ON THE WRITE TRACK

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Safety Committee Holds Year-end Review

The West Burlington Shop Safety Committee held their annual meeting on November 8, 2002 at the Pzazz Conference Center. The meeting had a two-fold purpose, first to review our safety performance for this year, and to plan activities and set goals for 2003.

As of this writing, the Shop has two reportable injuries and no first aids, for a reportable frequency rate of 0.61 and a severity rate of 0.00. Remember when we celebrated making the 2.5 (frequency rate) club a few years ago? We are having an extraordinary year.

Shop Superintendent **Bill Martin** addressed the group, after Safety Assistant **Tim Bernhart** delivered the safety statistics. Foremost on everyone's minds was the current study that will help determine whether this shop or the one in Topeka, Kansas will be closed in a consolidation move.

Bill came quickly to the point.

"First of all, I want to say that my house is not for sale," Bill declared. He spent several minutes talking about the World

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2002 Safety Committee left to right: Bill Martin, Dale McKasson, Fred Colesby, Gary Brown, John Williams, Karl Hester, Steve Lipper, Mark Cornick, Russell Kennedy, Dennis Patrick, Louie Becker, Bob Conehour, Dusty McCannon, Terry Davis, Tim Bernhart, Dan Williams, Bob Adams, Leroy Dobson, Mary Levene, Jeff Brockett

FROM TOP . . .

. . . TO BOTTOM AND EVERYWHERE IN BETWEEN . . .

Every person that reports for work at the West Burlington Shop each day expects that when they turn on the light over their desk or work area it will come on. When their air tool is connected to an airline they expect air to be there. And when they want a hoist to go up or down, they expect that it will go up or down as they need. Our shop's Productivity and Safety demand that things operate, as they should. I suspect that few people give any thought to what it takes for all tools and equipment to be up and running at all times. Except when it isn't! That's when the call goes out to the Maintenance Dept.

Having been a part of the maintenance team for nearly ten of my twenty-six years here at the shops, I have some experience in what it takes to keep it going. Naturally when **Tom Lewis** was looking for someone to write an article for the shop newspaper he tapped on my shoulder. At a recent shop safety meeting Senior General Foreman **Terry Davis** commented that he thought the Maintenance Dept. was un-

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Class Maintenance Scorecard.

"Just as a basis of comparison, for the year West B has averaged better than 86 points (out of a possible 105) and Topeka has averaged around 82. We have had 22 weeks this year above 90 points, and four months this year that 90-point threshold has been attained."

"20 points of the scorecard is safety-related, and our safety record has been carrying us all year. We went 236 days without a reportable injury, that is remarkable for a shop our size. What is even better, though, is that after the injury we have put together another streak of better that 100 days since that injury and are still counting."

"What has happened in the past," Bill continued, "is that after that first injury there is a kind of snowball effect, more injuries seem to follow. That hasn't happened this year, and we all should be proud of that fact."

Bill continued to explain that when two big companies merge, it is natural to examine areas where there is duplication, in our case both the Topeka Shop and West Burlington are doing similar work. At the present time, the BNSF RR management is examining whether it makes sense to consolidate at one or the other shops, or continue to operate them both.

"We had a 'lean' study last summer," Bill explained, "that looked at our work processes; and we looked pretty darn good." The same type of study is also being done in Topeka.

So where does that leave us? "We need to continue to do what we are doing, putting out high-quality locomotives, meeting our World Class Maintenance goals, and working in a safe and productive manner. Do we compare favorably?" Bill asked, then answered himself. "I'm confident that we do."

Bill then posed another question to the Committee. "What are we doing this year that has enabled us to have such a great safety record?" Among the answers given were that we have a smaller, more experienced workforce that is focused on doing the job safely.

How about you readers of this paper, do you have any ideas why we have been able to keep our injury rate down? If you have any ideas, tell your safety rep and they can bring it back to the next meeting. "If we could identify why we are doing so well," Bill concluded, "we could bottle it and make a fortune!"

Finally, Bill addressed our schedule for next year. "Like every year, the schedule won't be finalized until December, but rest assured we're going to be busy next year."

After Bill finished his talk, the group moved on to what the safety committee has accomplished this year.

Highlights were the emphasis on eliminating risk-taking behaviors, and using the Work Practice Observations to identify areas where we are doing well and where we need to focus our attention, and the handling of a large number safety-maintenance items.

Tim Bernhart then looked at the year ahead. "We need to continue to demonstrate positive attitudes and encourage other to do the same. We need to continue to influence our coworkers and eliminate injuries, be considerate of others' opinions, and try to keep safety and productivity working together."

More specifically, Tim encouraged the safety committee to "remain active in problem solving – be realistic – and don't get frustrated when ideas aren't fully implemented. " He also has set a personal goal of stocking a display case in the cafeteria with new safety equipment, as it becomes available.

Among other ideas tossed around for next year are an open house – health fair, maybe getting new jackets with a new shop motto (West B – we're still here! was mentioned as a possibility), maybe a Day 1 with guest speakers, getting some housekeeping chores addressed, and a few other suggestions.

Again I throw it to you out there, the workers of the West Burlington Shops. What do you want your safety committee to get done next year? Stop you safety rep sometime in the next few days and offer some suggestions. The committee is looking for ways to continue to improve the safety climate of our shop, and they are willing to listen to your ideas.

Tom Lewis

Christmas Committee Gets Ready

Instead of several 50-50 drawings as in the past several years the Christmas Committee has decided to hold a 'one time' collection for Christmas. We are giving this money to the Toys for Tots because we have already given $300 to the Community Action Pantry.

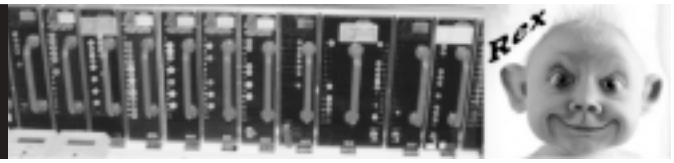
Please remember also that we are still collecting cans and bottles. We would like to thank all of you and the retirees for giving so generously to the 'Children'. We wish you and your families a very Happy Holiday Season.

CHRISTMAS COMMITTEE

J.K. Smith,
Dusty McCannon,
Willie Roach,
Mark Leffler,
Loren Booten
and Tanya Dunlap.

Merry Christmas
&
Happy New Year
Everyone!

Modules for Dummies Vol. 5



I have been asked to continue this series that I had discontinued long ago after I found myself way over my head. I was told that technical dynamic braking information is needed on Dash-2 series locomotives to facilitate troubleshooting locomotives equipped with modules that some guy named Beetner supposedly repaired.

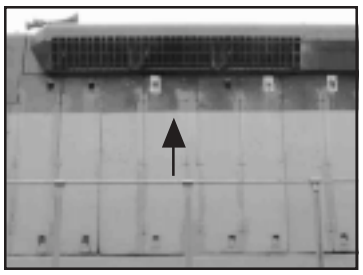
Well, let me tell you a little bit about dynamic braking first. Motors & generators are a lot alike. With a motor, you create a magnetic field with electricity. This creates a rotational pull on the armature, thus converting electrical energy into mechanical energy. Each armature is geared to a set of wheels. With a generator, you mechanically turn a magnetic field inside a stator. Mechanical energy thus gets converted into electrical energy.

Dynamic braking is simply re-configuring the connections to the traction motors so that they become generators. The main generator supplies electrical current (excitation) to the traction motor fields (creating a magnetic field). The mechanical energy to rotate the armature comes from the kinetic energy of the moving train.

Now, you can't fool machinists all the time. Imagine that you try to load test a locomotive and the generator isn't producing load. If you can just fake it for a little while it will end up being 3rd shift's problem. Only the easy machinists get fooled. Most know that it is pretty easy to spin the armature or a rotor in a generator that isn't producing any power. The injector rack always gives it away. It doesn't take near as much fuel to spin an engine at 904 RPMS with no load as it does when it is producing 3,000 horsepower.

The same is true for dynamic braking. If you want the train to slow down with dynamic braking, you have to dissipate the power generated by the traction motors. This is done by connecting the output of the traction motors (now configured to be generators) to dynamic brake grids. The function of the grids is to dissipate power by converting the electrical energy into heat energy. Dynamic brake grids are essentially the same as the toaster in your kitchen, except the heat energy your toaster creates get used for something important like heating pop-tarts. The heat energy dissipated by dynamic brake grids is wasted energy. Now, don't get me wrong, dynamic braking is a very efficient means to retard train speed. It doesn't cause wear & tear on the brake shoes & wheels, doesn't tax the air compressor and takes very little fuel from the engine since it produces no more then 100 horsepower for dynamic braking. The grids actually dissipate up to 214,327 watts each. That could cook millions of Pop-Tarts!

These grids are designed to be able to dissipate lots of heat energy. They are made of ribbon conductor with lots of open air space between each winding. In order to get the maximum heat dissipation, air must be constantly drawn through them. Grid cooling fans on top of the hood suck in air from the sides of the grid hatch through the grid ribbons and straight up into the air. Failure of a grid cooling fan would cause almost immediate destruction to the grids.



Dynamic Brake Grids

The modules that control dynamic braking are: DR, DP and maybe an optional DG. We will talk about the function of the DR in this article. Maybe it will be best if I talk and you read. The DR modules function is to keep the dynamic braking effort below the level of electrical current that the grids are capable of handling.

The guy that invented the **DR** module back in the early 70's was an old friend of mine named Albert. Al later went on and invented the Internet. He named his new invention **DR** which stood for ***D**umb **R**epublicans*. Since this offended many railroaders like me, he had to back-peddle and tell people it stood for Dynamic Brake Regulation. Since he had already ordered a million module faceplates with **DR** printed on them, he hoped nobody would notice the **B** was missing.

It didn't take long for Al to get criticized for his new invention. A guy named **George** said it's wasteful spending. Locomotive engineers are responsible for maintaining dynamic braking levels, make them accountable. AL countered by saying "if you guys get your way, you will fire all of them the first time a grid burns open". A compromise was later reached. The engineer must control the strength of dynamic braking by positioning his dynamic brake handle appropriately. He does this by observing his loadmeter and reducing braking effort if grid current rises above 700 Amps (or into the red zone). The DR module will over-ride the engineer's commands if it observes that the grids are getting more electrical current then they can safely dissipate. If the Engineers won't do their job, the module will.

Thus Al designed the **DR** module to examine the engineer's desired brake effort request (brake handle position) and a portion of the electrical current in the grids. Two pairs of grids are connected in a single loop circuit with two traction motor armatures. Since an SD has 3-pairs of traction motors, there are 3-independent grid circuits.

Now an electronic circuit board such as the DR module is not meant to handle large currents or high voltages. The

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Modules for Dummies continued from page 3

voltage across one grid is in put in parallel with another higher value resistor called **RE7**. This resistor has center taps that provide a **125** volt-to-**1** volt feedback.

Typical Dash-2 style grids can only handle about **712** amps of current. An SD locomotive utilizes 0.86 ohms grids. If a grid voltage reaches 612 volts, then there should be 306 volts on each half (0.43ohms). Ohms law says (volts ÷ resistance = amps) 306 ÷ .43 = 712 amps. Since whatever is across the examined grid is also across RE7 resistor, then the resistors center tap would be 125th of 306 volts or 2.45 volts. This reduced voltage is all that the DR needs to see. This voltage is applied to module pins 5 & 6 for an SD or pins 5 & 7 for a GP locomotive. The module knows that it has to do something if it sees 2.45 volts on pins 5&6 (SD's only). If the engineer's not going to reduce his dynamic brake request, the DR must get involved before the grid over heats itself and burns open.

Technically, the DR module compares this feedback voltage against the reference voltage that is a sample of the dynamic brake handle position. Even a 2 volt feedback on pins 5 & 6 would be too high if the brake handle was only in position 2.

If the DR module has to control or limit the dynamic braking effort, it does so by controlling the main generator output. Remember, the traction motor fields (configured as generators) get their excitation from the main generator. The maximum output allowed from the main generator in dynamic braking is 1175 amps at about 50 volts (SD locomotives). Stop this generator from providing the necessary current to provide the magnetic field necessary in the traction motors, grid current as well as braking effort stops, at least until the feedback level in the sampled grid is under the limit established by the DR module.

The DR module's regulation output is on pin 11. Pin 11 becomes a negative voltage and it is applied to the RC module at pin 6. This discharges the RC timing capacitors which bleed off the reference voltage originally manufactured by the TH module. Without the reference voltage, the main generator cannot load. Without the main generator supplying the traction motor field currents, they cannot act as generators. Dynamic braking ceases to be.

Al called the DR module a dynamic brake regulator; this was only a campaign promise. It

doesn't really regulate anything. It just discharges the RC capacitors on the RC module. Since dynamic brake effort ceases until the feedback is low enough on DR module pins 5 & 6 it removes the negative to the RC module. The RC module reference voltage output rises slowly as the capacitor charges and dynamic effort continues. The DR module only turned on and off.

Al had made a huge success with his DR13 module. Everyone that knows Al knows how much he is concerned with the environment. Al is always giving me heck about me driving my SUV. He decided that we could help save our environment if we could cut back on locomotive fuel consumption.

Al noticed that when the locomotive controls were setup for dynamic braking, the engine speed automatically went to throttle speed 4 (575 RPM). I tried to tell Al that we needed this RPM because all the mechanical blowers used to blow cool air through the traction motors needed the high engine speed to keep enough cool air through them. Remember, all the traction motor fields are in a single series circuit in dynamic braking. While the voltage is only around 8 volts each, the current can be as high as 1175 Amps. They will overheat if they don't get proper air cooling (By the way: this is a good way to dry some wet traction motor fields).

Al said: "but you know the locomotive is not always going to be in full dynamic braking. What about all the times the train is slowing gently and the dynamic brake handle is less then position 5?" Albert had the answer: add an additional circuit to the DR module and the locomotive to control engine speed. If the traction motor field current is above 800 Amps or if grid current is above 575 amps the DR will make the engine go to throttle 4 RPM. If below these values, just let the engine RPM cruise at throttle 1 speed.

Al added this new feature to the DR13 module and renamed it a DR20. A DR20 may only replace a DR13 after the unit is modified to use DR20's. Most of the BNSF fleet uses DR20's. This is my story and I'm sticking to it.

To be continued…

Rex E. Beetner

OPERATION STOP

left to right— Bob Chaplin, John Godsil, Jim White, Dean Robinson, Fred Stewart, John Williams, Debra Singer, and Pat Lyons

On November 6th of this year our local Operation Stop committee met with **Debra Singer** and **Bob Chaplin** and spent the day in training. Yes, we had donuts!

Debra Singer hails from Kansas City and started working with the railroad as a counselor in 1997. Ms. Singer holds a Masters degree in counseling from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and is a *devout* "cheesehead".

Debra brings to her counseling not only a background of education but also a history of alcoholism in her family.

She truly believes that intervention and treatment works.

Bob Chaplin is out of Macomb and is Ms. Singer's boss, but you wouldn't know it. We all work together well.

Understand that your *local* Op Stop committee is not a counseling committee. We are here to promote a sober, safe, work environment and a health lifestyle for all.

We are a "point of contact" for anyone who would like to be put in touch of professional counseling for help with most *any* problem, not just drugs and/or alcohol.

We hold any information that someone divulges about themselves in strictest confidence. I cannot stress this enough. This is the cornerstone of our organization.

There has been talk that there might be some changes next year with Op Stop functions. All I can say is that everything is on the table and we are looking for new ways to increase employee involvement and awareness.

We would like to thank Bill Martin and Terry Davis for their continued strong support of Op Stop; without which we would struggle to provide shop activities.

We would also like to thank all of you who have supported us over the many years we have existed, and a big thanks to all past members.

Again Op Stop is here for you. We don't pretend to have all the answers but we can put you in touch with professionals who can help if the time comes.

We are here to help not condemn. We all want a safe and sober work environment.

Thank you for your continued support…

Your Operation Stop Committee

FALL—A TIME FOR HUNTING, FARMING AND SAFETY

Fall, the harvest, hunting seasons, football, and the dreaded "getting ready for winter".

For most of us this is a magical time of the year when we slowly, hopefully, change over from hot summer to cool fall weather and different activities that are associated with fall. For some of you this means bringing in the harvest. This is a time of anticipation, stress, and fatigue due to the pressures of time. You do not seem to have enough time to do all that needs to be done. This can lead to accidents and injuries.

In spite of great innovations farming is still the second most dangerous occupation with a death rate almost six times higher than the average American industry; and some of the problem maybe stress and fatigue.

The farm can be a very dangerous place to work. Add to this environment stress and fatigue and you can have a very bad day.

Stress and fatigue can do many nasty things to our everyday environment such as: adds to our reaction time, we forget procedures and key steps in a process, we have a harder time making quick and correct decisions, and we may lack the time to maintain our equipment and machines so we can use them safely causing more stress.

So how do we protect ourselves, or families, friends, and coworkers from injury and/or accident?

We must make sure all equipment, tools, and machinery are properly maintained and used in accordance to manufactures guidelines. The removal of "stupid" safety guards or doing it my way because it's always been done this way is a recipe for disaster. The guards and safety notices are there because someone "got nailed". They are there for your protection not to make your life harder.

We must also make sure all involved are have the proper training to do their job safely and efficiently. We must also provide the proper PPE and how and when to use it.

Something that is so simple and so overlooked is proper rest, exercise, and diet. I cannot over state the importance of these three items. Many are injured each year on the farm and in the field because of lack of rest, exercise, and proper diet.

Your body is not much different that the machines and equipment you depend on to get the job done. You put your body under a lot of strain of long days and hard work, it needs good fuel and proper rest and exercise to perform at peak efficiency.

The same is true for going into the field for the annual hunt.

We sit most of the summer and when fall hits we are far from ready for the riggers of the fall hunt. Again proper rest, exercise, and diet will go along way in helping you enjoy each hunting season.

You spend a lot of time preparing your firearms, clothing, decoys and such, why not invest time in the most important hunting article you have…yourself.

On the farm or on the hunt practice safety and pass it on to your family and friends.

Safety is *always* a wise investment no matter where you find yourself.

Have a fun and safe fall…

John Williams

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der appreciated and as a result of Terry and Tom's discussion this article is being written.

All work performed by the Maintenance Dept. comes from work orders generated in the World Class Maintenance System. I spoke with WCM Supervisor **George Haessler** to get some totals and here are the results:

Unscheduled Maintenance items – 618
Scheduled Maintenance items – 260
Total – 878

These are the totals from January 1, 2002 through October 31, 2002. The WCM numbers are figured from July to July. During that time period the shop showed a total of nearly 6000 work orders from the whole shop (E-Floor, Components, Rebuild, HLP. Area etc. and Maintenance). Knowing that every year there are 305 scheduled work orders and with two months in the year to go, Maintenance will have completed in the neighborhood of 1/6 of all work orders generated at West Burlington. Not a bad total. Granted the scope of those work orders varies greatly, from changing light bulbs in the truck pit to changing trolley wheels and bearings on the 40/15-ton crane.

There three type of work orders that Maintenance addresses. The first is a new one, The Safety Work Order. These are generated to cover all items that need to be accomplished to insure safety. They have red printing on them, which varies from the other two, which are all in black. These replace the old blue safety forms. In the WCM system these work orders can be tracked to assure Safety needs are addressed and completed. The second type of work order is the Scheduled Work Order. These work orders are a part of the preventive maintenance program that sees to it that potential problems are spotted and addressed before they become the third type of work order, The Unscheduled Work Order. These are the work orders that address unplanned breakdowns.

The Maintenance Dept. is under the same need to work safely as the rest of the shop. The big difference is that sometimes that work takes place 60 feet above the rest of the shop. With that thought in mind I spoke with Safety Rep. **Tim Bernhart**: here are the Maintenance Dept. Safety statistics:

1st Shift- 1,284 days without a reportable injury (includes B&B, Laborers)
2nd Shift- 3,914
3rd Shift- 423
(Included in with total 3rd Shift E-Floor numbers)

Again, these are good numbers.

I spoke with several of the members of the Maintenance team to get their take on how these numbers of Productivity and Safety have been achieved and also to give the rest of the shop some idea of what it takes to be a part of the Maintenance team.

Chris Johnson – Maintenance Supervisor: "Safety is important. Even with all the safety training and PPE there is still a need to realize that the nature of the work demands constant attention. The guys also need to care about their fellow workers. My role is to provide as much direction as possible, but they know more about the work than I do and know that they have the ability to change plans as safety needs dictate."

A.J. Kenney - Machinist: "Safety is better today than it was years ago. Before we begin we preplan, line up tools, and review the game plan so that everybody knows what is going on. While working, you have to watch every move you make. Most of the guys have worked together for a long time, but you can't get complacent about that."

Dennis Utt - Machinist: "You really need to know what you are going to do before you do it."

Phil Hanson Machinist: "We work in some really awkward places, so safety has to always be on your mind."

Wayne Carlson – "There is a lot of experience involved but you can't take that for granted. You don't want to jump right in before looking the situation over. Good communication helps a lot too."

Bob Adolphson – Machinist: "You have to work together."

Ray McIntyre – Electrician: "It is important that everyone be up on Lock Out/Tag Out procedures especially when working on 440 volt panels up on the cranes."

Mike Richards – Electrician: "You need to understand the National Electric Code and OSHA regulations. You have to look at the situation before you start to work. Looking and thinking will tell often tell what you need to do first."

Kenny Taeger – Electrician: "You need to think about what you are going to do before you start. You need to think about what is safe and what is not. There is a safe way to do any job."

Bruce Johnson – Pipefitter: "Lock Out/Tag Out is important. You might be working on a steam line in one area but the shutoff is located elsewhere. If you don't have it locked out and some one decides they need steam, serious injury can take place."

From my own experience I know that we have to have a working knowledge of all the equipment in the shop. To properly diagnose a failure you first have to know how the equipment is supposed to operate, then determine what it is not doing and then determine the cause. This is all before the repair work even begins. All of us agreed that no two jobs are the same, but the work is challenging and rewarding. With all of these work practices and thoughts on Safety working together its little wonder that the Maintenance Dept. has piled up the record that it has. Keep up the good work fellows!

Dean Moberg

time for house cleaning?

Well, what to write about now? The market stinks for the most part. The Fed lowered the prime interest rate. President Bush says that we are on the verge of an economic recovery. Allen Greenspan says the recovery is weak and that the Fed is keeping an eye on deflation.

Deflation is a unique situation where companies lower prices to increase sales; falling prices eat up profits, causing massive lay-offs, poor returns on investments, and is much harder to control than inflation. What to write about?

Iraq says it will comply with UN sanctions. The head of the SEC quit among a scandal. More Wall Street scandal. The Republicans are in control of the House and Senate. They say good times are a-coming. What to write about?

Seems that the market is stagnant at best. How are your investments doing? Not well I bet. Looking at the latest quarterly reports, mine are down. I'm into my own money. I mean that the "unrealized losses" have gotten to a point where the amount of money in my 401 account has dropped below what I have invested.

We make money on our equity investments in two ways. One is in the dividends that are paid out. I hope that yours are being re-invested. The other way is in the increase of price per share. The unrealized gains or losses arise from the increase in the price per share. Moving funds out of any fund that has an unrealized loss would change this to a realized loss. This strategy needs to be very carefully looked before any movement caused these book losses to become real.

What to do? I could hold tight and ride this out. Remembering that the plan is long term investing and the principle of dollar cost averaging. The funds that I am in are good funds. Therefore, I have selected solid funds and the principles that these funds apply have not changed. What is being reflected in this down turn of these funds is a reflection of the market as a whole.

Dollar cost averaging means that I am now purchasing more shares of stock in these funds at a lower price. When these funds recover, the impact will be shown in the performance for the shares now being purchased at a lower price. But should I wait? How long will this thing run like this? Are there other things I should be doing? What about a switch to a bond fund? What about a gold fund? What about a finance fund, like a bank fund? Strange days as Jim Morrison said.

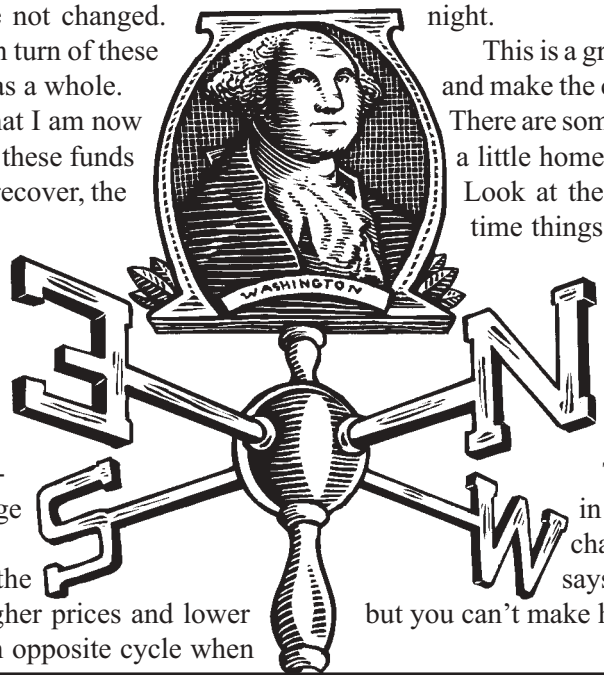
I missed the movement into the bond fund. I would be chasing higher prices and lower yields. The bond market runs in an opposite cycle when compared to the equity market. When the stock market is performing well, bonds are yielding a low return. And vice versa. They are quite sensitive to any movement of the prime interest rate. This is how the yield is figured, off the prime rate. Lowering this rate lowers the yield.

To stimulate the economy the Fed lowered the prime rate. This rate is the rate of interest that banks charge one another for bank to bank loans. Lowering this rate should encourage companies to borrow for needed projects. But companies need a rate of return to cover this investment. If the economy is flat, the needed return is difficult to realize. You can produce all the goods needed within a market but if the consumer is not purchasing, it does no good. You would be actually inventorying costs. The cost to produce would be sitting on some shelves. Not good business at any interest rate. Watch the consumer confidence level. This gives an indication of how we feel about the future. Higher is better basically. It is low now.

What about a gold fund? Seems that these types of funds perform well in bad times as people feel that gold is safe. If we go to war with Iraq, these funds will rise in value. Are we going into Iraq? Time to ponder.

A bank fund would be a good place to invest when the recovery takes hold and it **will** take hold. As the economy takes off, the need to borrow money will increase and these banks will be doing a lot of business. So maybe this is the time to invest in a quality finance fund.

Looking over my portfolio, take a deep breath; it stinks. If I change my investment strategies and move funds from within my 401 to other areas I would realize these unrealized losses. Yea, I put pen to paper and went through all my financial quarterly reports. Yep, some fun in Mepo. Slow night.



This is a great time to review your investments and make the changes that you feel are necessary. There are some very good buys out there and with a little homework you can identify these picks. Look at the history for the fund or stock last time things tanked. How did it perform? This gives an indication of how it will perform in this market and in a recovering market.

The history of the market runs from bear to bull to bear to bull, in cycles. The overall trend is growth. This is the principle that keeps us in the market. Things will change and change again. Like my partner Jimmy says, "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him quack".

Tim Levins

Vern Nielsen Retirement

On December 16th Electrician **Vern Nielsen** will retire from a thirty-year railroad career. This retirement story is going to be a little easier than most to write, Vern has been working second shift with me for the last several years so I know a little more about him than some others I have interviewed the past few years.

Vern started his railroad career in November 1971 in Oelwein, Iowa working at the Chicago Northwestern shop. He had learned the electrical craft at Collins Radio in Cedar Rapids, becoming an electronic Technician, so he started at the Oelwein Shop as a carded electrician.

His first day railroading went like this; Vern and two other newly hired electricians were given the job of stripping the traction motor cables from an old 'F' unit, and he was the only one to return for more work the next day.

Vern stayed at the CNW shop until June of 1976. A former General Foreman at Oelwein had gone to the National Transportation Test Center in Pueblo, Colorado. This ex-boss called Vern up and offered him a job working at the Test Center, so Vern moved west.

The Test Center is jointly administered by the U.S. Government, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the American Association of Railroads (a trade organization composed of the major rail carriers in North America).

Vern spent most of his year there at the F.A.S.T. track (Facility for Accelerated Service Testing), mainly pulling maintenance on the equipment. The F.A.S.T. track is a five-mile circle of track, the work was mainly trying to wear out various test track, ties, and wheel sets, among other things.

The F.A.S.T. track has a simulated coal set, composed of 50 hopper cars filled with ballast. One day they would run the train one direction, the next day they'd turn it around and run it the other. After a year of this, Vern decided he'd better get back into a job with a railroad pension (the test track wasn't), so he quit going around in circles and joined the BN.

Former Shop Superintendent **Darrell Zuerlein** was the Chief Mechanical Officer for the Denver Region at the time, and had been a visitor to the test center. He offered Vern a chance at jobs in either West B or Alliance, Nebraska, and since Vern was an Iowa native he came here.

Vern started at the shops in July of 1977, working the Erecting Floor for Ken Keller, but it wasn't to be for long. In August of 1978 Vern was promoted to first line supervisor and took a job in Livingston, Montana. He started out as foreman in the Electric Shop, then was in the Roundhouse, and finally spent a few months on the E-floor there before being transferred again, this time to Minnesota.

In August of 1984 Vern started work as a foreman on the fuel pit at the Northtown Shop on third shift. After almost five more years he decided to come back to his toolbox, and came back to West Burlington as a journeyman electrician again.

Whew, hang on, we're almost done here. Now back at the shop, Vern bounced back and forth between bids on the floor and the southside, working in the Generator and Traction Motor areas before winding up as the electrical inspector on second shift. This is where his career and mine intersected, I bumped him off that job a couple of years back and he stayed on the floor as an electrician until retirement. Vern noted that he had "worked either second or third shift most of my career, not because I chose to either. Now, at the end of my career, he stayed on second shift by choice!"

Okay, enough about his work, what about retirement plans? Two years ago Vern bought a 32-foot 'Montana' fifth wheel camper. This year he bought a new Dodge diesel truck to pull it. Vern and his wife Jeanette have taken a few short trips to try out the camper; they just might become full-time vagabonds.

"We plan to spend a lot of time on the road," Vern said. "Further in the future, who knows? Maybe we'll decide we like traveling and sell the house, and maybe after a few months together in the camper we'll decide it isn't for us."

"I've been dreaming about this for 25 years," Vern continued, "just taking off with no particular destination. I've hunted and fished for my whole life, but Jeanette hasn't really been a part of that. This is something we can do together; traveling with my wife is something I really look forward to. My railroad career has left us friends all across the country, it would be fun to visit a lot of them"

Vern and Jeanette have two daughters. Kristi is in her final year of law school at the University of Minnesota, and doesn't know where she will end up after graduation. Julie lives in Butte, Montana, with her husband Gary and Vern's two grandkids; five year old Jack and a one year old sweetheart named Quinn.

Jack has already stolen Grandpa Vern's heart; I remember a couple of photos of Jack and Grandpa Vern fishing in Montana. I have a feeling that Quin and Jack will both see quite a bit of their Grandpa and Grandma in the future.

Vern still has three weeks vacation, so November 22nd will be his last actual working day (although some might argue that his working days ended some time ago, but I won't go there). His plan is to visit his brother in West Virginia for

FISHING DERBY

The Operation Stop Fishing Derby was held at the 'Y' Camp on October 5th, 2002. The kids caught a total of 28 lbs. of fish. Everyone who participated received a trophy and gifts, and enjoyed donuts, cookies, chips, subs, and drinks after they fished.

Op Stop would like to thank Farm King, Vista, Hardees, HyVee, Pepsi, Pizza Hut and Happy Joe's for donations. We would also like to thank BNSF and Shop Superintendent Bill Martin for another great fishing tournament this year.

Participants this year included Hannah and Jack Dotseth, Jacob Diewold, Zack Osborn, Therese Lyons, Kaitlyn and Kelsey Godsil, Gavin Roach, Colin Lieb, Austin Liebli, Casandra Breuer, Ashley, Allison and Kayla Becker, Joey Shofe, and Courtney Lamb. Congratulations to all.

Dean Robinson, and John Godsil

VETERAN'S DAY

Patriotism peaked shortly after 9-1-1. As much of the nation returned to normalcy and went about their normal business, patriotism diminished.

Those that defended our freedom get little recognition. Veteran's Day is no longer observed by most of the Nation's work force… but not at the West Burlington Shop and not on machinist **Dean Robinson's** watch!

Dean created his own memorial for Veteran's Day. Dean made an impromptu poster for all veterans and active duty shop workers to sign, which a total of 57 did. Names were then put into a hat and one drawn. The winner, **Dan Ysseldkye** received a 5' American Flag donated by Dean. Dan immediately donated it to the VFW through **Ron Hunt**.

Dean's efforts to keep Veteran's Day alive are appreciated. Thanks to all of those who served and defended the greatest nation on earth.

Rex Beetner

Vern Nielsen Retirement Continued

Thanksgiving, return for his retirement ceremony, then collect Kristi and celebrate Christmas in Butte with the rest of the family.

"This will be the first Christmas since 1993 that both my daughters are going to be with us, and it is also the first Christmas I will get to spend with the grandkids. I think it is a toss-up as to which of these I'm more excited about!" Vern grinned.

This is the part of the retirement article where I always ask for some comments about the West Burlington Shop and the people that work here. Vern leaned back and thought for a minute. He looked at me and said, "I'm not sure if you want to print this – but here it is. I think Shop Superintendent **Bill Martin** was the right man in the right place for this shop. I think he has done a good job bringing work here, and he's kept this place open."

"The whole second shift on the Erecting Floor is the best group I've ever worked with! They are more like a family than a work group, even the boilermakers!" *(Editor's note – Vern and the boilermakers have had a few minor disagreements in the last several years, but they haven't let it be a problem!)*

"Our work record speaks for itself, we are safer than we used to be. People are more aware of what they are doing and watch out for each other. Even the safety rules that aren't liked and seem stupid (the man-lifts come to mind) have worked out pretty well. I've had some bad experiences and some good ones in my thirty years of railroading," Vern concluded, "but the good far outweighs the bad."

Good-luck and good health, Vern and Jeanette. I hope you both have many happy years on the road, if that is what works out for you. My only regret is that I won't be making a seniority move. The floor won't be the same without you!

Tom Lewis

ON THE WRITE TRACK IS TRYING TO PHOTOGRAPH AND PUBLISH PICTURES OF EVERY WORK GROUP IN THE SHOP. THIS ISSUE WE ARE PRINTING PHOTOS OF THE TWO ERECTING FLOOR GANGS ON SECOND SHIFT, THE ENGINE REBUILD GROUP ON SECOND AND THE ELECTRIC SHOP ON SECOND. LOOK FOR MORE GROUPS IN FUTURE ISSUES.

