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LIFE IN A CSXT LOCOMOTIVE CAB

PRESIDENT ‘S MESSAGE

CSXT Historical Society is honored to feature the recollections of CSXT’s engineer Matt Walker. I trust that you will enjoy his tales of life in the cab of a CSXT locomotive as much as I did. Hopefully some more CSXT employees will step forward and share with us what it is like working on the rails.

If you have a copy of any of the CSXT safety and training videos and DVDs that we have not posted to the CSXTHS web site, would you consider making a copy available to us to post. Send to CSXTHS, 201 Pin Oak PL, Frankfort, KY 40601

The 2022 CSXTHS Convention is a go – or should we say the 2022 CSXTHS Railfan Event is a go. CSXTHS will tour part of CSXT Cumberland Valley Subdivision and Eastern Kentucky Subdivision, and we will attend Railroad Days at Ravenna, Kentucky, as guests of Kentucky Steam Heritage. We will base ourselves out of the Comfort Inn at Hazard, Kentucky. You are on your own to negotiate a room rate. Hopefully there will still be an active mine to visit. We will definitely visit a few closed coal loadouts. See the registration form on the last page of this Journal.

The CSXTHS Journal is always looking for articles and photos. We will work with you if you need help in organizing your material for printing.

Remember, when trackside, Always Look and Listen for a Train, for a Train may come from any direction at any time.

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LIFE IN A CSXT LOCOMOTIVE CAB

Matt Walker

WELCOME WAGON

One frigid, January morning my conductor and I were called north on a through train at 4:00 AM. Despite the temperature being in the single digits, I felt like I was still half-asleep as we climbed on the lead engine. I plopped my grips (bags) down on the floor of the cab and headed out the back door to knock the brakes off the five trailing engines and ensure that they were running. The water in dead locomotives can freeze or, in order to prevent this from happening, most engines now have a "guru valve" that senses when moisture is freezing and opens to dump all the water out of the engine. As I entered the cab of the second engine, I realized that I had forgotten to grab my flashlight. *"No problem,"* I thought to myself, estimating there was enough residual light from the nearby streetlamps to light my way while walking out on the platforms, and could turn the cab lights on to see inside the engines. My plan worked like a charm as I checked the first four engines. Then came the last engine, an EMD SD40-2 facing south. Due to a high rock cut between the fifth engine and the adjacent street, the light I had been relying on to light my way outside the engines was now gone. Suddenly it was like I was in a coal mine, so I was relegated to holding on to the hand rail on the side of the engine with one hand and blindingly feeling for the back door of the cab with the other.

Matt Walker in the cab of CSXT 4303 getting ready to head up the track to Glasgow.

As was the case with the first four engines, this engine was running, so I knew that once I got in the cab all I had to do was reach up above the engineer's seat and turn the light on just as I had been doing. But as I opened the door and stepped into the pitch-black cab, my right foot and shin hit a heavy object between the engineer's seat and back door that should not have been there; one that was at once kind of soft and moveable, yet firm and rigid… that felt almost…*human*. A split second later, I heard someone grunt directly in front of and beneath me, along with a lot of low murmuring and others rustling around the entire cab. Clearly, I was not alone. Not even close. I quickly decided the best option I had was to do whatever I had to do to get the light on and see what and who I was up against. I quickly stretched my entire 6'4" frame and reached along the ceiling until my hand made it to the light switch, flipped it on, and was astonished to see the equally wide-eyed and surprised faces of not one, not two, but *seven* Latino men staring back at me! After we had all "sized-up" one another for a second or two, I quickly felt confident that they were no threat and, if nothing else, were simply seeking shelter from the bitter cold night. One of them spoke very broken English and my two years of high school Spanish had long-since fell prey to the "if you don't use it, you lose it" principle, yet I was finally able to get them to understand where we were going, that we were about to leave, and that they could go along for the ride so long as they did not touch any of the controls. With that, I turned on the heaters, made sure they had water, and away we went. When we pulled into the yard 8 hours later, I looked back in the mirror and saw them all bail off and head out on foot, bound for who knows where.

This is the valve for dumping the engine's cooling water.

This is what an engine cooling water leak looks like. The green dye in the water is to warn that the water is not drinkable and to make a leak more easily seen.

DEAD OR ALIVE

My conductor, Justin, and I headed out one hot summer night on our subdivision's northbound "short-car" train (i.e., a train that sets off cars for intermediate/outlying locations). Our train that night was 84 cars, 7,556 tons, and 5,000 feet in length, powered by two EMD SD70MACs. Justin was actually a "cut-back" engineer at the time, meaning he was a qualified engineer, but they had more need for conductors than engineers, so he could not hold any jobs as an engineer with his seniority and was forced to be a conductor for the time being. For many people in that situation, it was kind of a blessing, as it basically allowed them to continue learning all the many nuances of being an engineer without the pressure of *being* the engineer. Also, most engineers, myself included, loved working with guys cut-back because it gave us the option of switching off and letting them run some if they wanted to. Usually, it provided a nice break and a fleeting taste of the good ole days as a conductor, with nothing more to do than kick back and call signals on the radio, other than perhaps giving some instruction/feedback on how they were running every now and then.

We got out of the yard in pretty good shape and the trip was more or less uneventful for the first 27 miles until a high-pitched engine alarm bell suddenly pierced the EMD "Whisper Cab"-muffled roar of both engines laboring up our subdivision's steepest hill or "ruling grade" at full-throttle (a ruling grade is the hill on which a given engine's tonnage rating is the lowest on the entire subdivision). Now, since each of our engines were good for only 3,850 tons on this hill and we had a shade over 7,500 tons, that made us only about 150 tons "light" or "to the good." Conversely, if our train had been 7,850 tons, making us 150 tons over-tonnage for our engines, we might simply say we were 150 tons "over" or "to the bad". An alarm bell does not always mean an engine has stopped loading (generating power), and even though a

quick glance at the ammeter showed our leader was loading, with our speed dropping like a rock, it was clear that our second SD70MAC had big problems (not an uncommon occurrence for those!) and was now simply along for the ride. I turned the sand on while we were still moving in order to already have the rail sanded once we tried to get started again. After setting the automatic brake to bring the train to a controlled stop, I headed back to check things out and was grateful to find the "fault" displayed on the computer panel was one that was easy to reset. I went back to the lead engine, put the reverser in forward and the throttle in #1, then headed back to the rear engine to look at the ammeter to verify that it was, indeed, loading and ready to go. Satisfied that it was, I walked back to the leader and as I plopped down in the engineer's seat said to Justin, "You ready?" who simply responded with a sleepy, half-hearted nod.

In this scenario, simply getting the engine back on-line was only half the battle. Based on experience, not to mention the laws of physics, I knew getting a train that was essentially right "on-tonnage" (at the max of what our engines were good to pull) restarted on the steepest part of the hill was anything but a foregone conclusion. If we were unable to get underway again, we had two options: (1) "Double" the hill, {Where you take an adequate portion of the train to leave in the next siding or track long enough to hold the cars so that, once you return to the remaining part of the train on the hill, you can successfully pull it up the hill. This process can easily take an hour or more, depending on factors such as how far the conductor has to walk back to make the first cut, how far the next siding is, etc.}. Or, (2) wait on another train to cut their engines off and come either shove or pull us up the hill. Although the dispatcher is almost always the one who makes the call in such an instance, I knew the former option was the most likely since there were no other trains close by who could come to the rescue. My ultimate hope, however, was that neither scenario would come into play.

I kicked the brakes off (released) the engines and the train, turned the sand back on, and immediately came out on the throttle and up to #2 to hold the engines in place as I waited for the "beep" from the HTD (head-of-train device) that relays info. from the EOT (end-of-train device) and accompanying uptick in air pressure reading signifying the brakes releasing on the rear before I started "pouring the coal to it," as such. There is a bit of a fine line in knowing when and how hard to pull in this scenario because if you pull too hard, too fast, you risk breaking a knuckle or drawbar if the brakes are not released. But if you don't pull hard enough, *and* soon enough, you risk the brakes releasing fully and the train rolling *backwards*, which also greatly increases the risk of a train separation since the engines are pulling against/opposite the train's momentum. As I gradually increased to throttle to #5, then to #6, we were barely making any forward progress and the engines began jumping up and down due to the 1400 AMPS of tractive effort the engines were exerting. Cautiously, I went up to #7 then, finally up to #8. No dice. I reapplied the brakes, using just enough air to hold the train in place; usually about 10 – 12 lbs. is sufficient for most trains, depending on the train and steepness of the grade. The reason "just enough" air should be used will become apparent momentarily.

Since the first attempt to get the train started again failed, it was on to plan B. But, before starting down the road of the aforementioned two options of getting our train over the hill, there was still one more trick to try: The first attempt to restart the train was with the slack stretched out, which equates to essentially starting the train's entire weight at once. However, when the slack is bunched, you can basically start the train one car at a time, which helps you build up and, hopefully, maintain forward momentum. But, getting the slack bunched on a train on the side of a steep hill is a little tricky. To do this, the engineer leaves the air brakes used to stop the last time applied (assuming they didn't use so much air that the brakes are rendered too tight for the cars to move), reverses the engines, and carefully increases the throttle to gently start bunching the slack on the train. Then, while still pushing with the engines, if necessary, you gradually apply more air brakes (but not too much!) on the train to the point that the brakes on the cars are too tight for the engines to move the train with the throttle position being used, thus stopping the train. The keys to this maneuver are to maintain adequate shoving amperage (power) with the engines so that the slack does not "run out" (stretch out) and possibly break a knuckle or drawbar,

while at the same time not shoving with too much power and brake pressure that you risk derailing due to excessive buff forces. Care must also be taken to not use too much air too soon, to the point that you don't get enough of or all the train's slack bunched before the brakes get too tight and you stop.

Sound complicated? Well, on top of all that, once again, an engineer wants to avoid using all or even most of their air whilst doing this maneuver. The reason: Because it takes time to build your air back up once you release the brakes – the longer the train, the longer it takes. And if it's cold, it takes longer still. On a 90 lb. fully-charged train line, engineers only have at their disposal 26 lbs. of "service" air pressure to use to control the train's speed before having to resort to putting the train in "emergency," which dumps all the air in the train to stop as quickly as possible. So, if your attempt to start the train fails, you need to have enough air in reserve to keep the train from rolling backwards. For example, if I had drawn down 20 lbs. of air when the train failed to start, once I release it, it will come up 2-4 lbs. initially which will bring the air pressure up from 70 lbs. to approximately 74 lbs. But with that increase, the brakes on the whole train are now released, and unless sufficient force is exerted by the engines on the head end, the train will quickly start rolling backward down the hill. If that happens, or if you fail to start the train again, you'll probably have to go straight to "full-service" on the automatic brake, which is the full 26 lbs. of air pressure you have. And guess what? You're not getting 26 lbs. of braking force – since the train line is far from charged, you're actually only getting maybe 10 lbs. of pressure at the rear car. Now, hopefully that's enough to hold the train, but if not, the only option left is to "blow it out" (put the train in emergency), which takes the air pressure to 0 lbs. At that point, the conductor has to go back and set a sufficient amount of hand brakes or retainer valves to hold the train in place while the air is "reset" and brake pipe pressure is built back up. Depending on the train and the grade, hand brakes on 1/3 or more of the train may be required to hold it. And now, on top of everything else, your conductor is not happy and will most likely be talking bad about you for the next couple weeks!

Back to the story….It is important to note that there is a point where attempting the above maneuver following a stall is futile: If a train that is way over-tonnage, say 500 tons or more and "hangs up" (stalls), as an engineer, you simply have to chalk it up and say, "Oh well, we tried…" as you buzz up the dispatcher on the radio to relay the bad news. And, trust me, this is *always* bad news for a dispatcher. This was no such occasion, however, and I knew it had a good chance of working. Needless to say, following our first failed attempt at starting the train, Justin was now wide-awake and getting fairly antsy about what fate might await him should our second attempt follow suit. After successfully bunching the slack in the manner described above, I kicked the brakes off (released the brakes). The brakes release fairly quickly on each successive car following a brake application of 10 lbs. or more, so you want to start pulling at a low throttle almost immediately once the brake handle is released so that you can start moving each car as its brakes release, which I did. About 15 seconds in and after perhaps 20 feet of forward progress, I increased the throttle to #5 and almost instantly the engines lunged then slowed drastically, the force of which caused my conductor and I both to lurch forward in our seats. "Oh, #@&*!!" Justin hollered at the same time I said, "Whoa…!" and immediately notched-off on the throttle to reduce the power output. The closest thing I can compare this sensation to in the "real world" would be very firmly applying the brakes of your car and the subsequent lunge forward you experience. The reason this happened is because I had gotten a tad over-zealous in how quickly I advanced the throttle and the forward progress of the headend of the train was out-pacing the rate at which the brakes on the train were releasing. So, the jerk occurred when the first half of the train that was stretching-out and moving freely with brakes released met up with the still-stationary rear portion, whose brakes had not yet fully-released. Had I not quickly reduced the throttle, the result would have almost assuredly been a train separation due to a broken knuckle or drawbar. But, after dodging that bullet and gradually working up to full throttle, our train speed slowly increased to 10 MPH and we crested the hill a few minutes later and were quickly clipping along at our subdivision's top speed for mixed freight trains of 50 MPH. Justin had never had the experience of handling a stall with this method, so it turned into a valuable "teachable moment" – one that I was thankful to have not screwed up! [Note: A few years ago, soon after Hunter Harrison's bunch

took over, in the interest of upping the performance stats, the maximum authorized speed of just about every train was "magically" increased to 60 MPH.]

