activities in your work area. Call Milt Clark at 523-1437.

Do we know where you are?

Employees: Please be sure the Payroll Department has your current address. This is very important information for the W-2 Form, 401(k) and other mailings. All others: notify the editor.

Keeping Track

Josh V. Hinrichs to inventory manager effective November 13. Mr. Hinrichs joins us from Three Rivers Telephone Cooperative in Fairfield, Mont., where he was the inventory control coordinator/accounts payable accountant.

Dennis Eggers to mechanical foreman with headquarters at Missoula effective November 27. Mr. Eggers was formerly a carman at Missoula.

Sylvia Danca to assistant manager materials at Livingston, effective December 4. Ms. Danca comes to us with extensive experience in purchasing and materials management.

Daniel K. Watts to vice president operations effective January 1, 1996 (see article on page 1).

Timothy G. Van Orden to trainmaster with headquarters at Laurel from same position at Helena, effective January 1, 1996.

Randy L. Stending to trainmaster at Helena from same position at Missoula, effective January 1, 1996. ●

Newsbriefs (continued from page 1)

occurred December 27 when thieves took 16,000 feet of wire between Billings and Laurel valued at \$16,000. Anyone observing suspicious activity should contact his local law enforcement agency or the Transportation Control Center in Missoula.

■ **Close, but no cigar...** There will be no safety bonus for 1995. Our goal for the year was \$2.5 million, however, through November expenditures were over \$2.4 million. The Kootenai derailment on December 4, with an estimated cost of \$183,000, and other incidents, unfortunately, put us over the 1995 goal. The good news is that we will have the same safety bonus program in 1996. The goal will be 75% of the last five years average of accident expense. The goal amount will be announced in the near future.

■ **It Continues With Us...Delta and Beyond** One day Delta II training sessions for supervisors to reinforce the principles and concepts of communications learned at the sessions conducted early in 1995 are scheduled to begin in March 1996. Actual dates will be made known when available. Supervisory personnel promoted subsequent to the Delta I classes will have an opportunity to receive this training at sessions slated for late January.

■ **New training wheels...** Our new Training Car was unveiled December 4 in Missoula. Converted from an ex-Santa Fe baggage car, it is a first-class mobile facility featuring such items as air brake racks to enable students to learn first hand about their actual operation of the braking systems on cars and locomotives; various pieces of audio visual equipment, seating for 20, and much more. See photo on back page.

■ **We help** Besides the food drive conducted at Missoula this Christmas (see back page for photo), the "Country Store" run by **Linda Thompson** and the gang at the Billings Yard Office earned enough money from sales to help an area family and make a contribution to the Billings Rescue Mission.

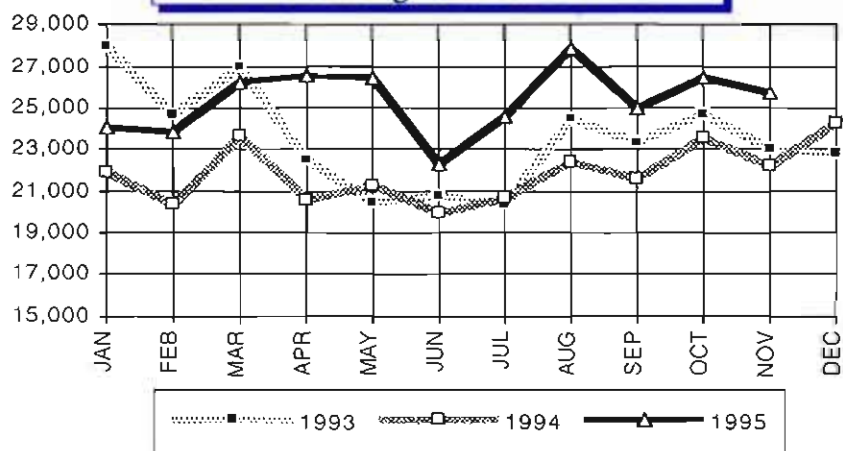
■ **\$15.6 million capital improvement program slated for '96** It includes installation of 82,500 cross ties, surfacing 250 miles of track, new rail, extending the Toston siding, and locomotive rewiring and brake conversion. New track equipment purchases include a "Jimbo" tie handler. Signal work includes installing "Electrocode" to control the CTC and eliminate pole lines in several locations and a new VHF data radio system between Helena and Winston, Mont. ●

Knuckle-headed move...



...and an engine crew's worst nightmare. The driver of this car did not stop, look and listen before crossing the tracks. Miraculously, he escaped serious injury. A good idea: yard clerk and Operation Lifesaver presenter **Suzanne Bonner** suggests that the driver be required to make OL presentations in lieu of other penalties. Remember the OL credo to "Look, Listen and Live!"

How we're doing: CAR LOADS HANDLED



Car loads for eleven months ending November 30, 1995 totaled 279,095, up 41,181 or 15.7% for the period compared to the same period of 1994. Bridge traffic increased 41,857 cars or 23.8%. Business that originates or terminates on MRL increased 653 cars or 1% during the period. Shipments of petroleum products helped to offset the impact of reduced movements of lumber and related products due to poor market conditions.



▲ Santa, a/k/a Missoula engineer Leo Block, flanked by TRAX, the safety dog (John Vandenberg), MacGruff, the crime stopper dog, and many helpers, wish everyone a warm season's greetings and a safe and happy new year. This marked our 9th annual Missoula Santa Claus Express, pictured here at Southgate Mall on December 2. ▼ With the generous help of many, including a pickup truck load from the Car Shops, we gathered enough food to help four families in the Missoula area this Christmas. Pictured here, left to right, are Christy Cheff, Dennis Meyer and Cindy Moore who coordinated the effort and delivered the food on December 22.



▲ Training Car 100050 was put into service on December 4. See Newsbriefs for more information.



News

Post Office Box 8779
Missoula, Montana 59807

Address Correction Requested

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 151
GREAT FALLS, MONT.

R. Milton Clark, Editor
Mary Semmens, Associate Editor
Member
Association of
Railway Communicators



No. 31 • Fourth Quarter 1995
December 29, 1995



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER