



ON THE WRITE TRACK

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WEST B HOSTS BOY SCOUTS



Could this be a future railroad worker?

On Saturday, April 26, 2003 the West Burlington Shop put its best foot forward and showed 600 area Boy scouts, Cub scouts, and their adult sponsors and leaders what a world-class locomotive shop looks like. If anyone had doubts about our shop and its abilities they were quickly put to rest as a dozen present and past shop employees spent the day giving tours as part of a marathon railroad merit badge outing.

This was the biggest one-day merit badge experience for the railroad merit badge in scouting history. Scouts from Iowa, Illinois and Missouri spent the day learning about railroads and qualifying for their merit badges.

The shop was one of three locations where the scouts demonstrated their knowledge of railroad operations and procedures. Machinist **Bob Drafahl** helped organize the weekend affair. "The Burlington Model Railroad Engineers' Society and Des Moines County Attorney (and Scout leader) Pat Jackson worked with the Chicagoland Lionel Railroad club to make the mass merit badge experience possible," said Bob.

The effort was a full year in the making. Jackson is an avid Model Railroad buff, as is his brother-in-law Fred Miles, who is a member of the Chicago railroad club. The two men spearheaded the effort to bring the scouts to our community. First they trained a group of local railroad enthusiasts to be merit badge counselors. Then, they brought the model train sets to Burlington.

The Lionel group has put on several events in the Chicago area, but this is the first time they traveled with their equipment and set-up. They put two full Lionel model train layouts in the Burlington Depot. The steam locomotive on display in front of the depot was the second part of the display, then the kids were brought out

to the shops in manageable groups to tour our facility.

The Boy scouts were understandably impressed with the model trains. To fulfill the merit badge requirements, they had to demonstrate what different rail gauges were, how to make up a timetable, put an



Laid-off pipefitter, Kevin Vollmer (far right), shows his pride in his former workplace.

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West B Hosts Boy Scouts...continued from cover

Amtrak train together, and how to maintain the trains. The Cub scouts worked with a fictional train, coupling cars, moving it forward and back, etc.

-Bob Drafaahl spent his day at the depot. "All the kids were so well-behaved, it was great. We had no problem keeping their attention. Their scout leaders told them that if one scout misbehaved the entire troop would be sent home! That really kept them in line."

The rest of the BNSF employees kept the shop tours going. "It was a real pleasure to have the scouts here," said Senior General foreman **Terry Davis**.



Scoutmaster and railroad carman, Rusty Carlson (right), shows off his shop.

"The volunteers enjoyed the scouts' company and their enthusiasm was infectious. It was a privilege to have the Chicagoland Lionel RR Club here. I enjoyed working with Pat Jackson in getting things set up. I applaud the shop workforce for getting the shop cleaned up in preparation for their visit."

Clerk **Dale McKasson** enjoyed the day. "It seemed like the little kids just wanted to get into the cabs of the locomotives. The adults were impressed with how clean and orderly everything was, I just wish we had more time, I'd love to do it again," Dale concluded.

Not all the kids were awe-struck though. Locomotive Foreman **Gary Siefken** was asked a few tough questions. "I had a couple of 10-12 year old scouts that impressed me with their knowledge. One boy asked to see an injector, I had to find one to show him. The adults were more impressed with the cleanliness and organization of the shop. The Lionel club has a diverse membership, including doctors and lawyers and other professionals, and these people aren't easily impressed." Gary noted that "the SD70MAC was a big hit, we took them up in the cab and they liked the modern layout and how nice everything was."



Dean Dobson (center) looks good in his hat - where are the bibs?

If anyone had the impression that the West B shop was in disarray after the layoff in January, they soon found out differently. There were SD60, SD70MAC, SD75I and SD40 locomotives on the E-Floor, and component areas demonstrated work on everything you could think of, from pumps and injectors to engines in the rebuild process and Generator assemblies.

Electrician **Rex Beetner** was also impressed with the Scouts. "The Boy Scouts of America is one of the best organizations on the planet. Boys learn valuable skills, ethics, leadership and integrity," Rex said.

"It was an honor for the BNSF and the West Burlington Shop to be part of this history-making event. The guided shop tours will make an everlasting impression on their minds that will carry on into adulthood."

Rex continued, "All the employees that volunteered showed both dedication and pride. It was a beautiful spring day these volunteers gave up to spend the day at the shop for no pay. They volunteered their time and expertise to give something to the community. One of the volunteers showing pride and grace was Pipefitter **Kevin Vollmer**. Kevin's 25 year railroad career came to an abrupt end on January 13th, when he was laid off with 260-some co-workers. Instead of being bitter, Kevin showed both pride and enthusiasm with each group. He proudly spoke of the work, talent and ability this shop has and had."

Machinist **Dean Dobson** had a good time. "I wish I would have worn my bibs! Anytime we can spend some time with kids, helping them learn about our jobs,

is time well spent. The kids were great; I enjoyed doing it. I'd do it again, in fact I am bringing Troop 106 from Burlington (who didn't get signed up in time) through for a tour sometime in the near future."

Tour guide Carman **Rusty Carlson** also had fun. "We had a good time. Luckily, no one asked me any hard questions. The kids mostly wanted to get in the cabs of the locomotives. Everyone thought the shop was an 'amazing place'. It was an honor to be a part of the experience. I'd like to see more of this type of activity take place.

"The Lionel people were really knocked out by the tours of the modern locomotives. Being a scoutmaster myself (Troop 348, Illowa Council, Medicine Lodge District) made this really special," Rusty said.


Clerk **Gary Buckles** spent his day handing out

mugs and giving safety briefings to the groups before and after they had the tours (the safety briefings came first, the mugs later). "I think all the kids enjoyed themselves, more than one mentioned the shop visit as the highlight of the weekend. The adult commented how much they appreciated BNSF and the shop for allowing the visits."

Bob Drafahl summed up the weekend. "The scouts had a cook-out at the 40 and 8 park that evening and recognized all the volunteers. They really appreciated everyone's efforts and were proud to be part of a railroad weekend. I think the railroad experience was something new and interesting for the kids, and maybe even more so for the adults. Everyone had a good time and they expressed the hope of doing it again sometime in the future."

*Tom Lewis,
June 2003*

EXCERPTS FROM MY TRAINING DIARY



(Editor's note – Several West Burlington Shop runners took part in the Great River Bridge Run on May 17th. Electrician extraordinaire Rex Beetner humbly submitted his take on the race and the preparations for it. On The Write Track and the BNSF railroad firmly reject any notion that what follows bears any resemblance to the truth.)

MAY 2 The taunting began. Color posters were placed on bulletin boards suggesting I would not show up in their training runs. **Bill Croston, J.D. Smith, Jim Ross & John Williams** all ganged up on me. The rivalry actually began years earlier. They couldn't stand seeing a much younger & better looking runner running on the same streets as they. What sick twisted people I work with at BNSF.

Burlington's famous **Great River Bridge Run** is where I want to see justice served, not on a training run setup by this angry mob of railroad runners. Interesting that none of these wimps showed up for the race last year obviously scared of being humiliated.

MAY 3 A year gone by and in the absence of any formable competition, I may have gained a few pounds



Beth & Jim Ross, J.D. Smith, Rex and Bill Croston are friendly before the race, (sort of).

and have not trained hard. Seeing my 'love handles' grow, these railroaders smelled blood (my blood). They intend to capitalize on my weakened condition.

To make matters worse, the massive layoffs have left me standing alone to battle a field of Machinists, a Pipefitter and their trophy track-star wives. With Rick Carlson furloughed, it is up to me to prove to the world that the IBEW is superior to all other craft unions. The odds are unfair of course. Me against an army of machinists & pipefitters might be a fair fight!

MAY 4 The name-calling and insults against me continue. They have blatant disregard for the tragic accident I sustained this year as a result of a massive whiplash I received while dozing off during a safety certification film. They always pick on the weak and innocent.

MAY 5 The smell of testosterone is in the air. Even mild mannered Bill Croston, who never raises his voice or swears, has joined the angry mob. He is trying to humiliate me into a Saturday practice run with them. I attribute Bill's unusual demeanor to a steroid rage and hanging with bad company.

I know that their main objective is to get me out and see what I got. I'm not having any of that! Besides, I already have weekend plans to watch a movie on the Women's Lifetime Network.

MAY 6 I haven't run for a full week. My weight has soared to 210 lbs. It's pouring rain & I am forced to sit it out again. As I snub out my last cigarette, I plan to put my training into high gear tomorrow. No more excuses!

MAY 7 Took the day off because of rain.

MAY 8 Took the day off because of rain.

MAY 9 The opposition again plans for another joint 6-mile training run on hills. I again politely decline. I don't want to get attached to these people as I plan to take them out.

MAY 10TH John Williams is now planning strategy to finish ahead of me. My only strategy is to run faster than him. Cheat only if necessary.

MAY 11TH The last official Practice Bridge Run was held Sunday night at 6 p.m. I arrive early despite the gale force winds blowing across the Mississippi. I look around and all I see are 'friendlies', not another railroader in sight. I am not surprised; they are worthless & weak, naturally afraid to show.

MAY 17TH Race Day!

I check my morning weight – it's now 215 lbs. Perfect! Just like I planned.

The Starter's gun goes off. My fellow railroaders have started at the front line with the Kenyans. I am in the middle of a mass of slower runners & walkers all caught in gridlock. They take the advantage as I zigzag in and out of the masses.



Rex tries to make friends after the race, John Williams (center) is an EMT and Rick Carlson is just a nice guy.

Snake Alley is where I can catch them.

Gravity is higher then normal on this day, but they are weak. I easily pass them as if they were frozen in time. They realize now that this is a young man's sport and they have no business being out there. Obviously, they were not prepared to do battle with young guys like me. They should take up shuffle-board.

5-miles later I head for the Great River Bridge to complete the race. I look back and can find no railroaders in sight. They probably gave up back at the Bad Girls nightclub. This was too easy...I need stronger & younger competition.

MAY 19TH Monday morning arrives and these guys are disputing my victory. They say it didn't happen the way I saw it. They claim that **Croston, Williams, Smith, Ross, Carlson** and some little old lady from Autumn Heights came in ahead of me.

This is exactly what I was afraid was going to happen. These people are all sore losers and they want to muddy the water. Sounds like the 2000 presidential election in Florida all over again.

All they have for proof is the official score time and the order in which all runners finished. I however, have digital photographic proof provided by shop photographer **Jerry McCormick** (when he wasn't too busy taking pictures of girls). Digital Imaging doesn't lie!

I admit, I may have lost a little time going across

the Great River Bridge. **John Williams** pointed something out to me something about the pretty scenery in front of us. Then they took advantage of me and ran ahead. I chose to admire the scenery awhile longer



because I wanted to see how it changed when we turned North in Gulfport when the wind hit us from the other side. It wasn't until the first water station that she threw her water on me to shake me off that I realized they had all gotten ahead of me. By that time it was too late to catch up.

Epilogue: Rematch in October for the 1/2 marathon (13.1 mile) in Iowa City. This will be a grudge match. This time it's personal.

Rex E. Beetner, May 16, 2003

AT YOUR SERVICE...

Even though we have had some drastic changes, Operation Stop is still here to serve the shop employees. We keep an obvious low profile, and that is part of our goal. To keep a low profile but to always be around to encourage those that may have need of professional help in some area.

We are not counselors; we are blue-collar workers like you that have an interest in helping where we can. We do not preach but we are able to point someone in the right direction to receive help.

We, at Operation Stop, desire a drug and alcohol free workplace.

All of us must work safely, and to that end we must be sober and alert while at work.

Operation Stop is committed to a "chemical free" workplace. Operation Stop will be having some monthly morning donuts, fruit, and gift drawings. Be watching for these upcoming events! We wish to thank **Bill Martin** and **Terry Davis** for great past and present support without which we would struggle to have any functions at all.

Operation Stop would also like to thank all of the shop employees who, over the years, have supported us. Try to stay positive, support each other, and continue to work for a sober and safe shop.

Your Operation Stop Committee
John Williams





JERRY AMENELL RETIREMENT



On July 7th Machinist **Jerry Amenell** will end a 41-year railroad career and take retirement. Jerry spent his entire railroad career working either here at the shops or downtown at the Burlington Roundhouse.

Jerry started in July 1962 as a laborer, then went through jobs as a machinist helper, laborer again, a fireman-oiler, machinist apprentice and then was laid off in January of '64.

When he was called back he served a full machinist apprenticeship, working the last six months downtown at the old roundhouse. He filled in vacations at the roundhouse, then got a bid down there and stayed until the roundhouse closed in 1980. He recalled working with **Earl McDonald**, 'Stoney' **Stoneking**, **Willie Roach Sr.**, **Lloyd Stout** and **Gary Siefken**.

Upon returning to the Shops, He worked mainly in components, stripping and building governors, building injectors, GE pumps and nozzles, but mainly building governors for EMD engines for the last 15 years. "I liked working on the Erecting Floor in my younger years when I was an apprentice. I learned a lot from **Johnny Johnson** and **Warren Stoermer**. The governors were the biggest challenge though. Every time there was a loading

problem with a locomotive the electricians would always want to change the governor, but usually there wasn't anything wrong with them!" Jerry claimed.

Jerry and his wife Roberta have three children - Shayla, Bradley and Dustin, with Shayla giving them four grandchildren, Ashley, Brandon, Brooke and Michael. Dustin lives down in Dallas, Texas; the rest of the family lives locally so visiting the grandkids will be easy to do.

The family will be heading to their favorite vacation spot this September; the Cut Foot Sioux Lodge on Lake Winnebygosh in Dear River, Minnesota. (Jerry swears he's not making all this up.) "The fishing is good," Jerry said, "but the girls go shopping while we fish. I think they hit every store for 100 miles."

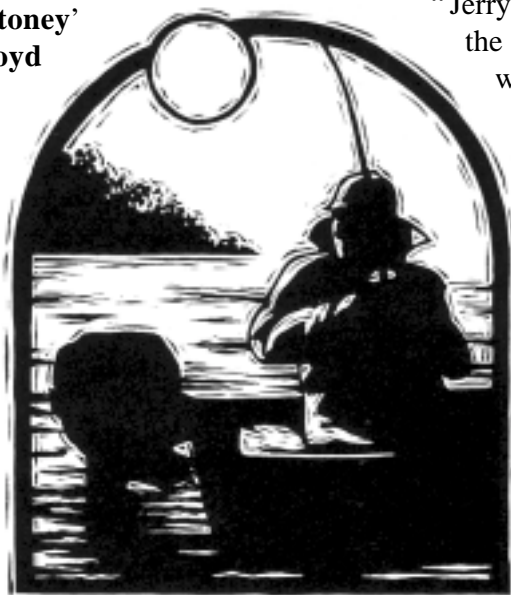
"I'm going to try to talk the wife into a trip to see Dustin down in Dallas when the weather gets cold," Jerry continued. "We also have talked some about going to Australia, but that might be a ways off."

"I loved railroading!" Jerry exclaimed. "I enjoyed every day from Day 1 until the BN - SF merger. The new management said they just weren't interested in maintaining locomotives, they were in the transportation business; that took away all our incentive. They just didn't care if you did a good job for them.

"But it has been a good life. Railroading has supported my family, put my kids through school. We had to work, but we had fun, too. I remember listening to **Johnny Lox's** stories when I was an apprentice, he could really tell a tale!

"I would just like us to regain what we've lost," Jerry summed up. "The guys don't need the stress of not knowing if the shop will be open a year from now, not knowing what comes next. I hope I get to see them when I'm out and about town, I know I'll be looking for them. Good luck to all of you!"

Same to you, Jerry. We hope the fish are biting and we're still here to have you tell us about next year and for a few years after that.



*Tom Lewis
June 2003*

HOWARD PAYNE RETIREMENT



Machinist **Howard Payne** has chosen the end of June to make his last appearance at the West Burlington Shop. After 31 years Howard thinks it is finally time to go!

Howard started here as a laborer in August 1972, getting into the machinist craft on a helper-apprenticeship in the spring of 1973. He was set up to full pay a year later. In the next two years Howard worked on the Erecting Floor, the Traction Motor Shop and the Engine Rebuild area, on both first and second shifts.

Howard attended first-line supervisor's training, and after two years working as a relief supervisor while a journeyman He was promoted to a foreman's job in Northtown Diesel Shop, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In January 1976 when he arrived at Northtown the wind chill was a minus 75 degrees, and there were 98 locomotives out of service. His first challenge was to get those units back out pulling freight! Howard jumped into the job with his usual enthusiasm, and met the challenge by "making a few adjustments and with a little teamwork we accomplished the goal," Howard remembered.

While at Northtown Howard was the boss in the service track, the truck shop and in the boilermaker gang. In 1984 BN railroad had a series of layoffs in the management team, and Howard was caught in the force reduction, coming back the West B and a toolbox.

From April 1984 until his retirement, Howard worked in the Head gang on rocker arms, then moved over to engine rebuild and stayed there until now. "I liked working on the engines," Howard smiled.

Howard and his wife Pearl have a pretty big family, and he plans on taking a lot of time just being a good Dad and Granddad. Son Robert, with grandkids Latasha, Tiffany and Robert, Jr., daughter Diane with her daughter Tiana, Daughter Jenna and her kids Sasha and JoVann, and son Leon with grandson Leon Jr., all live in the Twin Cities, so that will be a frequently visited area.

Ann lives in Georgia with her two kids Vanessa and Felicia, and Sheila lives in the Kansas City area, so Howard and Pearl won't spend all their time heading north. They lost one son, Allen in 1989.

The couple also plan on being a little more active in their church and the Burlington community in general. Pearl already gets involved in a lot of civic affairs like Steamboat Days and the like, with Howard having more time he'll no doubt follow her lead.

Howard also likes to have a 'little fishing time', so

he'll be catching some catfish or 'anything that bites' when the occasion arises. He also is a member of the Big Hollow Gun club, and likes to do some target practice with his pistols.

When the weather gets cold and they're not traveling to see family (Howard also said he has other family scattered about the country) he and Pearl enjoy playing all kinds of card games.

Howard wanted first of all to "thank everyone for their support, effort, kindness and friendship through the years." He has lots of fond memories, he especially mentioned traveling to Galesburg with **Gary Siefken** in the 70s when they were laid off at West B. It seems Howard had a Rambler station wagon that Gary helped keep running, and Gary's souped-up car gave Howard a couple of tense moments when Gary put the pedal to the metal. Electrician **Bill Payne**, machinist **George Hamilton**, and pipefitter **J.K. Smith** also figured in the Galesburg bunch.

Here at West B Howard said, "It has been a fantastic place to work. People have always been nice and you don't forget nice people- from the top to the bottom. I'd like to say to my co-workers to stay safe; retirement is coming sooner than you might think and you want to be healthy when you get there. I was really regretful when the January layoff occurred, we lost a lot of good friends, and good managers as well."

Howard concluded, "When I started getting close to retirement my co-workers came up to me and said, 'Howard, we're going to make sure you get out of here safe and sound.' It was a good feeling know they were watching my back"

Howard, I guess Pearl will have that job now, good luck and good health for your retirement!

*Tom Lewis
June 2003*



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!

JUNE

06-07 James Olson
 06-08 David Kleinkopf
 06-09 Kent Miller
 06-12 William Eggar
 06-17 Howard Payne
 06-22 Kim Schach
 06-23 David Aldershof
 06-25 Donald E. Olinger

**SORRY! WE APOLOGIZE FOR LISTING DAVE
 BABCOOK'S BIRTHDAY AS APRIL 8 IN THE LAST
 ISSUE. IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN APRIL 18TH.
 HAPPY BELATED BIRTHDAY, DAVE!**

JULY

07-04 Stephen Smyth
 07-06 Jeffrey Ross
 07-09 Gerald Payne
 07-12 Ronald Dockendorff
 07-14 Ray Murray
 07-15 William Roach
 07-18 James Peterson
 07-18 Russell Carlson
 07-19 Robert Drafahl
 07-21 James D. Smith
 07-22 Dean Robinson
 07-22 John Howell
 07-24 Eric Johnson
 07-29 Charles Beardsley
 07-30 James Engel

Spiritual Connection

Sharing & Supporting the needs of our Railroad Family

This Prayer
 Connection has
 been approved
 to support the
 special needs of our
 BNSF family.

- **Created for you!**
- **To Seek Support for your
 Serious and Critical Needs**
- Get connected: Send your e-mail
 address to mary.levene@bnsf.com

Spiritual Connection

PURPOSE

To unite our BNSF
 Railroad family in
 one Spirit and Mind
 as we pray for the
 critical needs of
 each other.



**"Prayers Can't Be Answered
 Unless They Are Prayed"**

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