About an hour later, we stopped in front of the office at the yard where we had to both set-off and pick-up cars. Justin stepped off the engine and walked towards the yard office to check the "mailbox" for a list of the cars we were to pick up without need of his railroad lantern (which is essentially a flashlight with a rounded handle that enables you to hook it around your arm while holding the ladder on a rail car) in his hand, thanks to the light from the light poles around the office. It was about 2:00 AM when he gave me the go-ahead over the radio to start pulling the 30-car set-off by him. After he counted me down to a stop, I applied "3-step protection" so he could set handbrakes on the cars we were leaving on the main track. The "3 steps" are (1) make a full-service application of the automatic and independent brake, (2) turn off the generator field switch, and (3) center the reverser (neutral position). Setting handbrakes usually only takes a few minutes when only two or three brakes are being set, as this situation dictated. But after more than 5 minutes of radio silence, I grabbed the radio mic and asked if everything was OK and Justin's somewhat groggy reply of "Yeah, I'll be with you in a second…" immediately crackled back. Another minute of silence went by when, suddenly, the cab erupted with the sound of Justin's now very agitated and excited voice ripping off a profanity-laced tirade, sprinkled amidst him relaying information that immediately got my attention: The rear car we were about to set off in the yard was a covered hopper and these car types have a "cubbyhole" on both ends above the trucks (wheels and axles) that is formed by the hopper car body coming down at an angle to allow room for the brake reservoir, piston, etc. When Justin looked down to see where to set his foot on the ladder and there, in the cubbyhole, lay a perfectly motionless person underneath a sheet with only the top of their head exposed! He said over the radio it had startled him so much, he almost fell off the car, thus the reason for his 'colorful' choice of words. Even more unnerving was the fact that, despite all the noise of setting the handbrakes and our conversation on the radio, the person *had never moved.*

While relaying this rather grim discovery, he had moved away from the train and we discussed what the next move should be. He was reticent to approach the person alone just in case they were, you know, *alive*. I jokingly asked him, "How big an 'ole boy is he?" Justin found that not the least bit funny, which made me laugh to myself in the cab even more. We ultimately decided that I would walk back and we would make heads or tails of the situation together. Now, by the time I walked the 1,600 feet or so back there, probably about 10 minutes had elapsed since Justin first saw the guy (he was fairly sure it was a man based on the short hair protruding from beneath the sheet), yet he *still* had not moved. With flashlight and air hose wrench in hand (you know, just in case), I walked up to the car with Justin beside and slightly behind me and cautiously peered over the rail into the cubbyhole. The light unexpectedly revealed the person's head was only about a foot from my face, making me draw back slightly for a moment. I looked closely at the sheet covering what looked to be a fairly small-framed man and could discern no movement to suggest he was breathing. With a volume slightly higher than normal speech, I said, "Hey, buddy… wake up!" Nothing. Justin and I exchanged uneasy looks that clearly said, *"Dude… this guy may really be dead."* Without really expecting a response, I lightly tapped on one of the rungs of the ladder next to me with the air hose wrench, which made a distinctive pinging noise that echoed loudly thanks to the acoustics of the empty hopper car. At the report of the third "ping," the man suddenly jumped up as if shocked with a cattle prod! For a moment, time stood still as he seemed to levitate; like a lifeless puppet whose strings were violently jerked upward. He started hollering what sounded like *"Wha! Wha! WHA!!"* He looked at us and furiously started gathering his few belongings. I could see now that he was Latino. He had a wild look in his eyes and I was not sure if it stemmed from being shaken out of a deep sleep or if he really was "crazy". *"Sir…! Sir…! Calm down!!,"* I yelled loud enough for him to hear me over his own loud, indistinct ramblings in Spanish. Clutching his few belongings against his chest with both arms, he suddenly jumped off the rail of the cubbyhole toward us like a WWE wrestler off the top rope. Factoring in the height of the car, coupled with the elevated roadbed, it was about a six-foot drop. Even though only a few seconds had passed between that moment and him "coming back to life" with a

vengeance, I somehow felt confident that he did not mean us any harm and was simply scared. So, when I saw him in midair my first concern was for his safety, and I made the best short-notice attempt I could to break his fall, which, quite honestly, was not terribly successful. His feet hit and slid from beneath him in the loose rocks, yet he was agile enough to keep his torso in a fairly upright position. With Justin still beside me, I instinctively grabbed him with both hands around his upper arm to help him up. It was clear now that he was more scared than anything, and since he was only about 5-foot-4 and maybe 120 pounds soaking wet, the fact that Justin and I both towered over him at well over 6 feet apiece probably didn't help much.

Thankfully, despite the obvious language barrier, we were able to quickly put him at ease. After a few minutes of talking with him in his very-broken English, we gathered that he had hopped our train in effort to get to Evansville, Indiana, and work in the tobacco fields. I sadly relayed to him that although he had picked a train going in the right general direction, our tracks did not go to Evansville and he was about 120 miles away by road. But it just so happened that an overpass for a main thoroughfare that would get him fairly close to his destination crossed the tracks about a half-mile back. There was also a busy truck stop not far away, and I conveyed the suggestion that he try to catch a ride there. He then said he wanted to go somewhere and sleep some, then try to get a ride the next morning. We gave him a few bottles of water and some money to get something to eat. He thanked us profusely as he shook our hands, and we watched him walk in the direction of the highway overpass and disappear into the darkness.

The cubby hole at the A end of a covered hopper. This is where my stowaway hid when he rode the train.

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE PORTLAND

One of the scariest, and definitely the most eerie experience I have ever had on the railroad happened in Portland, Tennessee. One night about 2:30 AM I was going south and running on clear blocks (signals) while my conductor was "resting his eyes" for an extended period. As soon as you go through town, there is an uphill stretch almost a mile in length and when you crest the hill, the track starts downhill toward a road crossing about 1/3 mile from the crest. On the east side of the track, is a housing subdivision and on the west side there is a lumberyard and a factory. Since we were running on clear blocks, I had the speed indicator pegged at 50 MPH. After passing the whistle post (a sign at which point engineers blow the horn to acknowledge an upcoming road crossing) located about ¼ mile from the crossing, the headlights illuminated something right next to the tracks on my side that just did not look right. At first it was unclear what the object was, but when we were about 400 feet away, I realized it was a person standing just off the edge of the crossties! I laid on the horn and, as we rapidly closed the distance, I could see that it was a woman. She was standing like a statue, her back towards the train, and her head down. I continued to blow the horn, held my breath, and prayed that what I feared was about to happen, wouldn't. She never moved a muscle as we roared past her, mere inches away; so close that I could see wind pushed by the train wildly blow her hair right before we reached her. I whirled my chair around to look out the back window of the engine as we passed her, but the darkness swallowed her up as if she had never existed. But she did - and I had chills down my spine to prove it. I called the dispatcher on the radio and, with more than a little sense of urgency in my voice, recounted what had just happened. But, to my surprise – and chagrin – the dispatcher's reply was just a half-hearted, "Ok, I'll see if I can get that reported." So shaken was I that, upon hearing this woefully lackluster response and before I was able to catch myself, I icily and firmly said, "No! *You. Don't. Understand.* This woman is obviously in dire straits – *if* she's even still alive. Evidently, he understood this was not your run-of-the-mill pedestrian encounter and assured me he would call the police. Although I know we didn't hit her simply because I never heard any more about it, to this day I have no idea what happened to her.

A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING

One bright, fall day we were on a local and headed back to the mainline at Park City, KY on the Glasgow branch line. The brakeman and I were talking along as we rolled through the sparsely populated countryside at the 25 MPH speed limit for this branch. We had two engines that day, so the conductor was stretched out on the trailing unit. Now, numerous childhood ear infections and years of loud train whistles has taken its toll on my hearing, but my eyesight seldom fails me. So, when I detected a subtle movement among the thick, fallen leaves next to the track some 800 feet ahead that just didn't look "right," I trusted my instinct, even though the source of the movement wasn't readily apparent. I leaned forward in the seat and strained to figure out just what this little, dark colored object was up against the outside of the rail on my side. It was strange because, while part of it was moving quite rapidly, it stayed in the same spot. Whatever it was, this was no leaf blowing in the breeze, it was *alive*. I immediately grabbed the automatic brake handle and set a minimum reduction on the train just to get some brake set on the cars as we continued up the hill. As we got a little closer, the situation became even more puzzling. A beagle hound came out of nowhere on the left of the tracks and made a beeline to the area I had first seen the movement a few feet from the right side of the track. I grabbed some more air on the train and notched off one on the throttle to slow down some more as the beagle pushed its nose into the leaves. And then I saw it: Up against the rail was a puppy so small it couldn't climb over the rail to follow its mother, and the movement I'd seen was its front legs churning for all it was worth in effort to scale the rail. A split second after recognizing the puppy, I saw that there were at least 5 or 6 more puppies scurrying helplessly around it! The mother by now had grabbed one of the puppies in her mouth and was racing to drop it safely on the other side of the track. By now we were probably 150 feet away and there was zero hesitation; my face was practically against the front window, so I reached back without looking, grabbed the automatic

brake handle and jerked it into 'emergency.' I did it with such force that my shoulder popped loud enough to hear it over the loud "hiss" of all the air in the train exhausting out of the valve next to me. Having only 10 or 12 cars, combined with our speed being about 18 MPH, the uphill grade, and the brakes already heated up, we only travelled another 50 feet before stopping. With the crisis averted, I sighed with relief, smiled, and watched as the mother dog stopped and gave us a knowing look, then calmly and methodically carried her babies to safety one at a time. I caught a glimpse in the mirror of the conductor walking up to see what was going on as the brakeman looked at me and said, "I've been out here over 30 years and I thought I'd seen it all…but I ain't never seen an engineer blow a train out to keep from hitting a dog!" His tone was somewhat sardonic, but knowing him like I do and that he would have done the same thing, I just grinned and said, "Well, there ya go…"

From the "Frequently Asked Questions" section….

"Does it really take trains a mile or more to stop?"

The distance it takes for a given train to stop depends on a myriad of factors (e.g. train tonnage, track gradient, loaded/empty car ratio, etc.) *and* the combination of those factors. So, contrary to this commonly-held belief, there simply is no one, all-encompassing answer to this question. Here is a simple example: A loaded, 12,000-ton coal train will take much longer to stop on a steep, descending grade – in this case, possibly a mile or more depending on the speed, steepness of the grade, how much dynamic braking power is at work, etc. - than it would on a flat or uphill grade. Conversely, a mixed freight train with a much higher ratio of empty cars vs. loaded cars, or that same unit coal train in the example above with empty coal hoppers, will stop within a much shorter distance than a very heavy train with predominantly loaded cars. Interestingly, on empty cars, it is possible to actually "slide" the wheels when enough brake pressure is applied. In other words, the wheels just stop turning. And that's not a good thing, because it doesn't take long to put flat spots on the wheels. You will often hear flat spots on passing trains; a rhythmic metallic banging noise as the wheel rotates and the flat spot hits the rail like a hammer. Minor ones aren't much to worry about. However, big ones like the ones pictured can, at best, hit the rail with enough force to break it, causing major delays to trains, and at worst, derailments.

Think about going down a hill with a wheel barrow filled with dirt versus one that is empty; it's going to take a lot more effort to control and stop the one that's loaded. Same principle with a train, just on a much The amount of braking power in a train is also a big factor in stopping distance. Generally speaking, if two trains have the same amount of tonnage, but one has 75 cars and the other 110 cars, with all other factors being equal, such as the number/type of locomotives and track gradient, the one with 110 cars will likely stop in a shorter distance because there are more brakes at work.

On the Glasgow Branch

An autumn view on the Glasgow Branch

During an emergency brake application or during slack action, a train's knuckle can break. Until the knuckle is replaced, the train cannot move.

A wheel with excessive flat spots resulting from a sticking brake shoe

Flat spots on a wheel resulting from it sliding along the rail after an emergency brake application

"Where do freight trains come from?"

For this one, we will start at the micro level and work up to the macro level, which would be the big road trains you see. Railroads are in the exact same business as trucking companies in that they move goods from one place to another. Every rail car you see in a train has its own "life cycle" of sorts which, with few exceptions and regardless of what commodity it's carrying, generally looks something like this: Let's say ABC Building Supply Company in Atlanta, Georgia, orders a car load of wallboard (dry wall/sheetrock) from their preferred supplier, XYZ Gypsum in Seattle, Washington. XYZ then orders or requests an empty spine car from the railroad servicing them on which to ship ABC's order. We'll say that railroad is BNSF. The BNSF customer service dept. then allocates them a particular car that is sitting somewhere in a railyard in Seattle's Balmer Yard. A yard job is then given a "switch list" that has all the cars listed in a particular track and, included on that list is the car destined for XYZ Gypsum. So, as the yard job switches out the cars in that track, they put that car in the particular track where they are putting the "block" (or group) of cars for all the industries that are worked by local job L123. Later, L123 grabs the track with their cars when they go to work, then they set out on their route to work their customers. When they get to XYZ Gypsum, the conductor looks at his work order and sees that there are five loads of wallboard to "pull" (or take out) out of there which are bound for other companies who ordered it. In addition, the conductor sees he has three empty spine cars to place back into XYZ; one of which is the car for ABC in Atlanta. The next day, when L123 arrives to work XYZ, the car for ABC is loaded with their order, so they pull it and put it in their train. At the end of the day, they bring all the cars they have pulled from the industries back into the yard. Then, ideally, in the not-too-distant future, another yard job is given a switch list of the track L123 put their cars in. The yard job switches out ABC's car and puts it in another track that has cars destined for all different points on the Eastern Seaboard. All these cars will then make up a road train that will run all the way to another large "classification yard" in Chicago. There, ABC's car is switched out yet again, this time to a track that are all bound to be "interchanged"

with CSX. At this point, either a BNSF yard job takes those cars to CSX before getting their interchange cars from CSX, or a CSX yard job brings BNSF their cars before returning back to their yard. Now that CSX, the railroad that services ABC Building Supply, has the car in their possession, they add it to a train that will run all the way to Atlanta. Depending on how many cars bound for Atlanta are in the yard in Chicago on a given day, they may run more than one train of "all Atlanta's." Once there, the ABC car is switched out into a track that has all of yard job Y125's cars. In addition to other industries, ABC Building Supply's track is located just outside the yard on an industrial spur track. So, probably 10-14 days after beginning its long journey, ABC's car is finally spotted by Y125 (CSXT train designation). Meanwhile, the car has already been earmarked to be placed at a lumber supply company after it is pulled the next day as an "empty" by Y125. Then another "adventure" on this continuous cycle begins, and practically every car you see on any train is on its unique journey.

One caveat, however, is that there are "unit trains" which typically carry commodities like coal, crude oil, or agricultural products (grain, corn, etc.) back and forth between the same two points like, for instance, from the coal fields of Eastern Kentucky to the Scherer Power Plant in Georgia, then back to get more coal, then back to the power plant in a continuous cycle. Other unit trains, meanwhile, can have the same originating point where the train is loaded with whatever commodity, but then have different destinations where they are unloaded before returning back to the original point to be loaded again.

"Do you ever see or hit any animals?"

Train crews see all kinds of animals on the railroad. Especially in the Western U.S. and Canada, trains run through vast stretches of farmland and wilderness where you are liable to see anything at any time. But to a large extent, the same holds true regardless of the location as animals of all types routinely use railroad tracks as highways of sorts. Inevitably, some of them get hit by trains and become part of the food chain, which attracts other animals, thus creating an endless cycle. Fox, bobcat, deer, and coyotes are routinely seen even in urban and residential areas.

One of the most common animals seen and that get hit by trains, at least in my part of the country, are possums. One big reason for this is that they commonly walk on the top of the rail and stay there come heck or high water….or a train. When walking on the rail, they seem quite focused and I would estimate that only about 40% of the time do they hop off the rail when a train comes, even when the horn is sounded. The theory for why they walk on the rail is that it's easier on their feet, but there's no question why they hang out on the tracks – for them, it's like going to a buffet. In case you're wondering, when you hit a possum or any smaller animal, you typically hear and 'feel' a little "ping." Same thing with skunks, which are also very common around railroad tracks. As you might imagine, when you hit one of them the smell lingers for a long time! Once we ran over one on a local that was in between the rails, but he most likely survived because at our next stop, the conductor said it smelled like it had sprayed the bottom of the entire train!

One of the toughest things to handle for all but the most hard-hearted, "crusty" railroader is the all-too-common occurrence of hitting dogs. When you encounter a dog that is fouling the track and start blowing the horn, a great majority of the time their response is to rightly run away from the train…but, unfortunately, not get *out* of the way. This is especially true if they are between the rails. The caveat to this is unless they come to a road crossing, where they usually are good to dart out of harm's way. Apparently, the reason for this is that the vibration of the rails confuses them into thinking the danger is on either side of them, but the vibration is dulled at highway crossings so they get out of the way.

Deer, unfortunately, are also commonly hit by trains; especially at night, when they seem blinded by the headlights and just kind of freeze. Sometimes immediately dimming the lights while blowing the horn

successfully scares them out of the way, sometimes not. Cats, on the other hand, rarely fall prey to trains as they typically waste no time getting out of the way.

Believe it or not, turtles are one of the most amusing animals to encounter on a train. They are almost always on the outside of one rail, endeavoring to cross to the other side of the track. Their reputation for being slow and methodical is both legendary and common knowledge. But it never fails that when you roar by one next to the rail and look in the rearview mirror, you see them literally *running* in long strides down the roadbed away from the train! This sight is one of life's simple pleasures and makes me laugh every time.

Flocks of turkeys are another very common sight in areas where they roam. One hot summer day with the windows open on the engine, a large tom (male turkey) missed flying right into the cab on my side by about 3 feet! Instead, he passed right in front of the windshield and somehow managed to not be hit. The engineer I was with said, "Whew! If he'd gotten in here, I would have been a goner – this cab ain't big enough for the three of us!" In addition to having a sharp beak and claws, male turkeys also have large "spurs" on the back of their legs that they use to defend themselves.

You're also liable to see much less common and elusive creatures on the railroad. Take, for instance, the events that occurred on a lonely, remote mountain side near Sinks, Kentucky, (Cincinnati, Ohio, to Corbin, Kentucky, line) one night over 40 years ago. Bob, who relayed this story, was on the caboose of a mixed freight train as a brakeman that night, along with Charlie, the conductor. They had crested the top of the hill and all was going well until they heard that loud *whoosh* of air beneath them that only means one thing; they were in emergency. Bob and Charlie exchanged glances that said, "Oh, great..." Sometimes the air on the train will immediately restore and the train can quickly get under way again, but in that case, it's usually because the engineer made a brake pipe reduction (applied the brake), but a car's brake valve malfunctions and releases all the air from the train (include what emergency is if first time). This phenomenon is often referred to as having a *dynamiter, shooter,* or a *kicker.* These can really make for a long trip, as they often put the train in emergency every time the brake is applied. Finding the 'bad' car is long methodical process, so most of the time an engineer just tries to only use dynamic braking. [Once in a blue moon the problem can be remedied by cracking the angle cock on the front of the engine open to let some air out, which keeps the train line from becoming fully-charged.] But this time, after the engineer reset the brake valve and "sent the air back," the air gauge on the caboose still read a big, fat "0." Charlie volunteered to start walking toward the head end of the train while the head brakeman got off the engine and started towards the rear.

Bob was giddy with this arrangement because, by rights, it was his job to walk the train, but Charlie decided he wanted some exercise. Not too long after Charlie started hoofing it, Bob decided to kick back on the toasty caboose and get a nap. He tilted his cap over his eyes and, just a couple minutes later, heard the ballast crunching under heavy footsteps outside. He thought to himself, *"Charlie sure found and fixed the problem fast?"* But then it occurred to him that he hadn't heard the air "hissing" under the car signifying the air being restored and the brakes releasing. He couldn't hear footsteps anymore – and not because whatever made them had walked away – because they had stopped right outside the caboose. *"Charlie's probably just taking a leak,"* he thought. A couple more minutes went by, then the footsteps started again, heading towards the rear of the caboose. *"Yep, here comes Charlie."* Only Charlie didn't walk in the door. "Charlie…that you?" Bob called nervously. Crickets – *literally,* and that was all he heard. He decided this had gone on long enough and it was time to go out and investigate. He cautiously opened the door a little and looked out. Not seeing or hearing anything, he crept out onto the platform, straining his eyes to see anything in the light cast by the lamp on the rear of the caboose. Nothing. He stood there for a few more seconds then turned to head back inside, thinking, *"I've got better things to do than stand around out here looking for something that ain't there….now, back to that nap!"* But as he turned something caught his eye that didn't look right. *Really* didn't look right. The light hanging on the

rear above the platform lit up a circle-shaped area reaching out to about 25 feet behind the train. He leaned out over the back railing on the platform, cupping his hands over his eyes to see better and, there, at the very outer reaches of the light, in between the rails, were two large feet covered in thick hair. But, except for their gigantic size, these feet looked almost *human*, attached to two legs that looked like tree trunks, equally covered in hair. Bob blinked his eyes in disbelief then looked again. By now his eyes had adjusted to the light and he could clearly see the silhouette of a large, thick-framed, human-*ish* figure standing there with an almost defiant posture, looking right at him. He knew this because although the light on the caboose was too dim to show any detail of this "thing" above its lower legs, it shimmered off its eyes. It then occurred to Bob that his eyes and this creature's eyes were pretty much level with each other. In a split second his next thought went something like this: *I see its feet on the ground…its eyes are level with mine…I'm 6 ft. tall…the platform of the cab is about 4 ft off the ground, so that's….**10 feet!*** And it was also all he needed to see. He rushed back inside the caboose, locked the door, and ran to the back door. He was *scared*, and as Vietnam veteran, he didn't scare easily.

He had never believed in Bigfoot, but he knew he had just locked eyes with one – there was nothing else it could have been. His thoughts then turned to the stories he'd heard about Bigfoot dragging people out of their tent while still in their sleeping bags. After two minutes, he had heard only his own breathing and racing heartbeat. He really wanted to believe that meant it was gone, but deep down he knew nothing that big could steal away into the darkness without making a sound. It was still out there. He pictured it still standing there, coldly calculating its next move, and felt the hair on the back of his neck stand up. Suddenly he heard the air hissing underneath him and practically jumped out of his skin. The caboose rolled a few inches and the couplers creaked when the brakes released. Charlie hollered on the radio and said he'd fixed the problem near the headend, was back on the engine, and they were pulling. Bob simply responded with "Ok," but inside he was thinking, "*Please get us outta here!"* The caboose lurched forward. "Finally," Bob muttered to himself, thankful that experience was over with. Around 30 seconds passed and although he hadn't moved from his spot at the rear of the cab, from the sound of the wheels rolling, his experience told him they were doing around 10 mph. The speed limit was 30 mph and, since they were headed down the mountain, it shouldn't take long to get there.

Bob wasn't sure what the noise was the first time he heard it, but he only had to wait a second to hear it again. Then he knew. The rhythmic crunch of ballast rock some distance behind the caboose grew louder and in quicker succession – the Bigfoot was chasing the train and gaining ground. In a panic, Bob yanked the radio mic out of its holder and yelled, *"PULL on this son of a #$%&!!"* The engineer responded with irritation, "*What's* the problem??" "It don't matter, just *GO*!" Bob shot back. The tone of his voice left no need for further questions. Almost immediately, the caboose jerked and picked up speed in response to the engineer's compliance. The footsteps had gotten close enough to hear the accompanying *thud* along with the *crunch* as its massive feet landed on crossties and rock with every step. But the increased noise from the faster speed quickly drowned out the sound. It could've been a false sense of security but, right or wrong, it gave Bob the courage to go to the door and try to get another look at it. "*When will I get another chance to see the most elusive and mysterious creature in the world??,"* he thought. He hoped the answer was *never*, but still, he had to make the most of *this* chance. He cracked open the door and was relieved to see the passing trees and not his new 'friend' patiently waiting on the platform for a tour of the caboose. He guessed the train was now doing every bit of the 30-mph speed limit. "*No way that thing can run 30,"* he thought.

In the initial encounter when they were stopped, the trees shielded what was a fairly bright moon that night. But now the rear end had rounded a curve, so the shadows and moonlight randomly splashed the track and its surroundings. Bob opened the door enough to see behind the caboose and didn't see anything out of the ordinary. At least, not at first. After looking straight back, his eyes wandered more to the side of the tracks. But he caught a fleeting movement directly behind the caboose, maybe 50 yards away. He trained his full attention back on the spot that was mostly in the shadows, but then a gray blur blew

through a sliver of moonlight. Ten seconds went by and it happened again, this time further back. *"He may not be able to keep up, but dang if he ain't trying!"* Bob thought. The caboose had just passed through a clear, moonlit expanse 100 feet long that the creature would soon have to traverse. "Ok, big boy…let's get a good look at you," Bob said under his breath as he leaned out over the rail. It was almost as if the beast had read his mind. As Bob peered intently and held his breath, the spectacle of this mystical giant sprinting into the moonlight like Usain Bolt didn't materialize. Instead, like a ship emerging out of a fogbank, in slow motion, its head – and *only* its head – one that likely no one else had ever seen, appeared out of the darkness. The moon glinted off its back left side for just a fleeting moment before it vanished back into the shadows, never to be seen again. But from then on, Bob never went over that hill without thinking about the events of that night, and even 40-some years later they're just as clear in his mind as if they happened yesterday.

A LOAD OF "BULL"

One day while we were zipping down the main, my conductor, Jason, casually said, "Hey, did you hear about that bull Chris and Robert hit at Cave City, Kentucky, the other day?" I had not heard, but was all ears, as this was a pretty rare occurrence, at least for these parts. So, he went on to relay the story as he had heard it:

As they went through Cave City at 60 MPH with their unit auto-rack train, they encountered a large bull – horns and all - standing between the rails. Naturally, Robert blew the horn. The bull threw his head back and stomped a couple times in defiance, but then turned and started running away from the train. He was still in the middle of the rails, though. Unfortunately, that's where he decided to stay, thus the inevitable eventually happened. But, when they hit the bull, it was in such a way that the bull was "launched" like a missile, still in an upright position. So, the bull was flying through the air about 10 feet off the ground and right in front of the windows of the Dash-8! But before ultimately meeting his untimely demise, when he had reached the apex of his flight path, the bull turned and looked back at Robert and Chris with this expression that clearly said, "Why did y'all hit me?"

When Jason said that, I *completely* lost it and laughed so hard, tears were streaming down my face! A couple of weeks later, I ran into Chris and ran up to him like a long-lost friend and said, "Chris!! Dude…you've gotta tell me the story about that bull you and Robert hit!" He kind of looked at me funny as if he had no idea what I was talking about, and then it clicked. "Oh yeah, I remember," he said in a matter-of-fact tone, "Yeah, that bull was just right there in the middle of the track and wouldn't get of the way, and we nailed him." "Wait, wait, *wait!"* I pleaded, "What about the part where it launched him up in front of the engine like a rocket and he turned back and looked at y'all?" That incredulous look returned to his face and he said, "What?? He didn't look back at us…we just knocked him off to the side into a field." I was incredibly disappointed to hear this, yet still thankful for the many, many laughs I had in recounting the story for those last two weeks and continue to have to this day, years later.

HAWG WILD

There was one engineer, Artie, who was quite the character – you never knew what he was going to do or say. He loved to let – or oftentimes, *make* – conductors run the train. Once he and I were on the other end of the road at the hotel and it was going to be at least 10 or 12 hours before we got called on a train home. It was a pretty day, so Artie, who had a car at the hotel, said, "Hey, let's go over to the Harley dealership and look around." So, we did, and it wasn't long at all after we got there that he fell head over heels in love with one particular bike. He sat on it then got up to walk around it at least ten times, all the while talking to the salesman who'd been hovering from the moment we walked in. Artie asked for a test drive and he gladly obliged, sensing he had a real "live one" on his hands. Artie had a huge smile on his face when he came back about 15 min later. The salesman surprisingly was nowhere to be seen. I said, "Well,

how was it?" "Matt," he said in a serious tone, pausing for effect, then, continued as he patted the seat, "I think I'm gonna buy it." I could tell he was just as serious as he could be, and I was surprised and confused, as this whole time I thought he was just messing around and window shopping. And besides, I had met his wife, Jo, at various functions and had also heard enough stories from Artie to know that she called most of the shots and would skin him alive for buying a new motorcycle without her say so. I thought about all of that for a couple of seconds, then said, "Are you serious??" "Yep, I am," he said in a matter-of-fact tone. "Well…what are you going to do? You and Jo going to drive back down here tomorrow after we get back?" I asked. "Nope. I've got it all figured out – I'm going to buy it today and…." "Wait-wait-wait," I interrupted, "how are you going to get it home?? We don't have any way to put a Harley on a train?!" Artie quickly shot back, "I've done thought of that. I was just about to say that, when we get called, I'll take the bike to work while you take the shuttle van. We'll get the paperwork and get on the train. Then, after we get everything squared away and they give us permission to leave, I'll take your radio (walkie talkie) and take off on the bike. *You* will run the train while I pace you on the interstate, then if you have trouble or go in emergency, I'll just come to the train. And before we go in the yard, I'll park the bike next to the track and you'll just stop and pick me up. Simple."

At this point I had a few thoughts: This was beyond crazy! If we were caught pulling a stunt like this – and there were any number of ways that could happen – we'd be all kinds of fired! This was before "everybody" had cellphones. So just imagine us going in emergency, me hollering at Artie on the radio to tell him, and a trainmaster or dispatcher hearing it. Or something happening and Artie unwittingly rumbling right on down the highway because he's out of radio range. If caught, there would be no explaining our actions away – not even the most far-fetched excuse imaginable would even begin to justify such a scenario. And not only would we be fired, but Artie's FRA engineer license would be suspended, possibly permanently. And what about a conductor with 1.5 years of experience having sole responsibility of a mile-long, 6,000-ton train with no *official* training or experience? Talk about ruffling some feathers… I had worked with Artie quite a bit and on many trips had run the train from one end to the other. So, I was kind of flattered that he was confident enough in me to even float such an idea. Despite all that could go wrong, and all the reasons *not* to do it, that part of me that loves a challenge and pushing the envelope *really* wanted to do it. I mean, we might just be able to pull this off…
So, before we left the dealership, we went over all the details, and Artie assured me that I had "the goods" to get the train over the road. And, true enough, I really felt like I had learned a lot. As predicted, by the time we got called it was totally dark. And we couldn't have asked for a better train. It ran as smooth as silk and we didn't even meet a train the whole night. However, there were a couple of times when I wasn't sure what the best train handling technique would be, but it just wasn't worth hollering at Artie for advice; if I was going to be a *real* engineer soon, I needed to figure things out myself. And besides, Artie was sleeping so soundly over on the conductor's side of the engine, I would've really hated to wake him up… What, you didn't think we *actually* did that, did you?! Oh, and if you're wondering, Artie decided against buying the bike.

BAIT AND SWITCH

One of my first trips on the Mainline (Louisville. Kentucky, to Nashville, Kentucky, where I still work) in 1997, I was training with a conductor with whom I would come to be great friends with, David. At that time, he had been with the railroad about 3 years; long enough to have a pretty decent handle on things. The engineer we were working with, Kenny, was a 25-year veteran and one of the best. I would eventually become good friends and work with him quite a bit as a conductor on a regular run. Later still, he became a Road Foreman of Engines (an Engineer supervisor) and was my boss for a period of a few years once I became an engineer. But, anyway, on this night, I was "green as a gourd" and barely knew which angle cock to turn when making a cut on a train. In fact, we had just finished setting off and picking up cars at Bowling Green and I had actually turned the one on the car we were *leaving* rather than on the rear car of the cut we were setting off, which of course put the train in emergency when I told

Kenny to pull ahead. David was watching all this next to me, but, since there was no harm to be done, he wisely let me learn this mistake the hard way. I say "wisely" because I never made the same mistake again.