ERECTING FLOOR ELECTRICIANS, BOILERMAKERS AND CARMEN 2ND SHIFT

From left – upper row – Mark Leffler, Roger Broeg, Dennis Sperry, Terry Schrepfer, John Newberry, Bob Rehman, Bill Casey, Jim Hanson, Gary Brown and Tom Rozhon.
From left – lower row – Jerry McCormick, Rick Cluney, Vern Nielsen, Tom Lewis, Ricky Carlson, John Dugan,Dick Wyett, Darren Blakley, foreman Bernie Lee, Bob Sink and Jim Howie.

GENERATOR GANG 2ND SHIFT

From left - Frank Cooper, Bob Wilson, John Lox, Mike Graham, Jim Flietner, Greg Smithart, Foreman Dutch Schultz, Dennis Johnston, John Smith, Jerry Mallonee, and Larry Blutt.

ERECTING FLOOR MACHINISTS AND PIPEFITTERS 2ND SHIFT

From left – upper row – Darrell Nielsen, Luke Witherell, Neil Cornwell, Kathy Osborn, Mark Cornick, Jack Cross, Dick Bruyn, Arlen Shofe, Bill Lane, Gerald Hancock, Del Osborne, Steve Levins, Kevin Siefken, Joe Connell, Joe McCleland, and foreman Mike Thompson. From left – lower row – Bill Kent, Rusty Garner, Mike Smith, Marty Waddell, Steve Lipper, Sam Baxter, Roger Keever, Harold Herbaugh, Ann Stout, Jim Wahl, Dan Sargent, Kim Daniels, Gerald Richards, Jon Rhodes, Ray Peebler and Dan Yssledyke.

ENGINE REBUILD 2ND SHIFT

From left – Bruce Boyles, Torin Walz, Tim Balbort, Greg Stokes, Roben Scott, Jim Durbin, Frank Pratt, Don Northrup, Tony Hoel, Ron Sims, Gene Gard, Kirk Fillmore, Joe Erdmann, Dave Klesner, Kent Bowton,Bob Harden, John Anderson, Bob Kobs, Barron Graham and foreman Jeff Brockett.

MAINLINER EVENTS

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

Carroll Banquet Hall
December 7
10:00-11:30 a.m.

ADULT'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

PZAZZ!
December 28
6:00 p.m.

CONTRIBUTORS TO *On The Write Track*:

WRITERS/PHOTOGRAPHERS

Tom Lewis • Dean Moberg
Rex Beetner • John Williams
Tim Levins
Jerry McCormick
Barron Graham

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

DECEMBER

12-2 Gary W. Stiller
12-3 James A. Durbin
12-4 Delbert W. Morse
12-6 David C. Miller
John W. Crowner, Jr.
Jeffery K. Hall
12-7 Michael E. Sink
Don R. Otto
12-12 Glen R. Payne
Jack L. Richards
12-14 John A. Perry
Jon J. Rhodes
12-16 Dennis L. Sink
Dennis Flowers
12-17 Kirk A. Henry
12-20 Gerald E. Hancock
12-21 Phillip M. Hanson
David C. Dixon
12-23 Darrell P. Wagler
12-24 Greg A. Koestner
12-25 Leslie D. Baldwin
12-26 John R. Wasson, Jr.
12-27 Gary M. Schultz
12-28 David T. Schulte
J. Mike Hobbs
12-29 Jeffrey R. Keever
Michael W. Kartel
12-31 Sandra S. Klesner
Richard W. Oldham

Frank Scott, we didn't forget you this time.

JANUARY

1-2 **FRANK SCOTT**
Leroy D. Dobson
Ralph E. Martin
Dennis E. Utt
1-3 Ralph D. Ives
Steven D. Mark
1-4 Richard A. Swarringim
1-5 Robert J. Siefken
Danny J. Wade
1-6 Michael F. Richards
1-9 Melvin A. Krogmeier
1-12 David W. Inverarity
Richard D. Bruyn
Brian C. Carlson
1-14 Walter E. Knotts
Daniel D. Petersen
William C. Bundy
1-15 Thomas A. Walsh
Steven W. Heckenberg
1-16 Gregory R. Smithart
Steven E. Lipper
Luke C. Witherell
1-17 William G. Lane
REX E. BEETNER
Raymond D. Douglas
Richard H. Smith
1-18 Jimmy R. Treadway
1-19 Bernie D. LaHart
1-20 Russell W. Kennedy
Rory E. McCulloch
1-21 John K. Lyon
John H. Veith
Richard F. Cluney
Christopher Lamb
1-22 John R. Jenkins
James R. McKee, Jr.
Frank D. Weinert
Billie H. Garr
1-23 Roy E. Blodgett
Christine M. Garrett
Jay G. Harris
1-25 Richard J. Bauer
Jerry W. McCollum
Timothy K. Bernhart
Leslie A. Boling
1-26 Stephen L. Thompson
1-28 Larry L. Williams
1-29 Michael A. Stevenson
1-30 Daniel E. Williams
1-31 Richard B. Gaddis