

# ON THE WRITE TRACK

**VOLUME 14** IS:

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ore than a dozen years ago a small group of West Burlington shop employees decided that we'd like to promote the shop and the people in it through a newsletter. We wanted to give voice to our pride in our shop, our co-workers and our jobs.

Over those past years we've proudly proclaimed West Burlington Shop's preeminent status as the best locomotive rebuild facility in North America, if not the world. We've detailed visits from other locomotive experts from around the world, and they all expressed their admiration for our shop, its workers and their abilities.

2002 might have been the best year ever in our shop's proud history. We led the BNSF system in the Mechanical System performance scorecard, which gives points for safety, quality and productivity. We accomplished all of this under budget. We accomplished this with a workforce of a little less than 400 highly talented and proud machinists, electricians, pipefitters, boilermakers, carmen, Bridge & Building workers and laborers, with a fine management team and cleri-

cal and storehouse support.

The last couple of months of the year a sword was held over our heads, with the much-publicized consolidation study holding out the possibility of closing our shop. During those last two months our shop continued to work hard and work well, putting 60 quality locomotives back into service.

On January 13<sup>th</sup> we were dealt a mighty blow. The BNSF management team arrived with incredibly bad news - the shop would lose 2/3 of our workforce immediately. For the 135 or so workers that remain, the sword of closure or consolidation has been delayed, but not put away; we still face an uncertain future.

This blow has left our shop in a state of shock. The people that went out the door were our family and our friends. We literally grew up with them. We attended their weddings, watched their children grow up, shared their joys and sorrows. Others came along later in my railroad career, but you

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# FROM THE BOSSES' DESKS

On Monday 1-13-03 248 of the finest railroaders I have ever had the privilege to work with walked out the door after being told they were furloughed. It was one of the most difficult days in my entire life and, I'm sure, in theirs. I don't know, at this time, if any of them will ever come back in these doors to perform their duties again. This was done because of a downturn in the economy and a reduction of the business we have traditionally done at West Burlington. We have been lucky, given the economy and other initiatives presently at work in our industry, that we weren't affected before 1-13-03. I wish all of these folks the best of luck in their lives and thank them for their hard work in the years past. If I were a manager of a local business, I would be salivating at the aspect of hiring these people. They are professionals and will do anyone a great job.

The "pain" continued on 1-22-03 when 10 of the 16 exempts, including myself, were given notice that they no

longer had a position in the future of the West Burlington shop.

One thing to keep in mind is the action taken on 1-13-03 had nothing to do with the performance of the shop in years past and, particularly in 2002.

The West Burlington shop was the highest scoring mechanical facility on the entire railroad as measured by the Scorecard in 2002. Safety results were 2 reportable injuries compared to 9 in 2001 for a 77.8% reduction. The 2002 reportable injuries resulted in ZERO lost or restricted days as compared to 45 days lost in 2001 for a 100% reduction. Our released locomotives performed at or better than goal throughout the entire year. The times the locomotives sat at or were in the shop being worked on were better than goal all year long. The number of locomotives at the shop for class repairs was better than goal all year long. We spent approximately \$7.6 million less than was allocated for the year. Overtime

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### W. Burlington Shop Pride." continued from page 1

can get to know someone pretty well in a few years, these people also are part of my railroad family. It has been an incredibly emotional time, for both the ones who received layoff notices and those who were lucky enough to hang onto their jobs.

I started out this piece talking about pride. Let me make this clear - we did our jobs well because we take pride in what we do. We can't live our lives any other way. It wasn't a lack of effort that caused us to lose jobs. It wasn't poor quality or a bad safety record. We did everything asked of us, and more. We rose to every challenge and met or exceeded any expectations.

We did all that because West Burlington Shop employees are the best at what they do. I am proud to be a railroader, more directly I am proud to be one of the West Burlington Shop employees. For those local employers or others who might be considering hiring one of our laid-off workers let me assure you that you are getting the best.

The men and women who left here are highly trained, safety oriented, and have the quality that distinguishes them from so many others - they take pride in what they do. That one characteristic will guarantee that whatever endeavor they end up working on, they will do it successfully.

After the layoff I thought that this newsletter was done. After several conversations and some introspection I discovered that my original motivation was still there - I still want to promote the people of West Burlington Shop. This issue is dedicated to those in our West Burlington Shop family that no longer share our days and nights. We miss you, we enjoyed sharing our lives with you, and we will never forget you.

It is hard to stay motivated, but I am sure that the pride that lives in the hearts of every shop employee will assert itself. Who knows what the future holds? I'd like to think that the quality of this workforce would demand that more work come our way. We'd love to bring back those we've lost, but I'm not going to pretend that I'm optimistic. I am, however, damned proud of my co-workers, both present and past. Here's to all of you, good luck to you and to us for the future. We sure won't forget you, and we'll try to keep a light on.

Tom Lewis

### On Monday . . . continued from page 1

was less than 1.0%. The man-hours consumed for the class repair locomotives were under goal all year. In fact, the internal goals for almost every item we produced were lowered numerous times throughout the year. This is a testimony to the productivity of the employees at the shop. Bottom-line is West Burlington shop was the highest rated shop for the year of 2002 with an average points of 89.4. The next closest facility was Interbay, Washington with an average points of 86.7. This is a fact that everyone should be proud of as it is a great accomplishment. It was not easy. We faced several significant challenges in 2002 and the "TEAM" is what made the above happen.

What does the future hold for the West Burlington shop? I wish I knew. As I said at the employee talk on 1-15-03, this has been a difficult time and everyone is struggling on how they feel and will react. I also shared that I plan to do all I can do to keep this shop successful until I am no longer here.

I have been a railroader for over 32 years and an exempt for over 26 of those years. I have worked at four facilities in my career and visited most of the others on the BNSF railroad and several on other railroads, as well. I have never been more proud to say, "I work at the WEST BURLINGTON SHOP". When I am no longer assigned to the West Burlington shop, I will still proudly say, "I worked at the WEST BURLINGTON SHOP".

It is the finest locomotive rebuild/heavy repair facility in the world. Nothing will ever change my opinion on that.

W.H. Martin Shop Superintendent West Burlington Shop



Your editor, Tom Lewis asked if I would write something about the furlough on 1-13-03 or the shop paper. This is something I never thought would happen. I have seen layoffs in the past but never one of this magnitude.

have worked in 3 shops, Springfield, North Kansas City, and West Burlington. I am most proud of my 15 years at West Burlington. The reason, the people. I have never worked with more talented people. No matter what project, program, or challenge you were given you accomplished it. West Burlington is the BEST shop in the world. We were the first shop to capture cost of overhauling locomotives and building components. We have had visits from other railroads from the US and other countries.

We have all shared good times at work, Main Liner events, and at the BIIG events.

Not one of the employees at West Burlington did any thing to cause the layoff. Each and everyone should be proud of what we have accomplished. No one can take our success away. Be proud of yourself, I am proud of you.

Terry Davis Senior General Foreman



# FROM THE BOSSES' DESKS

It was September 1978 when this young 22 year old Supervisor was transferred to West Burlington. I was not long out of my apprenticeship and had already decided I knew everything there was too know about locomotives. I Stepped into the Main Office and was greeted, after waiting awhile, by Mr. Bob Propp, Shop Superintendent. He had the look of "old Railroad" on his face and I could sense that he knew he had power and how to use it. He asked a General Foreman by the Name of Leo Chase to "show me around" the new shop I was about to start working at. I walked out the door and took about 20 steps towards the Erecting Floor and saw a Locomotive flying though the air and my delusions of knowing everything about Locomotives was gone. I thought to myself "buddy you are about to get a lesson in Locomotive repair".

Over the next 17 years I spent most of my time as a Foreman, Production Manager and General Foreman on the Erecting floor. Everyday I came to work I knew would be different from the last. Each day I would learn something new from the talented craftspeople who surrounded me and I loved it, absorbed it. I realized that there was nothing that West Burlington could not accomplish once given the challenge. The many projects and modifications fascinated me as I watched craftspeople make happen what others thought was impossible to do. Opportunities and promotions came my way but for some reason, I turned them down, wanting to continue to watch in amazement the work being done at West Burlington. And still I watch, and I learn something new each day.

The last 8 years at West Burlington I spend as General Foreman in Components. It was a change from the Erecting Floor and Heavy Locomotive overhauls in that I was

now the supplier of component parts instead of the end user. Once again I began to learn what really made each part work and why. I worked with a team that met each challenge that was placed before them. The coordination to insure the right parts are built at the right time can be a challenge. We also did outside sales which got me involved with customer, pricing and delivery. The learning never stopped as still each day I learn something new.

January of 2003 has not been a bright month in the history of the West Burlington shop. We cut 250 scheduled jobs and I watched with sadness as many of my teammates left the shop, shaking my hand and saying goodbye. Soon after I was told that a job as General Foreman in Topeka was waiting for me. I look forward to the new challenges in my life knowing that all things in life change. As I look back on the last 25 years, yes 25 years, I spent at West Burlington, I do it with great respect and appreciation for all of the people I have worked with. Often it is said that we remember the bad times and forget all the good times but that's not the case with me. I remember so many good times and few bad times. I spent the last few days thinking about all the projects I have been involved in over the past 25 years and I cannot remember a time that we failed to accomplish our goal. Once again I want to thank each and everyone of you for your support, efforts, kindness and friendship though the years. When I leave West Burlington on that final day, I will look back at the shop knowing that I am walking out the door a different man than I was when I walked in 25 years ago, and I will smile with appreciation for all and shake my head wondering how 25 years went by so fast.

Fred Colesby

# WE MUST MOVE FORWARD. EASY TO SAY BUT HARD TO DO.

We all have been through the range of emotions that come through a layoff and/or watching our friends go out the door. Many of us, myself included, are still in a state of shock and sadness but we MUST move on.

I believe Nile Kinnick, who the stadium is named after, said it best in a letter to his brother George in February of '43..."never let momentary feelings deter you from pressing on, or even starting anew". I read this quote in the paper and it really stuck with me. Life does go on and we who are left are bound to each other by tradition. We need to continue to work safely no matter what the final outcome maybe.

Many times as a Paramedic I have worked on patients who I knew were either already dead or soon to die. I never, and will never, give up on the smallest hope of their survival. This is the way I was trained but also my humanity toward my fellow man moves me to go beyond and press froward and never give up. My patients deserve this and their families deserve that I always do my best.

I believe we must have this same attitude at work. I know it is hard but what is our alternative?

**Steve Mark** and I trained many of you in First Aid/CPR, and what did we always say?

Do your best at what you are trained to do as long as there is a glimmer of hope. This also helps to treat you. In the end you can look in the mirror and say "...I stayed the course and never gave up"!!

Many of us have a form of Survivors Syndrome. We feel guilty that we made the cut, we feel bad for our friends, but we also feel guilty because we are glad we made the cut and are still working. It is not unlike a plane crash and we feel sad for the victims but we are glad we made it sprinkled with a large amount of guilt that we did make it.

Never the less we hope and pray for the best for those who are no longer with us and we need to continue to support each other.

I have seen such a pulling together since the layoff. I have seen people helping each other with an attitude of care that I have never seen. I have heard many kind words and seen many kind deeds done because I believe we are one family here and we need, more than ever, to the support of each other.

This has been the hardest article to compose but I truly believe each word.

We are still the best at what we do and we do it safely, be proud of this!!

Life does go on...

Sincerely, John L. Williams



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WHEN Monday Feb. 17th at 10:00 A.M.

(President's Day)

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**Day of Tournament** 

FREE BEER • FREE BEER • FREE BEER FREE FOOD • FREE FOOD

One pool cue to be given away.
Winner has choice of 5 different LaCosie cues.
(\$250 to \$350 value)

All Employees are invited – laid off or working!

Come drink a few brews with your old buddies!



# Three West B S hop employees left railroad employment for good reasons at the start of 2003; they retired Electrician T om Rozhon, and Machinists Dick Bauer and Gary S tiller will all start receiving their pensions soon

# Tom Rozhon

Tom started his railroad career at the Clyde Diesel Shop in November 1972. After a few months as a laborer and a hostler Tom began an electrician apprenticeship in the spring of 1973. He didn't serve the entire 4 years; he took a set-up to full pay in 1976. After three years as a journeyman



and a relief foreman Tom came to West Burlington as a foreman in January of 1980.

"I remember taking 15 hours to get here from Chicago, it was the worst blizzard in decades," Tom recalled. Tom served as a foreman in the boilermaker gang, the Truck Shop, the Traction Motor Shop, Maintenance, and on the Erecting Floor (both shifts) before returning to a toolbox in 1990.

After working in the traction motor gang (and following the work to Topeka), Tom returned to West B to finish out his railroading in the Generator Gang and the E-Floor on second shift.

At first Tom was reluctant to single out anyone he'd worked with, but remembered Lee Folkes (the spaceman) as his favorite in Topeka. "If I were to list everyone at West Burlington I enjoyed working with it'd take two pages," Tom grinned.

"The shop sure has changed over the last twenty years, "Tom said. "I don't miss the old cinder road; you needed pontoons to get through the potholes! It seems like every couple of years they move the gangs around in the shop, and blocking off the windows might have been the worst idea I ever saw, there's no ventilation now. The lighting sure is better, though, you used to have to use a flashlight just to walk down the aisle on nights!"

Tom added that "I worked with Bill Martin's Dad when I started out at Clyde, he was the Master Mechanic for the Chicago division.

"It is a little frightening looking ahead," Tom admitted. "I don't think anyone likes change and retirement is going to be s big one. Next to my time in the military this is the best job I ever had."

So what does the future hold? "I'm not sure," Tom said. "I liked Europe when I was in the Army, maybe I'll go back there. I was also in Korea, but I think I've seen enough of that place! I might just jump on my Honda Shadow and visit my grandkids in Ohio."

Anywhere he goes, Tom plans on keeping Burlington his home. Good Luck Tom Rozhon.

# Dick Bauer

Achinist Dick Bauer started his career in Livingston, Montana on December 20,1962 as a laborer. He started his machinist apprenticeship about a year and a half later, and served the full four years. In February 1969 he received his journeyman's card.



He worked in the Livingston Roundhouse for a couple years, then went to the truck gang as a welder, transferring to West Burlington on that job in 1986. After ten more years as a welder in the Engine Block area he became a leadman on the Erecting Floor, a job he held until retirement.

So what are his retirement plans? Dick and wife Peggy, plan to "hang out and travel."

Dick and Peggy have a lot of family spread out across the United States. "My mother lives in Idaho, and the mother-in-law is in Eastern Montana." Dick explained. "My step-son Jim lives in Tooele, Utah, near Salt Lake City. Step-daughter Melody lives in Olathe, Kansas, a suburb of Kansas City, with son Scott in Blue Springs, Missouri, also in that area. His daughter Michele lives the other direction; in Buckley, West Virginia. Son Jeff lives in Burlington, and Dick and Peggy's son Tim unfortunately passed away in 1995."

Their 10 grandchildren are scattered around, with one grandson in the Navy on the West Coast. The Bauers also are good friends with former general foreman **Dick Reich** and his wife Karen, and plan to visit them in Carson City, Nevada when Peggy bowls in a national tournament in nearby Reno later this year.

"I don't know about moving out of Burlington," Dick said, "it will probably be a little tough to sell a house in this area for a while."

"I did want to mention that Killer (**Denny Kayser**) and I started the same time, been to the same places and did the same things, "Dick grinned. (He also mentioned something about Virginia City, Montana, but thought any questions about that he'd let Killer handle!)

Dick understands the shop is going through a tough time. "The railroad career has been a good one for me, even though the climate doesn't look good here right now. I've had to relocate, moving down from Montana, and it isn't always a bad thing. The people here helped with that, though, they have been very friendly. It is a good bunch of people here."

Any last advice, Dick? "I'd just say to everyone, never quit trying," Dick concluded.

# Gary S tiller

Machinist Gary Stiller, like Dick Bauer in the previous article, also started off in Livingston. In October 1961 he began working midnights at the roundhouse as a Pipefitter helper.



In April 1962 he began a machinist apprenticeship, getting a journeyman's card in August of 1965. "I have worked everywhere," Gary said. "I've been in the diesel maintenance shop, truck gang, spent 14 years as a roadway equipment mechanic, worked on traction motors in the Electric shop, then we moved to West Burlington."

"Since coming here I've worked on GE power assemblies, Air Compressors, Traction Motors, engine components, I spent 9 years in the machine bay, a little time in the governor room, back to a lathe, and finally had a leadman's job until I retired."

Gary lives with wife Marsha in LaHarpe, Illinois. Son Jerry work for the Raytheon Corporation in Dallas, Texas; and daughter Vonda works at the hospital back in Livingston. Their two grandchildren, Tyler James and Elyssa are in Livingston with their mom.

Gary also plans to do a little traveling, he bought a new camper a couple of years ago; but he and Marsha plan to stay in LaHarpe. Gary's been building motorcycles and custom cars for quite a while, and right now he has a Volkswagen tricycle, a 1929 Mercedes kit car and a '74 Vette to play around with.

"I like my toys," Gary smiled. "I also have a nice woodshop, and I do a lot of volunteer work for my church."

"My most memorable time was when I was working in the machine bay, and the Ergonomics team was going full tilt, I built a device for the Overland Park, Kansas Training center that taught people how to align rotating equipment." (Editor's note -I think the shop paper did a story about that a few years back.)

"I also built a lot of the tooling for the Omni mill in the traction motor department." Gary related. "The most fun I had was one summer on the road — we spent a summer traveling from Baker, North Dakota to Terry Montana with a double tie gang. They laid 96 miles of track and 96,000 ties!"

Gary also reflected on the current shop state of affairs. "Things look dark now, but over the past 40 years these times have come and gone. We have prevailed in the past, and with a little luck and the grace of God we can prevail again."





**MACHINIST** 

R.L. Garner D.W. Ysseldyke K.E. Boone M.K. Waddell

R.L. McIntyre

F.D. Weinert J.W. Anderson

R.P. Hummer

F.L. Pratt

J.H. Oberly

T.A. Peterson R.L. Scott R.W. Keever

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P.F. Lyons W.G. Kent F.Z. Scott

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R.A. Swarringim

S.M. Baxter

H.L. Herbaugh K.E. Bowton

G.A. Stokes R.L. Buege

The names (and some of the faces) on this page and the following pages are the members of our railroad family that no longer work at the **West Burlington** Shop.

Some lost their jobs in January 2003, some earlier. but all will be missed.

This issue is a tribute to them.

J.J. Rhodes

E.W. Gard

F.W. Cooper

J.M. Mason

M.R. Thompson

W.E. Heckethorn

C.M.Garrett

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