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POST

PENN CENTRAL RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY



■ **WORKING FOR PENN CENTRAL** ■

■ **PCRRHS 2019 CONVENTION** ■

■ **LIFE AFTER PENN CENTRAL** ■

■ **THE CRUMMY LOCKER — FIRST AID FEUD** ■



FROM THE PRESIDENT

From Day One in 1999, the society founders decided there would be no numbering of membership cards. We wanted to prevent a hierarchy from developing, treating everyone with equal importance whether they've been a member for two months or twenty years.

However, imagining for a moment that we had assigned numbers, this man would be a very strong candidate for member Number One. As I understand the earliest history, he and Jerry Jordak were the first to propose forming a Penn Central society.

He did the dirty work of writing by-laws and had them ready for us at our first meeting in Altoona in October 1999. We hashed out those by-laws all day, and as the trains kept rolling by outside, I remember thinking, "Why can't

we just be done with this and go watch trains?" Undeterred, he stuck with the task at hand until the last "i" was dotted and the last "t" crossed. At the end of that day, he took the lead, volunteering to be the first President. Holding that office for five years, he was simultaneously the editor and publisher of the *POST* for the first nine, publishing four issues in the majority of those years.

Continuing on the board as a Trustee after stepping down as President, he was elected Secretary in 2012, a position which he held until this year. If all that wasn't enough, he even hosted the 2013 Rochester convention and has helped with the A/V equipment at almost every convention. Simply put, there would be no PC society as we know it if not for this man's efforts.

Of course, by now you've guessed I'm talking about Jim Hebner. Being the only person with 20 years of continuous service on the Board of Directors, he decided to step down at the end of last year. In appreciation for his years of service, Trustee Pat Livingston created an original, colored oil pencil drawing of a prototype PC caboose that Jim once owned. The drawing was presented to Jim at the 2019 convention banquet. See Kevin Cunningham's convention article on page 17 for a photo of the presentation.

On behalf of the officers and membership, I say thank you and well done, Jim! You are honorary member Number One as far as I'm concerned.

Gary Farmer



POST PONDERINGS

Here at the *POST*, we get by with some help from our friends. Of course, our friends are you! As I've said before, we can't do it without you.

Specifically, I'd like to thank Jack Swanberg for once again responding to a call for photographic help to illustrate an article. Jack's work is well-known — and very good! We are lucky that 1) he took the time to shoot Penn Central when so many ignored it and 2) he is willing to share his work with us.

Saying that photography makes or breaks an article is probably not fair. However, we do not run just plain text stories. We have to have some kind of art to illustrate the contents of the *POST*. I know many of you have slides and negatives of Penn Central subjects. Have you shared those images with your fellow Penn Central fans? If you have shared them on Facebook or Instagram, please consider

sharing them through the *POST*. It is true that an image that can be posted on-line may not be suitable, for technical reasons, for publication in the *POST*.

Steve Hipes

We try to maintain the highest possible reproduction standards for the *POST*. Thanks to the wonders of modern technology, we're able to "restore" photographs that would not have been publishable during the era of Penn Central.

There are limits, however, as to how much restoration is possible. While we can fix over exposed or color shifted photos, within limits, images with excessive grain or that are out of focus are not recoverable (currently) for publication.

We can work from color slides (preferred), color negatives, black & white negatives and prints.

To get the most out of every image, I prefer to do my own

scanning and I'm happy to scan your photographs and return them to you in a timely manner, usually within days of receipt.

If you have a collection of any number of Penn Central images, please consider allowing us to scan your images for possible use in future issues of the magazine. As was the situation with this issue of the *POST*, we are often faced with the conundrum of having an article that is not accompanied by photos. Having a library of scans on file is invaluable on such occasions.

Should you have technical questions regarding your photography or the scanning process, please feel free to contact me via my e-mail address listed on the following page. I look forward to working with all of you while we continue to make the *POST* the best historical society magazine available.

Dale Sanders

PENN CENTRAL RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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FIRST AID FEUD

FRONT COVER: RSD-15 6813 switches cabooses at DeWitt Yard, located in Syracuse, New York, in February 1973. DeWitt was one of the yards that Larry Jones visited during his stint as a fireman and engineer for Penn Central. *Victor Procopio photo, David P. Oroszi collection*

ABOVE: DeWitt Yard was Alco territory on Penn Central. In this October 13, 1972, view, a pair of RS-3s work the class yard while RSD-12 6858 handles a caboose off the hump. *Victor Procopio photo, David P. Oroszi collection*

BACK COVER: A trio of U25Bs depart DeWitt Yard on October 3, 1973. *Victor Procopio photo, David P. Oroszi collection*

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ARTICLE BY LARRY JONES



ABOVE: Penn Central concentrated their small fleet of RSD-12s and RSD-15s in upstate New York. The wizards working at the DeWitt diesel shop employed all sorts of tricks to keep these veterans running. *Victor Procopio photo, David P. Oroszi collection*

On Friday, May 23, 1969, I found myself within the offices of Penn Central's New York Penn Station. I was about to become one of their newest locomotive firemen. I was 18 years old and fresh from relinquishing my 2-S student draft deferment — but that's another story, left to be told another time.

I had traveled on a Penn Central train to New York City from the Albany-Rensselaer Station early that morning, believing I had an appointment for a pre-employment physical exam. When I arrived at Penn Station mid-morning, the interviewing officer expressed surprise, saying that he wasn't expecting anyone until the following Monday. But here I was — so he said we might as well get it all done. Fine with me, I thought. "Besides," he said, with the ever-present railroad officer cigarette smoke swirling around his face, "you'll establish your seniority three days ahead of the others from Selkirk. Smart move, kid."

Of course, the opportunity to get a jump in seniority (seniority meaning practically everything on the railroad) came to me

completely by random chance. A couple of days prior to my Penn Station experience, a group of us had gathered at the old, gray Railroad YMCA building located at the east end of Selkirk's brand new A.E. Perlman Yard.

At that time, the best way to get hired by Penn Central was to be related to someone who worked there. As the hiring officer in New York told me, they liked hiring people from railroad families because the newly hired employee would know what the life of a railroader was like. The way this was accomplished was to keep the times and locations of hiring sessions as closely-held secrets, available only to people with connections. In my case, it was my father who had the connections.

Dad had been a brakeman and hump retarder operator for New York Central since 1947 — and the newly-rebuilt PC hump yard in Selkirk (as well as the booming economy) had him working steadily for a few years by then. With his "furlough time" carpenter tools stowed in the basement, he was feeling confident that maybe



ABOVE: A U25B/U25C/U33B trio take a west-bound van train through DeWitt Yard on February 25, 1976. *Bill Dechau photo, Dan Dover collection*

the railroad would be a decent career for his youngest son after all.

At the hiring session in Selkirk, we were given applications to fill out. After that, they gave us a multiple-choice test to take. The only question I recall from that test had to do with a train speeding around a curve, and asking which way the train would tend to fly off the track if it derailed — to the inside or outside of the curve. As I answered to the best of my ability (outside, of course), I'm sure the irony of Penn Central asking that question escaped me at the time. But then PC was (apparently) still a going concern in early 1969, even though the full negative impact of having been recently forced to absorb the cash-draining, bankrupt New Haven Railroad had yet to become obvious.

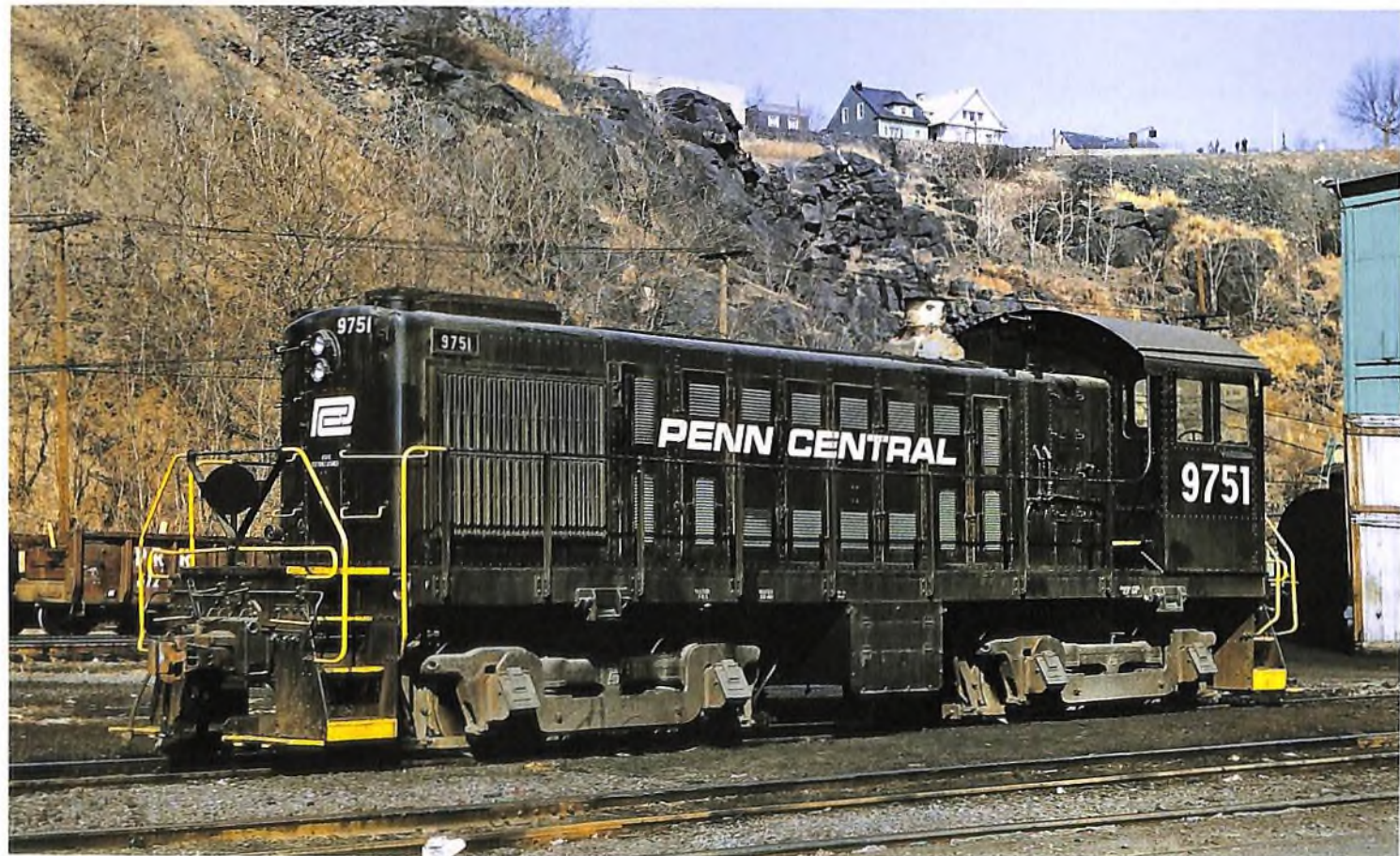
After the tests were scored, those of us who passed were asked to stay for more discussion. I had indicated I wanted to be a brakeman on my application — but I was quickly convinced that I would much rather be a locomotive fireman. They were hiring firemen for the New Jersey Division

(former New York Central River Division), and we would all have to go to New York to finish the hiring process by getting a physical examination, the completion of which would establish our seniority dates and positions on the roster.

As that conversation was winding down, I took the opportunity to visit the restroom. When I returned, everyone else but the hiring officer had left. When he saw me, he handed me a pass to ride the train to New York to get my physical. The pass was made effective May 23, the following Friday. The officer was in a rush to get away, it seemed — so I just assumed that I was supposed to go to New York on the 23rd. And so I did. And now you know the rest of the story, as Paul Harvey used to say.

LEARNING THE JOB

The next thing that happened in my PC career was when a letter arrived a week or two later telling me to travel to Weehawken, New Jersey, for my initial training as an



OPPOSITE PAGE ABOVE:

PC RS-11 7605 takes a breather between assignments below the cliffs of Weehawken, New Jersey, in February 1970. In the background, a loaded coal train passes on the single main track. Dan Milone photo, J.W. Swanberg collection

OPPOSITE PAGE BELOW:

Alco S-4 9751 sits outside the little Weehawken engine house in March 1970. Wonder if this is the same "ancient Alco" that Larry worked as power for the ballast train on his second day on the job? Peter Klapper photo, Louis Marre collection

AT LEFT: E8A 4042 stands with an Empire Service train at the Syracuse depot in January 1973. Victor Procopio photo, David P. Oroszi collection

engine service employee. Another pass to ride a PC passenger train to New York was enclosed. I was to spend a few days in Weehawken, getting qualified as a hostler and a road fireman in preparation for marking up on the fireman's extra list in Selkirk.

Prior to the Penn Central merger, Weehawken had been the southernmost (easternmost by timetable) location on the former New York Central River Division, which ran along the west side of the Hudson River, poking out of a tunnel under Bergen Hill (South Palisades) to reach Weehawken Yard. Milepost 0.0 of the original New York, West Shore & Buffalo Railroad was located at the east portal of that tunnel. New York Central had leased the West Shore not long after it began operations in the late 19th century — back in the robber baron days.

Weehawken, you may recall from your American history classes, was the location of the infamous and deadly duel between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton in 1804. During my many times there, I often wondered exactly where that event had transpired. I have since learned that the specific location was long ago obliterated by excavation and development of the waterfront, including the railroad.

In the spring of 1969, being only a little more than a year after the PC merger, Weehawken was still a crew change point

where former New York Central crews went on and off duty. However, more and more trains were running through to the yards and terminals of the former Pennsylvania Railroad, which were located beyond that location. At the time when I first arrived, Weehawken was still a sizeable yard with a yardmaster on duty around the clock, multiple regular switching crews, an intermodal ramp and a small locomotive servicing facility. Weehawken is located on the Hudson River. Ferries once transported train travelers to and from the west side of Manhattan, which is clearly in view.

One of the operational headaches for Weehawken at that time was the problem with locomotive seats. Central engineers had a seat agreement that specifically defined what seats must be like. The Pennsylvania had no such agreement. When I started working for PC, there were still many units that the Central engineers would not accept in the lead position. The derogatory term for PRR seats was "toadstools," with no reclining mechanisms or armrests. If there wasn't a trailing unit fit, or facing the right way, to be a leader, substantial delays would often result in order to get the proper unit in the lead.

Our small group of new firemen met the road foreman, who was in the yard office building that also housed the yard crew room, yardmaster's office and separate crew bunk rooms for train and engine crews

AT RIGHT:
RS32 2042 and a Schenectady mate lay down a smoke screen as they escape from the confines of DeWitt Yard on September 14, 1974. Victor Procopio photo, David P. Oroszi collection



OPPOSITE PAGE ABOVE:

The DeWitt diesel shops rebuilt former PRR RSD-15 6811 with an EMD 567B prime mover, rated it at 1,200 HP and then paired it with former RSD-5 6803, which was converted to a slug, to create a one-of-a-kind locomotive. Classified as an AEH-12, the 9949 spent its entire life working the DeWitt hump Bill Dechau photo, Keith Ardinger collection

OPPOSITE PAGE BELOW:

As mentioned above, the DeWitt Yard engine house hosted a fleet of Alcos that were assigned to yard and local service. RS-32 2042 and RS-3 5527 work at DeWitt Yard in the summer of 1976. Victor Procopio photo, David P. Oroszi collection

being held away from home. The road foreman's name was Jack Hudler, a pleasant enough man who hailed from Jackson, Michigan (New York Central territory).

The first order of business was to assign employee numbers (mine was the lowest, of course), and then to get our employee books, which included timetables, safety rules, air brake rules, and rules for conducting transportation. In those days on that region, the timetable General Order updates were in "lick and stick" format. As I remember, we had several multipage orders that had to be moistened and pasted into the blank back pages of the timetable. Not very tasty!

After the books were in order and inspected for proper completion, Jack informed us that the New Jersey Division was projected to soon be in dire need of locomotive engineers. He said that within nine or ten months, we could probably expect to be fully qualified engineers, operating freight trains between Selkirk and Weehawken. Or at least, that was their plan, anyway.

After he fixed us up with leg bands (elastic straps to keep pant leg bottoms tight to the leg) and verified that we had the proper footwear and gloves (yes, that's right, no safety glasses, hearing protection, or high visibility vests), Mr. Hudler took us out to the yard track directly in front of the office

building, where we met the hostler on duty that day. In those days, I should clarify, a hostler was an engine service employee who moved locomotives within engine servicing territory. We were about to learn how to do that job.

Before turning us over to the hostler, the boss instructed us on how we were to cross the several tracks between the office building and the engine house. We were to stop clear of each track, look both ways, and then step over each rail, never stepping on top of the rail. He said that he would be in his office watching us out the window. If he saw any one of us fail to cross a track properly, he would fire that offender immediately, since we were not yet protected by the union.

The remainder of that day consisted of getting familiar with the operation of locomotives. On hand were a few large six axle units and at least one ancient Alco switcher. All the units were idling away on the service or ready tracks. The switcher, as I recall clearly, was making quite a racket just sitting there doing no work. The diesel engine revved up and down periodically and vibrated everything so badly, I felt certain the locomotive was about to fly apart. But of course, it had been shaking like that for many years at that point in time.

Simple rules to follow were: Turn on the bell, give two toots on the horn before going





ABOVE: One of those somewhat rare "We ain't mad at nobody" three-builder consists heads up an outbound freight at Selkirk Yard in May 1968. *J.W. Swanberg collection*

forward, three before going back, place the reverse lever in the proper position, release the independent brake and slowly pull the throttle out to notch one or two. We learned the hand signals to watch for from the ground helper and just generally became familiar with moving locomotives, slowly and safely.

On the second day, I was told that I would be covering the fireman position on a work train that would be spreading ballast out on the main track. The job required a fireman, I was told, because it would be going across the New York state line, and New York's full crew law meant a fireman was necessary. In those days, the hours of service regulations allowed for working sixteen hours. I sat on that same rattling, shaking Alco switcher from the previous day for every one of those sixteen hours.

The engineer was George Connor, a very nice man who took pity on me and gave me some of his lunch, as I had no opportunity to bring any food. It was a very long day that started with the locomotive being barely able to drag the loaded ballast cars out of the yard, through the three-quarter mile long tunnel and up the main to West Haverstraw, New York. I never got to work with Mr. Connor again after that day.

MARK UP

After the training period was finished, we were sent home to mark up on the Selkirk fireman's list. The first job I caught off that list was the VK-2, which was the 7:00 a.m. traveling switcher (or way freight, as it was known on the old River Division) that took care of most of the local industry work between Selkirk and Kingston. They also took cars from Selkirk to Kingston yard, and often brought a train back to Selkirk, symbolled as KV-3.

The way freight generally used a couple of second-tier locomotives, such as RS-11s, RS-32s, or GP20s, which had mostly been replaced on through freights by the newer, higher horsepower Alco, EMD, and GE power inherited from NYC, PRR, and NH. They were all either black or that very dark green that just looked like dirty black to me.

The job usually worked sixteen hours a day, six days a week. Actually, fifteen hours and fifty-nine minutes on the time slip, so the crew could work the next day after only eight hours off. I just happened to catch it when the regular fireman took a day off. The engineer, Arnold Ainsworth, number one on the roster, rarely, if ever, took a day off. The job had a full crew of



ABOVE: U25B 2545 waits for clearance on Track 11 to depart the Selkirk Yard receiving yard in May 1968. The rebuild of Selkirk Yard, a key pre-Penn Central project, is almost complete — note the piles of fresh ballast. *J.W. Swanberg collection*

engineer, fireman, head brakeman, rear brakeman, conductor, and flagman. So that's at least eight hours of overtime pay, six days a week, for six crew members.

The first stop for VK-2 that day was the Pulver House, a bar that catered to early morning patrons in Ravena. We held the single main there as the train crew went to the bar for, well, whatever — while I went to Lou's restaurant on Main St. for coffee. I don't remember how long we stayed there, or how much actual switching work was done on the way to Kingston — but I do recall that we had to taxi back to Selkirk from Kingston, having run out of time under the "hog" law. I also remember the conductor and flagman drinking cans of beer and eating pickled pig's feet in the Cadillac limousine that the Kingston cab company used to transport crews. Funny how some events just stick with you that way.

I worked steadily on the fireman's extra list all that summer, covering hostler positions at the fuel plant (service track) in Selkirk, as well as various extra jobs and road assignments that went to Weehawken and back. The former River Division roster also owned the Albany Branch Traveling Switcher that I caught a few times. It took a train to the Port of Albany every day

(along the route that the original West Shore took into Albany Union Station), interchanged with the Delaware & Hudson at Kenwood Yard, and brought a train back to Selkirk from the Port and the D&H. Engineer Al Bleau was an interesting character on the "Port Job," as it was known. This job frequently used a single Alco RS-3 for power.

One night that summer, I was called to cover the midnight hostler position at the Kingston engine house. The old roundhouse was equipped with a turntable. As the lead machinist told me, the normal operation was to work like crazy for a couple of hours, servicing and situating power for the next day's two or three jobs. Then, everyone would "hit the hay" for the rest of the night.

Most of the power for the way freights and the Catskill Mountain Branch job out of Kingston were Alco RS-3s. This was my first experience with a working turntable. It was cool! I wasn't too popular with the mechanical guys, though, when they discovered one of the old Alcos dead in the early morning, most likely because I turned off the wrong breaker/switch when I parked the unit. They had to jump the batteries from another unit. I was still green in those days, after all.

OPPOSITE PAGE:

RSD-12s 6858 and 6859 were assigned to Selkirk Yard hump and puller duty. In the above photo, they have a rendezvous with the fuel truck at the Pullout End (east end) of the class yard. After their fill-up, it's back to work on the hump. Too bad we don't have an embedded sound byte of these two beasts getting started shoving a train up the hump. *Two photos, J.W. Swanberg collection*

BELOW: A small handful of RS-1s survived into Penn Central. The 9910 and an N9 transfer caboose are tied down after working industries in Syracuse on February 18, 1974. *Procopio photo, David P. Oroszi collection*

RIGHT MOVE RIGHT TIME

Toward the end of 1969, having been schooled and tested by Weehawken in preparation for promotion to engineer for the New Jersey Division, I started reevaluating options with my PC District 6 seniority. I had discovered that when the time came that they needed engineers in Weehawken, I was subject to being "force assigned" there, something I was not too keen on.

After looking at the open jobs that I might be able to hold, I bid on a daylight fireman's relief position that covered three different yard jobs in Selkirk, with Tuesday and Wednesday off. This position was owned by the Mohawk Division. Making this move would effectively cancel out my chances of having to move to Weehawken. I was awarded the job and never looked back. I'm sure Mr. Hudler was not happy with this turn of events. I felt badly for about a minute, but then got over it.

The relief position covered two days on the 7:00 a.m. hump job, which shoved cars over the computerized classification hump, two days on the 7:00 a.m. East End puller, which pulled the classified cars out of the bowl and built outbound trains in the departure yard, and one day on the 6:30 a.m. "Buck 15," which took care of pulling and spotting the auto and intermodal "van" sites and did some work around the Top End yard, which was a remnant of the old

westbound departure yard where empty intermodal equipment was stored.

The Buck job towed around an old wood Central caboose that the ground crew used for coffee breaks and "beans," at least until one day when a hard snap of the slack caused the east wood-beam drawbar to break off, thus retiring the ancient red "crummy" from a bygone era forever. And no, I didn't do it.

At the time, the hump job used either two Alco RSD-12s, or a single RSD-12 hooked up with two EMD GP9B units. All this power was former PRR and nearing the end of its useful life, that being much more the case with the "B" units. They used two of them because one was often dead, commonly due to leaking radiators, a frequent ailment with old GP9s. A couple of the RSD's were equipped with a rheostat lever for controlling humping speed (usually 1.5 to 2.5 mph). They also had a rudimentary cab signal system that the hump conductor in the tower used to communicate humping speed, stop or back up information.

In June 1970, we were rocked by the news out of Philadelphia that PC had declared bankruptcy. Initially, a bit of panic had set in as local banks held off cashing pay checks. But in a few days, things settled down after reassurances were made that payroll was in no immediate danger since the railroad was protected from creditors. Even so, it was a somewhat stressful time to be an employee.





ABOVE: Penn Central took delivery of 19 U23Cs in 1970. Half of them went to Selkirk, displacing the RSD-12s on the hump and in yard puller service. On November 18, 1972, 6715 and 6717 are parked on the Back Track, awaiting their next assignment at the Selkirk hump. *James Jensen photo, Kevin EuDaly collection*

Fortunately, I was still a single young man without many financial obligations.

I've read a lot about the details of what led to the PC debacle, but at the time, all I really knew was what I saw first hand. I'll always remember what railroaders told me about how if I wanted to make money, all I had to do was stay marked-up, don't miss any calls and just hold my pockets open. Money tended to flow under the work rules and agreements that came out of the PC merger.

An example of one of these generous agreements was when a train ran out of time waiting to get into the yard, either a yard crew or one of the engine exchange crews would be placed on the train to bring it into the yard. Every time that happened, the replacement crew claimed (and would get paid) a full day's pay on top of their regular pay. If that crew pulled in more than one train, the crew got another day for each train yarded. In those days of multiple slow orders on main tracks and congested yards, these events happened frequently.

WORKING ON THE MOHAWK

Another agreement that I and other firemen took advantage of concerned covering a hostler vacancy while being marked up on the Mohawk Division fireman's freight pool, a position I would bid on every chance I could hold it. The rule allowed the fireman

used as a hostler to claim a complete round trip to Dewitt (East Syracuse) and back. This was, in effect, three times the normal pay rate. These claims were most often paid without question. Thus, the advice, "Just hold your pockets open, kid."

The year 1970 started bringing quite a bit of new power to Penn Central, all black, shiny and new. Orders were shared between GE and EMD, Alco having gone out of production in the U.S. Most of the units I saw were lower horsepower, less expensive locomotives. This included SW1500s, GP38s, U23Bs, U23Cs, and elsewhere on the system, SD38s.

The six-axle GEs were used for hump and puller power in Selkirk (road numbers 6710 through 6718) when they arrived late in the year, displacing the old PRR Alco units that ended up as fodder for "motor trailer" units (slugs) eventually. The new four-axle units, both GE and EMD, were used for badly needed road and local power. These units were equipped with dynamic brakes, though I never thought that feature on those low horsepower units was worth much. Later, the GP38 order turned into GP38-2s with alternators and composition brake shoes. We never saw any of the SD38s in Selkirk until they were painted blue in the Conrail era, and lashed-up to slugs rebuilt from the Alco RSD carcasses.

Over the next few years, my work varied considerably, from yard assignments, to Mohawk freight pool, and the odd chance to cover passenger assignments. In the yard, most engineers allowed — or expected — the fireman to run for part of the shift. On the road trains, it was a different story. Most engineers wouldn't let a young fireman touch the throttle. There were a handful of engineers, though, who were willing to give us a shot, and even provided valuable feedback and instruction. Usually, it was engineers on the extra list who were most likely to let me run — and there were only a few of them who seemed interested in teaching me how to do it better.

I covered a traveling switcher for a long time that took a train from Selkirk to West Albany (and brought another one back) six days a week. The regular engineer, Jim Donato, insisted I run the train one direction every night, which contributed a lot to my experience and knowledge. We went on duty early in the afternoon and usually used up all our legal time getting back to Selkirk. When we got to West Albany, a taxi would take us to a diner for a meal every night. The trip back to Selkirk also involved a dip down into Schenectady to grab an inter-change cut from the D&H. Power for the job was a couple of GP38s or their equivalent.

One peculiarity about New York Central (Water Level Route) was that they didn't order dynamic brakes for their locomotives — and we were squarely in former Central territory on the Mohawk Division (later called the Mohawk-Hudson Division) between Selkirk and Dewitt. This meant the road engineers I fired for (and who trained me) learned stretch braking as their "go to" operating method. For those not familiar with the term, it means locomotive power applied against train air brakes, in effect, dragging the train into slowdowns and stops with the slack stretched and the locomotive brakes "bailed off." This method, if done correctly, and with enough power applied, gave the caboose crew a much smoother ride. Any engineer who had concern for their reputation in this regard would take extra care to handle their trains in this way. However, many westbound trains out of Selkirk were made up of 140 or more empty cars, with load-heavy trains moving mostly eastward.

This meant that the power provided to haul the long but light westbound trains, such as VNF-7 (Selkirk to Niagara Falls) or ML-9 (multilevel auto racks), was seldom enough to stretch the train properly for braking purposes. Subsequently, it would be necessary to modulate throttle or bunch the slack to use dynamic brakes (if they were working). If one had to apply train air brakes on these long trains for a slowdown, one would have

to plan on stopping before releasing the brakes, or else risk a break-in-two.

As the end of Penn Central drew near, my roster standing steadily rose so that I was eventually bouncing from the Dewitt pool, to a travelling switcher (TS-1), a yard job in Selkirk or West Albany, or very occasionally, a regular passenger run either on the Mohawk to Syracuse or the Hudson to Croton-Harmon (or even Boston). My career so far was remarkably free from furloughs, unlike my father's experience.

All in all, my experience with Penn Central was a good one. I only had one formal investigation, for my part in a slight collision at the east end of Selkirk, for which they gave me ten days off on record, but time that was never served. In my later years as a Conrail manager, I learned that employee discipline in former PRR territory was much stricter than what I experienced as a fireman or engineer in Selkirk. The culture on the former New York Central just seemed to me to be more respectful of craft employees. Either that or the unions wielded more influence.

CONRAIL AND BEYOND

After Conrail came to be, I worked mostly as an engineer on one extra list or another. I even went back to my origins on the New Jersey Division's River Line for a year or so. I remember it being a good feeling to finally master that piece of railroad, though Weehawken had become just another place the trains would roll past on their way to somewhere else like Oak Island (former Lehigh Valley) or the Meadows (PRR).

In June 1984, I marked off with the crew dispatcher after having worked the midnight hump in Selkirk. After getting some rest and packing the car, I drove to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to assume the role of road foreman of engines. I would be working for Ben Black, division road foreman for the Harrisburg Division. My new headquarters would be Baltimore, which brought me a whole new set of experiences. My partner RFE in Baltimore was Mike Schaffer, who took me under his wing and helped me to get a good start as a manager. I'm still in touch with Mike after all these years. He retired as an engineer for Norfolk Southern in Elkhart, Indiana.

I never went back to the craft — never used my seniority again. Conrail moved me around a bit and promoted me a couple of times. I even managed to go back to school to get a degree during that time, which eventually enabled me to get a good job with the Union Pacific Railroad in Omaha, from which I retired in February 2016. Railroad Retirement is the best! ❖



PCRRHS 2019 CONVENTION

ARTICLE BY KEVIN CUNNINGHAM



AT RIGHT: Since the 2019 convention was our 20th convention, Wayne Sanden designed a special logo to commemorate the event. Jerry Jordak photo

with PC (NYC territory), SP (PE territory), Conrail, and CSX. He spent the majority of his career in various positions performing signal department duties. The Emerson's gracious hospitality was much appreciated.

Later in the afternoon, the convention registration opened, followed by social time in the meeting room. There were sales tables, along with displays of PC memorabilia and model railroad equipment as well.

The evening's first presentation was given by Jack Wright, author of *Trackside in the Mohawk Valley 1955-2015*, *D&H Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment* and numerous articles. Jack gave a slide presentation and spoke about rail operations in the Mohawk Valley region, from Selkirk to Rome, New York, from mid-1970s to 2015. It was fascinating to watch the railroad change from Penn Central to Conrail to CSX. During the presentation, Jack also showed slides of CN, CP, Guilford, D&H, B&M, and the Vermont Rail System as well. For an added bonus, Jack shared photos of various tugboats and canal locks from the region.

The next presentation was given by member Bill Sternitzke, who shared photos from his slide collection. Bill started his show with photos of NYC subjects located in the Selkirk, Rensselaer, and Schenectady areas, as well as locations throughout Massachusetts and northern New Jersey. Then he showed slides of PC subjects in various locations in the Mohawk and Hudson Valleys of New York State, Cleveland, Chicago, and the New York City metro area. Finally, Bill wrapped up his presentation with photos of random Conrail subjects taken in New York and New Jersey.

The third and final presentation of the evening was a railroad police double feature, presented by PCRRHS president Gary Farmer. The show was a video of two short films entitled "The Great Train Robbery" and "The Railroad Special Agent." The first feature, "The Great Train Robbery" was a 1971 PC documentary about freight car looting on the Bayside Branch, which primarily ran through the Bronx, New York City. It was a compelling documentary that filmed real time acts of looting accompanied by narration. The film was never publicly screened but it gained notoriety throughout the corporate and government security world. Over 35 different organizations viewed it. In 1976, Conrail management decided not show it and ordered all but two copies destroyed. The second fea-

AT RIGHT ABOVE: Treasurer Mike Beverley, President Gary Farmer, and Secretary Jim Hebner preside over the annual business meeting.

AT RIGHT MIDDLE: A proper Penn Central cake with green and white icing, prior to being devoured by convention attendees.

AT RIGHT BELOW: Gary Farmer presents Jim Hebner with a drawing by Pat Livingston of PC N10 class caboose 24014, which Jim used to own. The plaque reads: "Jim Hebner; PCRRHS President/POST Editor/Secretary; 1999-2019." It was presented to Jim by the board for his 20 years of service to the society. Three photos, Jerry Jordak



ture, "The Railroad Special Agent", was a late 1940's short film that was a tribute to the nation's railroad police. The film portrayed railroad police and special agents performing their duties, with some scenes featuring PRR police.

DAY 2, SEPTEMBER 20

Friday's events began with the officers' meeting followed by the annual business meeting. Upon the conclusion of the business meeting, there was a break for lunch. After lunch, the attendees boarded the buses that would take them to tours of the Port of Albany, the Albany Port Railroad, and Amtrak's Rensselaer Maintenance Facility.

Our first destination was the Port of Albany. The port was built by the Albany Port District, which was established by the State of New York in 1925. Presently, the port is managed by the Albany Port District Commission (APDC). The APDC consists of five members, four of which are nominated by the Mayor of Albany and one nominated by the Mayor of Rensselaer. After nomination, APDC members are appointed by the Governor. The port is a year-round operation, providing access to markets in the Northeast, Midwest, and Canada. It is upstate New York's busiest port, responsible for more than \$800 million in state economic output annually.

Upon our arrival, we were greeted and welcomed by Tony Vasil, Maritime Business Development Manager, and Ben Montenero, Superintendent. Tony spoke about the port facilities, operations, types of cargo handled, and related services offered at the



ABOVE: As part of the 20th anniversary celebration, the ten founding members were recognized, five of whom were at the convention. From left to right are Gene Fusco, Jim Hebner, Gary Farmer, Chip Syme, and Chuck French. Jerry Jordak photo

The Penn Central Railroad Historical Society's 20th anniversary convention was held September 19-21, 2019, in Albany, New York. The convention was held at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites-Albany Airport. There were 75 attendees.

DAY 1, SEPTEMBER 19

Prior to the start of the convention on Thursday afternoon, attendees were invited to the home of members William and Barbara Emerson (they are both members), to visit his model railroad and to enjoy his home brewed beers (three bottled varieties and two on tap), and other refreshments. William had 38 years of railroad service





AT LEFT ABOVE: Matt Bushart displayed part of his PC railroiana collection during the convention.

AT LEFT MIDDLE: The dozen flea market tables were packed with all kinds of Penn Central (and successor and predecessor) goodies to peruse and buy.

AT LEFT BELOW: Here are just a few of the fine models on display. Every Penn Central model railroad needs a block truck! *Three photos, Jerry Jordak*



port. We toured several warehouses and the marine terminal area at the wharf on the Albany side of the river. The port currently consists of 400 acres on both the east and west banks of the Hudson River. It has seven berths and a 32 foot freshwater draft. The wharf length is 4,200 feet on the Albany side and 1,200 feet on the Rensselaer side. There are twenty acres of paved marine terminal and open storage space, and 350,000 square feet of covered storage space. The port infrastructure also includes two mobile heavy lift cranes, a 13.5 million bushel capacity grain elevator, a 105 million gallon bulk liquid storage facility, a twelve acre road salt depot and a twelve acre scrap metal yard. No inter-modal operations take place at the port. Security is provided by a dedicated port security team and there are offices for both U.S. Customs and the U.S. Department of Agriculture on site.

The Port of Albany is the premier heavy lift cargo facility in the northeast. They have two Liebherr mobile cranes, 440 and 550, which were specially built in Germany for the APDC. Crane 440 was purchased in 2003 at a cost of \$5.6 million. It weighs approximately 439 tons. It is the primary crane used in daily operations and can be modified to engage in tandem lifting operations with cranes aboard ships. Crane 550 was purchased in 2014 and is used as a backup crane. It has the same approximate weight and capabilities as the 440. Both cranes are 172 feet to the top of their booms and both can be operated from their cabs or by remote control. The combined lift capacity of 440 and 550 is 248 tons, or the weight of 50 African Elephants!

The port handles between 60 to 95 vessels a year. The largest vessel accommodated can be up to a maximum length of 750 feet. It handles 300,000 to 400,000 tons of products annually. The two highest volume commodities handled are scrap metal and wood pulp. Grain, molasses, liquid fertilizer, animal feed, and calcium chloride are handled there as well. Heavy lift items include turbines, generators, transformers

AT RIGHT ABOVE: Members check out a Connecticut DOT car in for some contract work at Amtrak's Rennselaer shop.

AT RIGHT BELOW: Amtrak P32AC-DM #714 poses over an inspection pit at the Rennselaer maintenance shop. *Two photos, Jerry Jordak*

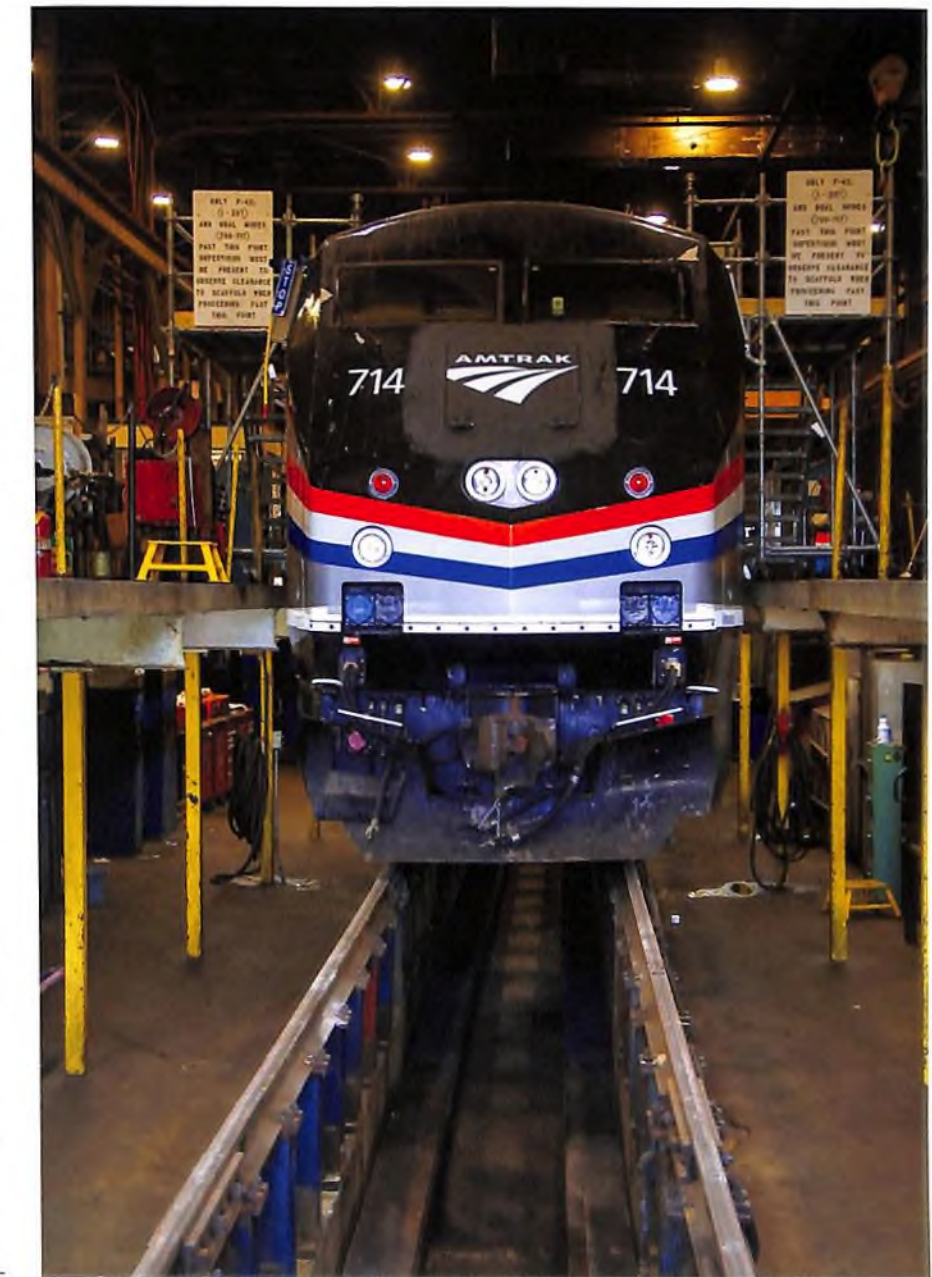


and other specialized electrical equipment that are shipped by GE, located in nearby Schenectady. Car shells from China for Boston's subway system (MBTA) arrive at the port, destined for the CRRC facility in Springfield, Massachusetts for completion. The port is served by four modes of transport modes: Ocean vessels, barges, highway transport and rail, which accounts for twenty percent of the overall shipments.

Our next stop was nearby at the Albany Port Railroad (APD). It was established in 1975 as the terminal railroad for the Albany Port District. It is jointly owned by CSX and CP Rail. Upon our arrival at the Albany Port Railroad facility, their equipment was positioned for our group to photograph and inspect. We were greeted by John Gaylord, General Manager, and the railroad's operating employees, Dave Campbell, Steve Cassick and Paul Hayes. John briefed us about the port railroad operations and then we were permitted to tour the equipment on display and the shop, with Dave, Steve, and Paul available to answer questions.

The Albany Port Railroad operates twenty miles of trackage inside the post, serves twelve customers, and earns approximately \$2 million dollars annually, with a staff of six employees. The railroad connects with CP Rail's Kenwood Yard, which is located adjacent to the port, and with CSX's Albany Secondary Track. The railroad's largest customers are Ardent Mills (formerly Cargill), for which it annually hauls 3,500 cars of grain products, and Buckeye, for which it hauls 3,000 cars of ethanol a year. It also handles high and wide loads originating from GE's Schenectady plant, scrap metal, and other cargos destined for trans-shipment.

The Albany Port Railroad's equipment roster consists of three locomotives; 12, 13, and 390 and caboose APR-1. Locomotives 12 and 13 are EMD SW-9's that are of PRR origin. Both served PC and Conrail. The railroad received them from Conrail in the early 1980's. Both have been upgraded to SW-12 specifications. Locomotive 12 is named "Tony D," and 13 is named "Don Z," in honor to two former APD engineers. While preparing this article, locomotive 13 was sold and left the property on October 12, 2019. Locomotive 390 is an EMD MP15-





ABOVE: Convention attendees pose for the annual convention group photo in front of Albany Port Railroad SW9 13. As you can probably guess, 13's lineage has a Penn Central element. The locomotive was originally built as PRR 8531. It was renumbered to 9131 by PRR in anticipation of the merger and wore that number through PC and Conrail, which sold the locomotive to the Albany Port Railroad in early 1986. *Jim Hebner photo*

AC that is a complete rebuild of an old UP unit. It was acquired in February 2016 from GMTX on a five year lease. APR-1 is a caboose, or van, of CP Rail origin. It was purchased in 2000 and is currently for sale.

Everyone we met at the Albany Port Railroad, from our host John Gaylord, to the operations personnel, were very accommodating. Their time and efforts were appreciated by the attendees.

The third and final destination of the day was Amtrak's Rensselaer Maintenance Facility. There, we were greeted by our hosts, Mike Pandillo, General Foreman, and Joe Hill, Machinist. Our group was given tours of the back shop, tool room, sheet metal shop, and machine shop. The Rensselaer Maintenance facility was built on the site of a B&A railroad shop. Construction on the 132,055 square foot facility began in June 1976. The facility

was designed to maintain Amtrak's seven RTL Turboliner train sets, then being built for New York State service. Opened in November 1977, the \$15 million facility provided maintenance and repair for the Turboliner fleet until they were withdrawn from service in 2003.

Present day, the shop is responsible for the repairs and maintenance of seventeen General Electric P32 and eleven P42 locomotives. They also handle repairs for coach cars that are primarily used in Amtrak's Empire Service. Sometimes, repairs are also made on equipment used on Amtrak's Adirondack, Maple Leaf, and Lake Shore Limited Routes as well. Occasionally, the facility performs contract car refurbishing services for the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDot). The facility operates on a 24/7 schedule, 365 days a year. The shop has five tracks, four of which are

through tracks. It also utilizes four drop tables to change out trucks and traction motors. There is also a wheel shop and train wash facility on the property.

Amtrak's Albany-Rensselaer passenger station lies immediately to the south and is Amtrak's busiest station along the Empire Service corridor. Some of the equipment present at Rensselaer during our visit was GE P32 AC-DM Locomotives 703 and 714, GE P42 DC Locomotives 103 and 104, Amtrak coach car 82777, ConnDot coach car 1744 and several MP15DC Locomotives. There was also a P32 traction motor re-building project in progress in the machine shop.

After a break for dinner, attendees returned to the meeting room for the evening's presentations. First up was a presentation by Randy Bushart of CSX about the history and development of Selkirk Yard. Randy has a thirty-year

career in railroading, starting with the NYSW as a track laborer. He later worked in NYSW's engineering department. Then he worked for the D&H, first in the signal department and later as a train dispatcher. He dispatched for the D&H, Soo Line, and CP Rail. Randy continued his career with Conrail and CSX, where he held positions of dispatcher and supervisor of train operations. Presently, he is CSX's Manager of Passenger Operations at Selkirk. Randy's presentation covered the planning and development of Selkirk Yard, early area railroad development, the Castleton Cut-off project, the re-building of Selkirk Yard as a run-up to Penn Central, Conrail operations, and the eventual take over by CSX.

By the early 1900s, the Albany area had become a bottleneck for westbound NYC traffic from New York City and New England. Trains heading west from Albany



ABOVE: A locomotive prime mover attracts the attention from some of the members during the Amtrak Rennselaer shop tour. *Jerry Jordak photo*

encountered a steep 1.75 percent grade up West Albany Hill, which required splitting trains and the use of pushers. The solution was the Castleton Cut-off. This major NYC construction project was a new railroad line built south of Albany that connected the B&A and NYC lines on the east bank of the Hudson River, with the West Shore and NYC lines on the west bank of the Hudson river. To span the Hudson River, the mile long A.H. Smith Bridge was built and the line was opened on November 14, 1924. The cornerstone of this \$25 million project was Selkirk Yard, which opened on November 20, 1924. Selkirk was a massive new yard built to replace the congested yards at Ravena and Rennselaer. It was built on a site that was one mile wide by six miles long. It had 120 miles of new track and was designed to handle 8,000 cars a day through its eastbound and westbound classification yards. The engine terminal included two roundhouses, housing a total of 62 locomotives.

Realizing both the inefficiency of a dual-hump system and the advantages of computer-controlled classification, NYC undertook a reconstruction of Selkirk Yard beginning in 1966. The project cost an estimated \$19.7million and made Selkirk the largest east-west freight yard on the NYC system.

One of the innovations of the new yard was a computer-operated freight car classification system. At the time, Selkirk was reported to be the first application of this new technology. The re-built yard opened in 1968 by Penn Central and was renamed "Alfred E. Perlman Yard." The new yard had 220 miles of rail and 403 switches on 632 acres. It consolidated functions for east and west bound traffic into a single yard with a single hump. The capacity of Perlman Yard was said to be 8,329 cars per day. In 1969, a new \$4 million diesel servicing facility was opened. In 1976, after the Conrail takeover, the yard was renamed Selkirk. In the mid-1980s, Conrail built their new Northeast Regional Headquarters building at Selkirk. At a later date, an addition was added to the building to accommodate a consolidated dispatching facility. Selkirk's diesel maintenance facility was one of Conrail's three major service facilities.

CSX succeeded Conrail as owner of the yard on June 1, 1999. In 2011, CSX opened a new auto transload facility at Selkirk and in 2017, added a second main track on the south side of the yard, allowing run-through trains to swap crews more efficiently.

Randy's presentation was followed by a short film called *Cybernetics at Selkirk*, a

promotional production made in 1969 for General Railway Signal Company, describing their role in the computer modernization of Perlman Yard.

Friday evening's next presentation was a slide show by Jeremy and Jeffery Plant, the authors of *Penn Central in Color, Volumes 1-4, Delaware and Hudson V3, Boston & Maine in Color V1* and numerous other railroad books. Jeffery began the program with photos he took during the PC years at locations throughout New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The equipment he photographed was not only in PC livery, but also in NYC, NH, and PRR liveries as well. Then Jeremy gave a slide presentation of photos taken while he was in military service, during the time period at the end of the PRR, into the beginning of the PC. He started with being stationed at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, where he took photographs at locations throughout central and northern New Jersey, Maryland, and Washington D.C. Then he was transferred to Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, where he primarily photographed trains in the Harrisburg, Altoona, and Horseshoe Curve areas.

DAY 3, SEPTEMBER 21

Our tour of Selkirk Yard was Saturday morning. Randy Bushart, our CSX escort, joined us at the hotel prior to departure for the yard. When we arrived, we were welcomed by Robert Rohauer, CSX Community Affairs & Safety Regional Manager. After a brief orientation, the attendees were split into two groups, one to tour the locomotive plant and the other to tour the hump tower. The groups exchanged locations later in the morning.

At the Selkirk Locomotive Plant, we were greeted by our host, Lee Knasel, Plant Superintendent. Lee escorted us to an observation area overlooking the shop, where he spoke about the facility and its operations. This was followed by a question and answer session.

The locomotive plant was staffed by 167 employees. The shop building has seven tracks that can hold up to eighteen locomotives at a time. They service between thirteen and twenty-one locomotives daily. The facility does all maintenance service and mechanical repairs, except complete prime mover changes, and can perform all electronic related repairs and installations. The shop's service center performs the fueling, sanding, watering, daily inspections, and basic maintenance to sixteen locomotives a day. On average, it only takes ninety minutes to fuel, sand, and inspect a locomotive. Truck repairs and wheel truing are also performed at the shop. Wheel truing is



ABOVE: Mike Wood poses in the cab of Albany Port Railroad's leased MP15AC, GMTX 390, while other members take pictures. *Jerry Jordak photo*

done by putting a locomotive on a wheel truing rack. The shop also has two wash racks. Selkirk rarely services foreign power and when it does, it's for safety reasons. The biggest operational challenge at the Selkirk Locomotive Plant is space constraints.

While one group was visiting the Locomotive Plant, the other was at the Hump Tower. Given the tight confines of the hump control tower room and the need to keep employee distractions to a minimum, only a small number of attendees entered the control room at any one time. Up in the control room, our host, Mike Novicki, Assistant Superintendent, greeted us and spoke about the yard and hump operations. Selkirk has seventy tracks in the classification yard with a capacity 3,680 cars. There are eleven receiving tracks with a combined capacity of 1,716 cars. On any given day, between 2,000 and 2,500 cars are humped in a 24 hour period. The average hump time, per car, from initial arrival to designated yard placement, is 4.3 hours.

The Selkirk Hump Tower uses the Pro Yard Hump System, which utilizes computerized timing algorithms, set by a predetermined program based on car types and specifications and weather conditions. The locomotives assigned to the hump are remote controlled units that are operated by the pin puller. Currently, the average dwell time is 24-25 hours, which is down from the previous average of 32 hours. Sixteen trains originate at Selkirk. Seventy auto racks are unloaded every night at the auto transload facility. Recently, a new south retarder was installed at the hump, which is the largest in the world. Also, forty new track panels were installed in the east end yard.



ABOVE: Former Penn Central President Alfred E. Perlman, for whom this yard was once named, would have highly approved of the use of technology in the Selkirk Yard yardmaster tower. Perlman was on the cutting edge of implementing technology to improve railroad operations and company performance. *Dee Matyas photo*

Our tour finished with a stop at the east end of the yard. There we saw "The Missing Tie Memorial" for fallen railroaders and spent some time watching train operations. While boarding the buses to depart, everyone received a CSX drawstring backpack bag containing safety promotional materials. The level of hospitality at CSX Selkirk Yard was incredible. The tours were well planned, organized, and informative. The manner in which the tours were conducted was commendable, considering the size of our group and having to be escorted within a fast paced, industrial environment. Everyone we met at CSX was very accommodating.

Following the Selkirk Yard tour, we made our way back to the hotel. Our group had several hours for lunch, railfanning, or other activities. Later that evening, everyone gathered in the meeting room for the banquet and the evening's presentation. During the banquet, President Gary Farmer, who is an original society member, shared his thoughts commemorating the 20th anniversary of the PCRRHS. Gary then presented Jim Hebner, also an original society member and long-time secretary, with a drawing of an N-10 caboose that Jim owned, drawn by Pat Livingston, as a thank you for his service to the society. Gary also said a word of thanks to trustee Jim Homoki, his predecessor as PCRRHS president, for his ten years of service in that capacity. Other original

members in attendance were Chuck French, Gene Fusco, and Chip Syme, all of whom spoke as well. We thank everyone who has given so much of their time and so much effort to make the PCRRHS what it is today.

The evening's keynote speaker was Bruce Becker, Vice President of Operations for the Rail Passengers Association (RPA). Bruce also served as the volunteer president of the Empire State Passengers Association. He has worked in the hospitality industry for nearly 40 years. The RPA was formerly known as the National Association of Railroad Passengers, which was rebranded on its 50th anniversary in 2017. It is the largest national organization that serves as a voice for the more than 40 million rail passengers in the U.S. The RPA has over 25,000 members.

Bruce began his presentation with personal recollections accompanied by photos of watching, riding and being around trains during the early years in his life. His family worked for the NYC so there was an immediate railroad connection. Bruce discussed the history of rail passenger service in New York State, from the later NYC years to present-day Amtrak operations. Bruce also spoke about the mission of the RPA; which is to improve and expand intercity and regional passenger train services, support higher speed rail initiatives, increase connectivity among all forms of transportation and ensure the safe operations for our



AT LEFT: This view from the top of the hump tower looks west toward the locomotive shop (on the right) and the receiving yard. In the foreground, ET44AC 3323 takes head room as it yards its train in the receiving yard. *Gary Farmer photo*

nation's trains and passengers. The RPA carries out their mission to achieve its goals by advocating for rail passengers with Amtrak, local and state governments and the U.S. Congress.

Bruce also highlighted current Amtrak equipment refresh programs such as the Amfleet 1 interior element replacement and new equipment orders, such as the first of 28 new Acela train sets that are due to arrive in 2021 for service on the Northeast Corridor. He also discussed improvement plans and future development of major Amtrak stations, and their plan to address food service issues. A question and answer session followed Bruce's presentation, which covered the auto train, route miles, scheduling, cooperation with host (freight) railroads and other passenger rail topics.

THANK YOU!

The PCRRHS would like to thank everyone who worked so hard to make the 2019 20th anniversary convention a success, starting with Kevin Jones, the convention organizer. Kevin acknowledges the members who assisted him: Ken Bacher, Mike Beverly, Barbara and William Emerson, Donna and Chuck French, Walter Langston III, and Wayne Sanden. And again, many thanks to our generous tour hosts: Tony Vasil and Ben Montenero of the Port of Albany, John Gaylord and the



employees of the Albany Port Railroad, Mike Pandillo and Joe Hill of Amtrak, and Randy Bushart, Robert Rohauer, Lee Knasel, and Mike Novicki of CSX. In addition, we thank all of the presenters who provided the evening programs, all of which were entertaining and informative. Finally, I would like to thank Kevin Jones, Randy Bushart, Gary Farmer, and John Gaylord, for providing information for this article. Their assistance is greatly appreciated. The 2020 convention is scheduled for Dearborn, Michigan, October 8-10. Hope to see you there! ❖

ABOVE: SD40-2 2418 and MT-6 1015 idle between hump classification assignments. Conrail built the MT-6 slugs in the early 1980s out of the hulks of former Penn Central (PRR) RSD-12s or RSD-15s. *Jerry Jordak photo*

TEXT BY TORIN REID



There used to be a TV series on satellite or cable TV that posed the question, "What happens to life after people?" The show attempted to answer this question by presenting scenes of abandoned monuments and cities in various stages of being returned to nature. They showed how things would look after one year, 20 years etc. after humans disappeared from the planet.

Life is like that, it is temporary. Here today, gone after so many tomorrows. From a railfan's point of view, this seems to be particularly true. Maybe once there was a small train yard not far from home where a railfan may have gotten to know a train crew. Or, it might have been a station platform that hosted one passenger train a day, and now, it no longer exists.

It is much the same with corporations and companies and the hardware and tools that they use, because they are the creations of human beings. However, when changes are made, not everything is rebranded. Some objects are simply abandoned. Other objects simply "hide" in plain sight. Some things are kept that way because they are a reminder of the past. For example, there was an old Alco S-2 in Ohio that some Erie Lackawanna shop men kept in Erie paint right up to the first day

of Conrail. That was 16 years after the Erie ceased to exist. That loco went to scrap wearing Erie paint.

Let us take a look back at a few items from the Penn Central, starting with the first couple of months after the PC, in railroad corporate form, ceased to exist. I realize that a number of former Penn Central SD40s and GP38-2s still carry on, wearing the colors of a successor railroad or lessor. In this article, I would like to narrow the focus to equipment that carried the Penn Central paint scheme (more or less), as well as a couple of unusual items that I have come across in my railfan photographic journey.

ABOVE: Starrucca Viaduct in Lanesboro, Pennsylvania, was one place where you wouldn't expect to see Penn Central. As it turns out, this scene was a somewhat common occurrence, pre-Conrail. The D&H and PC interchanged a daily train in each direction at Buttonwood Yard in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Penn Central power often shoved northbound D&H WR-1 out of the valley up to Lanesboro. The PC power either returned light or brought southbound D&H RW-6 to Buttonwood. *Torin Reid collection*



ABOVE: During the period right after the formation of Conrail, one of the first things railfans saw was the sight of Penn Central locomotives invading, and sometimes taking, power assignments on the other pre-Conrail railroads. I am sure that the fans of the other, smaller railroads howled as they rushed to their favorite watering holes of the Conrail predecessor, only to find former PC units blackening up the place. It was this way at Sayre, Pennsylvania, on May 29, 1976, as some PC units shouldered aside their Lehigh Valley hosts. A former New York Central GP40 occupies the center of the photo. In the background to the left is U28C 6535, which made it all the way through Penn Central to Conrail with its PRR numbers and DGL paint mostly intact. A couple of small PC logos were applied to the ends and car body of that unit, almost as an afterthought. I wonder if that locomotive stayed that way because it was a good runner, or was it because of neglect? *Torin Reid collection*

AT RIGHT: In its early days, Conrail had a lot of business and was so desperate for motive power that anything that ran could be found anywhere doing anything.



This former PC FP7 managed to escape from coal and transfer duties in the Cleveland area and make its way to Binghamton, New York. Perhaps it came up from Sayre with that former LV C-628. The locos are occupying the former EL engine pocket track at the west end of Binghamton Yard. Today, that engine track is gone but most of the row of buildings in the background remains. One building houses today's Norfolk Southern as a tenant. *Torin Reid collection*



AT LEFT ABOVE: There are still a lot of slides out there, on eBay and elsewhere, that show this unusual combination of a former NYC S-2 electric locomotive and three ex-New Haven Washboard cars. Most are mislabeled. This was an Electric Railroader's Association fan trip, operated on July 3, 1976, using the equipment to run over most of the Hudson and Harlem commuter lines out of Grand Central Terminal. Basically, this train ran wherever former NYC third rail went. Mr. McKernan did a great job of keeping the other photographers out of the shot at Crestwood, New York. *Ed McKernan photo, Torin Reid collection*



AT LEFT MIDDLE: Every once in a great while, one could tell when a PC engine or caboose was out of place, even on the former PC. Several PC N5c cabooses were painted brown with dark yellow lettering and were assigned to Pennsylvania Power and Light (PPLX) unit coal trains that operated in central Pennsylvania. N5c 23065 isn't anywhere near a PPLX train as it brings up the markers on a freight wrong-railing southbound at Elizabeth, New Jersey. *Torin Reid photo*



BELOW: The PC invasion of other railroads was nearly complete by this July 20, 1976, photograph. Were it not for the NJDOT RDC in the background, this location might not be readily recognized as the former CNJ shop at Elizabethport, New Jersey. SD45s 6179 and 6143 occupy center stage. It is a wonder that these heavy units did not derail on the oil-soaked, worn-out track at this terminal. *Torin Reid photo*

BELOW: After the demise of Penn Central, New Jersey DOT had a little more flexibility with the makeup of the commuter trains. Normally, the former PC E7s and E8s would have operated with former PC coaches. In this view, they look like they were at the head of a streamliner one more time. On July 20,

1976, E7 4244 and a pair of E8s take a New York & Long Branch train down to Bay Head Junction. Those E units had about two more years of running before either being rebuilt or scrapped. Unfortunately, E7 4244 (and one other E-7) didn't make the cut, or rather, were sent to be cut (up). *Torin Reid photo*



ABOVE: Six months ago, this would have been a Reading freight, with Reading power. But on September 23, 1976, it's just another Conrail freight and another PC invasion. PC GP35 2234 is followed by former EL 3665, along with PC 7839 and 8161. The train is crossing the Lehigh River into the former Allentown Consolidated yard that hosted the Reading, LV, CNJ and L&HR trains in the

past. Power from other roads, such as the B&O and even the Penn Central, also visited this yard. Today, this spot continues to be a fair to good spot on NS. Most of the NS trains now take the bypass around the yard and the Lehigh Canal park. The bypass is located to the far left of this train and in this view, is hidden by trees and bushes. *Charles Houser photo, Torin Reid collection*

BELOW: After the demise of Penn Central, several of the commuter operations in the Northeast began to take a more proactive approach toward the use of the equipment. Boston's MBTA was, by this time, directing operations on B&M and Conrail's former PC commuter lines out of the city. Apparently PC E8 4265 required contract repair work at B&M's



Billerica, Massachusetts diesel shop. A hostler, with either a sense of humor or a quick recognition of the situation, paired PC 4265 with B&M 4265. *Ralph Phillips photo, Torin Reid collection*

BOTTOM: Brills Junction, located in Newark, New Jersey, was once an important part of the Jersey Central lines. A busy branch line to Jersey City left the main line here. But after a bridge across the Passaic River was knocked out of service by marine traffic in 1948, the line lost its importance and began to fade away.

On Sunday, February 12, 1977, former Penn Central 8802 and the two disparate Conrail cousins, all untouched by renumbering or repainting nearly a year into Conrail, idle the day away. Tomorrow they will patrol this desolate industrial area, which still had plenty of business in 1977, including Naporano Iron and Metal, which was one of the premier locomotive scrappers during the 70s and 80s. A wide variety of railroad equipment was put to death here, everything from Burlington Es to UP DD35s to New York subway cars to Penn Central switchers. *Ed McKerman photo, Torin Reid collection*



ABOVE: A visit to Conrail's Juniata Back Shop complex in Altoona, Pennsylvania on April 28, 1990, yielded a pair of PC veterans. GP35 2383, one of ten GP35s ordered by the New York Central without dynamic brakes, had been stored at Rose (note the "Rose to store" on the frame), located just east of the shops, for several years. Due to increased business, Conrail pulled some GP30s and GP35s out of the dead line, primarily for use in local

service. The 2383 was retired from Conrail's roster on April 6, 1990, so it likely served as a parts source until sold or scrapped.

Another prize that day was former NYC GP9 7319. The vast majority of Geeps were long gone by 1990, traded in on newer power. Someone out there knows the story behind why this Geep, which looks to be in reasonably good condition, was hanging around the shops. *Two photos, Torin Reid*



ABOVE: In a corner of the Altoona shop complex rests a former PC F7B, number 73600, which was used to transport EMD prime movers. In later years, NS used an old SD45 frame and cab for the same reason. The fate of this unique piece of equipment is unknown but one must assume it had a date with the scapper's torch.



AT LEFT MIDDLE: Lewistown, Pennsylvania, is located on the heavily-used Pittsburgh Line. The small yard, turntable and roundhouse are used by the Juniata Valley Railroad, which services 11 miles of a former PRR/PC branch line to an industrial park. Here at the roundhouse, on July 10, 2006, PC 73319 rests under load with its at least 30 year old paint job intact. I waited for a NS freight to pass by, to show the passage of time. I got an eastbound with two "undecorated" NS units in primer paint.



AT LEFT BELOW: RFX H54 covered hopper cars make a regular appearance on New York, Susquehanna and Western freights SU-99 and SU-100. These trains travel between Little Ferry, New Jersey and Binghamton, New York. The Susie Q, which is owned half and half by CSX and NS, uses GP38-2s from the above roads as well as their own small fleet of six-axle EMD standard cab locos. On this December 14, 2014, catch at Ridgefield Park, New Jersey, there were multiple RFX cars still wearing Penn Central paint in the train. *Three photos, Torin Reid photo*



ABOVE: Plenty has been written about the Norfolk Southern SD70ACe 1073, the Penn Central heritage locomotive. While the 1073 has been all over former Penn Central lines and all across the country, I thought catching it on a BNSF oil train at Rochelle, Illinois, on May 1, 2013, was one of the more appropriate non-Penn Central locations to see it. After all,

its NYC GP40 and PRR GP35 predecessors came through this location on a regular basis on Burlington and later Burlington Northern run-through freights. What made this train extra Penn Central special was the leader was NS's New York Central heritage unit, SD70Ace 1066. The 1073 was the set-up as the rear-end DPU. *Two photos, Torin Reid ❖*

ARTICLE BY GARY FARMER



“So, as I was sayin’, the derailment at 3 a.m. was due to ice buildup in the lead switch of the departure yard, caused by a faulty switch heater on the south rail which, like everythin’ else around here, was brought on by deferred maintenance. That derailment led to the big jam-up in the yard this morning and that’s why I’m here with yas now. We were called for 5 a.m. and here we are, four hours later and haven’t turned a wheel yet. Hey, what’s with all that sniffing; you leakin’?”

I always get nosebleeds from the dry air this time of year.

“Follow me into the yard office and ol’ Clarence will get ya fixed up.

“Now hold still while I wrap this gauze around yer head.”

Hey, let go!

“Relax, I’m just funnin’ ya. Here, shove this wad of packing up your schnoz, that’ll fix ‘er up right quick.”

Boy, that kit is quite the bomb. It has a tourniquet, a splint, scissors and a whole bunch of other stuff, plus instructions inside the lid for handling burns to broken bones and everything in between.

“It’s the deluxe model, based on the PRR kit of course. They look exactly the same except PC’s is dark green and white, while the Pennsy one was silver and red. This is the kit they hang in shops and offices where ya got lots of guys workin’. Here, feel how heavy it is. Nuthin’ but solid American steel there.”

For sure.

“Now I’ll show yas a real piece of history. Grab some flashlights off that shelf and come with me.”

Does it matter which lights? They look almost identical except one is black and

AT LEFT ABOVE: Halco nine-inch square by 2.5-inch-deep steel 24-unit (item) first aid kit with original box. This was the same kit used by the PRR, theirs being silver with red lettering and logo, whereas PC’s is dark green and white. It has a hinged bracket for wall mounting, or can be carried by the handle on top.

AT LEFT BELOW: Contents of the kit include Merthiolate, Ammonia, Metaphen, an eye dressing set, tourniquet, wire splint, gauze, and various bandages. Instructions for dealing with various maladies are listed inside the lid.



AT LEFT: Five varieties of Bright Star No. 1618 plastic flashlights. L to R: The most common one is marked “P.C. Co.,” while the next three all have “Switch Guard Bright Star No. 1618” in addition to the P.C. Co. marking. The far right one is marked “Penn Central.” The right three have metal rings for attaching to a belt clip or other fastener. Two of the five have red lens cases. All except the second one from left have “1618 Bright Star Made in USA” also raised on the end cap.

two have a red ring around the lens.

“Naaa, just grab any of ‘em. Follow me up these stairs and down the hall ...

“Okay, now shine your light into this storage room and we’ll see if it’s still here.

“Yep, sure is; see it sittin’ on the floor there? It’s one of the old wooden kits, which go way back to when I hired on the railroad. And just like me, it’s covered in an inch of dust.”

Boy, this thing is far-out! I can’t believe it has survived all these years.

“It just got left behind when they closed down this side of the building. Nuthin’ ever gets thrown away on the railroad ya know. At least not until after there’s a merger. Then they wanna get rid of everything and make you forget all about the railroad ya worked for your whole life. Go ahead and take the kit outside where we can get a better look at it.”

Wow, this is so cool! So first came the wooden kits, then came the silver and red metal ones and then PC just reordered the same metal kits, but with a new paint job?

“Well, yes, but then again PC always buys two of everything. They used the same kits as the Central too. Here’s their ‘large’ kit, if you can call it that.”

It is much smaller, a little more than half the size of the ex-Pennsy one.



ABOVE: Wooden PRR first aid cabinet that preceded the metal kits. It measures about eleven inches square and five inches deep. The door latches on the left and there is a shelf inside.

AT RIGHT ABOVE: This steel first aid kit, first used by the New York Central, measures 5x8 and 2 inches deep. "FIRST AID" and the PC logo are raised on the lid. The contents are similar to the larger metal kit.



AT RIGHT BELOW: Small plastic kits that may be original to Penn Central, or possibly NYC heritage. The larger one measures just over 3x5 and 1.5 inches deep, with the smaller one just over 2.5x3.5 inches and under an inch deep.



"Not only that, but it's the same ugly color the New York Central kit was. Plus, there ain't no instructions inside the lid or nuthin'. Pretty plain if you ask me."

It looks like it's either painted flat black or maybe Brunswick Green if you hold it just right in the light.

"Hey, watch your mouth! There ain't nuthin' that the Central ever used that was Brunswick Green- that was a

Pennsy color. I think it's just plain flat black.

Whatever the color, at least it has a handle on the lid. Portability could be an advantage you know ...

"The Pennsy one has a handle on top too."

True, but who would want to lug that thing around? And anyway Clarence, don't you think carrying the red vs. green

feud the whole way down to first aid kits is going a bit too far?

"There wouldn't be no reason to feud if they would just use our kit. But I do see yer point. Maybe these plastic kits are the solution to the red vs. green problem. If they're from one of PC's parents, I don't know about it. Then again, PC is so big that anything is possible.

"And anyhow, if you do need a portable kit, Pennsy had these here cardboard-box jobbers that would do just fine. You could fit one of 'em just about anywhere. As you can see, PC picked up on 'em, both orange and white ones."

These are clever, they open sort of like a clamshell and the two plastic pouches inside have the PC logo too. The orange ones have the PC logo printed on three sides but the white one only has a decal on the front. Did you see the 'Instructions for Maintenance' printed on one side of the orange kit that has the metal corners?

"Can't say as I did."

It says 'When seal has been broken, return box with remaining contents to Division Supervisor-Material, to be refilled and sealed'. I wonder how many get sent back to be refilled?

"I guess you'd have to ask the Material Supervisor, but that just shows ya how the Pennsy took care of their stuff. On the other hand, these little personal ones

from the Central are just throwaways."

They are small, but I dig 'em because they slip right in your pocket, plus they're made of that smooth, shiny cardboard.

"All I can say is, I hope if I ever get hurt on the job there's somethin' better than one of those piddly little things layin' around."

Well they're only meant for a cut or scrape. The slogans on them are cool; it would be groovy to collect all of them.

"Who in the world would bother to collect first aid kits? It's not like they're baseball cards or marbles."

Baseball cards are righteous, but marbles? Who collects marbles?

"Careful there, sonny. I had some real dandy shooters when I was yer age."

Shooters?

"You never heard of a shooter marble? You kids just don't know how to have fun these days."

Don't take this the wrong way Clarence, but playing marbles sounds pretty lame. I'm sure if we got caught playing marbles, we'd get made fun of mercilessly. Sort of like pinning baseball cards on your bike wheel spokes, or having tassels on the end of your handle bars. I mean, that stuff was okay when we were ten, but not now.

"Then what do kids do for fun these days?"



ABOVE: Small 2x4 and 2.5-inch-deep cardboard first aid kits of PRR lineage, packaged by Mine Safety Appliance Co. of Pittsburgh. Inside the box are two packets of supplies sealed in plastic, also with the PC logo. "Packet A" contains larger bandages and pins, while smaller "Packet B" has Merthiolate and small bandages.

AT RIGHT AND BELOW:

Even smaller "matchbook" NYC-heritage kits that measure about 2x3 inches. Each contains a small antiseptic packet and band-aids. Top row L to R: NYC B&A Division, B&A Accident Prevention Committee, Boston Accident Prevention Committee, New England Division, New Haven Region Mechanical Department. Bottom row: New York Region, Mohawk-Hudson Division, Metropolitan Region, New Jersey Division. Below, Back sides of the kits, showing various safety slogans.



We got PONG for Christmas, and it is funkadelic!
 "Funka-what?"
 Funkadelic means it's super-cool. PONG is like playing ping-pong on TV. "That don't even make sense. Ping-pong is played on a big table. How can that fit on a little screen?"
 We have a 21-inch TV, so I wouldn't exactly call that little.
 "Your dad must have a good job to afford a TV that big. Anyhow, that still don't explain how you can play ping-pong on the boob tube."
 I guess you'd just have to see it to believe it. It's a home video game made

by Atari, which means there's no need to wait for a turn on the machine at the pizza shop anymore.
 "OK, whatever you say. Hey, speaking of games, I got another riddle for yas."
 I think I'd rather have another nose-bleed.
 "Whaddya mean by that? Don't ya like my riddles no more?"
 No more?
 "You mean you never liked 'em?"
 We have to think too much in school already to have to think on the weekend too. "I promise ya won't have no trouble with this one, and then you'll have a clue as to what it is I'm bringin' next time."
 You always say they're easy, but they never are. Go ahead.
 "What comes one of 14 to a 'fore' or 13 to one of four?"
 See, this is what I mean. You just completely psyched out our minds with all those numbers.
 "Alright, I can see that yas need a hint. Take a look at this long round piece of hickory."
 It looks like a skinny baseball bat. Wait- I know- it's an antique stick ball bat from when you were a kid!
 "No, no, no. It ain't even old; take a look at the middle."
 Wow, it's marked Penn Central. So that means it does belong somewhere on the railroad ...
 "Sure it does. The rear brakeman uses it to turn brake wheels."

AT LEFT AND BELOW:

Top row L to R: Syracuse Employees Credit Union, Syracuse Terminal, Buffalo Division Accident Prevention Committee, Detroit Division, Northern Region. Bottom row: Central Region Maintenance of Equipment-Valley Division, Cleveland Division, Toledo Division. Not pictured is a Michigan Division one, which makes at least seventeen different ones from PC, let alone the NYC. Clarence strongly suspects there are more yet to be discovered! Below, Back sides of the kits, showing various safety slogans.



Oh, of course, we got it now. It's a brakeman's bat.
 "Yer close; not a bat, but a brakeman's ..."
 Stick.
 "Aw for cryin' out loud, yer dancin' all around it and I'm outta' time. We're finally next out of the yard, so I gotta get goin'. You think about that some more and I'll catch up with yas on the next trip." ❖

BELOW: Wooden brakeman's (stick, bat, what's it called?), manufactured by Hartwell, is a hint to Clarence's riddle. It measures 32 inches long, 1.75 inches diameter and is used to turn brake wheels. "Penn Central Co., Hartwell Hickory" is embossed in the middle.