By the time we finished our work and David and I got back on the engine, it was around 12:30 AM. Kenny started pulling and soon we were clipping along at close to 50 MPH before he began slowing down for the 30 MPH city ordinance through downtown Bowling Green. Meanwhile, David was showing me how to update the train list, which always has to be done whenever the train's consist is changed, mainly to keep track of where the HAZMAT cars are. All of a sudden – totally out of nowhere – Kenny just starts going off on this profanity-laced tirade. In essence, it was, "I'm so tired of this *$%#@ railroad! They're always making you stop for something! Pick up cars here…set off cars there….you can't ever get over the road!! I'm sick of it! I don't care what y'all do or what happens to this *#$% train, but I've had it! I'm going back on this second engine and taking a nap!" And with that, out the back door he went.

So, to set the stage: There is no one at helm, the train's still moving at probably 40 MPH, approaching road crossings and a 30 MPH city ordinance speed limit not even ½ mile away, and David and I are on our side of the engine, staring with wide-eyed bewilderment first at one another and then back at the vacant engineer's seat. We looked through the back window at the second engine, a GE CW40-8 "wide-body" as they are commonly called and, sure enough, the lights in the cab came on and there was Kenny moving the conductor's seat back into the "nap position" where you could then put your legs up on the desk and get pretty darn comfortable. Upon seeing this, David looked at me and flatly asked, "Dang, man…what are we gonna do? I've heard stories of Kenny getting mad and blowing a gasket out here, but I've never seen it – and I don't think he's coming back!" I couldn't believe what was happening. Visions of getting fired before I even got marked-up (qualified as a conductor) raced through my head, so the only answer I could manage was a very anxious and exasperated, "I have no idea?!" "Well," David said calmly and matter-of-fact, "I guess I need to get over there and at least blow the horn for these crossings so we don't hit anybody. I know the horn is that little button right there, but I ain't got a clue about what that other stuff does."

David got up and nervously sat in the engineer's seat, looking as lost as a freshman on the first day of high school, and started blowing the horn. I looked back at the second engine again and by now the lights were out, but I could see two socked feet up in the front window. My heart sank. I just knew we were all fired and these two yahoos didn't even seem to care! After kind of zoning out and wallowing in my own anxiety for what seemed like 10 minutes, but in actuality was probably more like one, I snapped back in the moment and reassessed the situation. I took a quick glance at the speedometer and it was pegged right on 30 MPH, just as it needed to be for the section of track we were on. David was still in the engineer's seat, blowing the horn and…*wait*…did he just notch-off on the throttle?? From across the cab, I watched him a little longer and, yep, there he did it again, notching off on that throttle. I thought, *"Is he just stabbing in the dark and hoping he's doing something right?" "Maybe he's some kind of natural-born prodigy at running a train??"* I looked at his face and the residual light from the lights on the downtown street revealed that the "lost" look on his face from just a couple minutes before had now been replaced with one that, if I didn't know better, looked almost like he was trying hard not to laugh? *"What the heck is going on here??"* I thought.

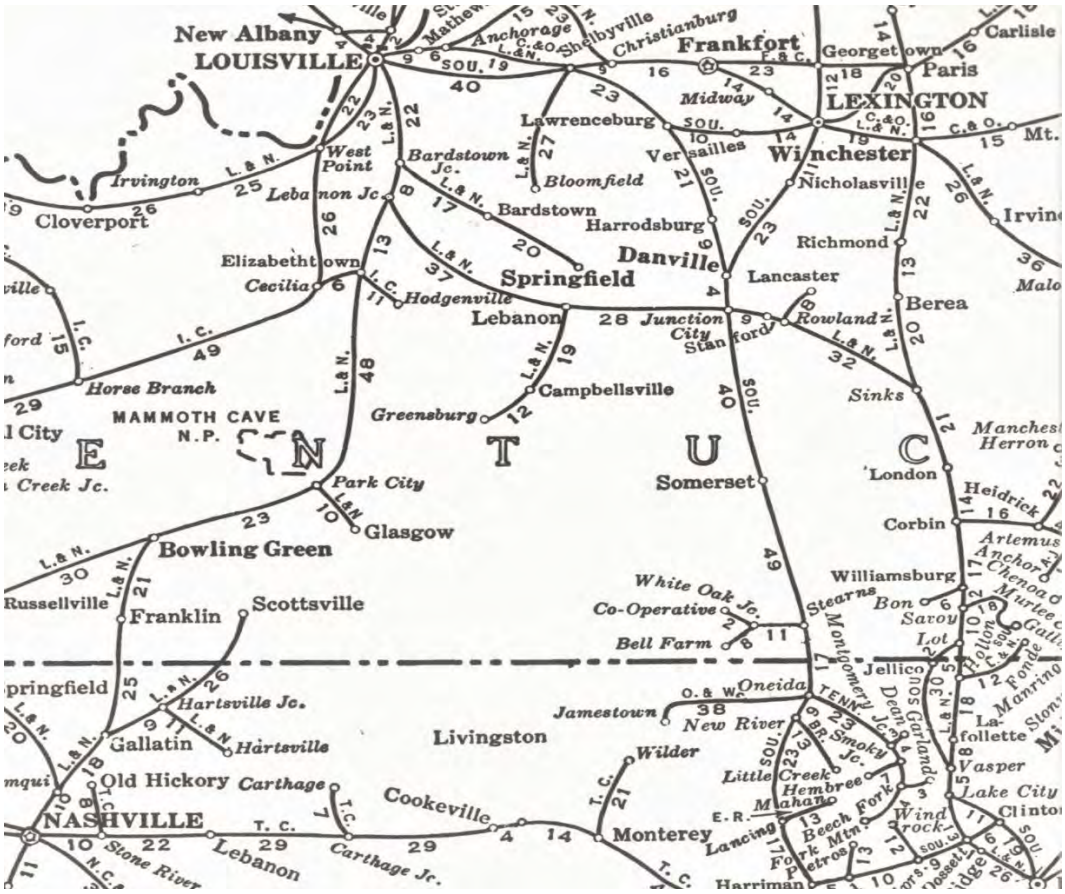
David had been looking straight ahead this whole time, but about that time, he stole a glance my way and caught sight of what I'm sure was one of the most puzzled expressions in history and he couldn't hold back any longer – he busted out laughing so hard he could barely catch his breath! Well…I knew I'd been had, I just didn't know *how*, exactly. After he finally stopped laughing enough to where he could talk, he casually lit a cigarette, (meanwhile he had run the train up to the 50 MPH maximum speed for the track we were now on, by the way) then explained that he was actually a "cut-back" engineer. This means that

he was a fully-trained and -qualified engineer, but his seniority did not currently allow him to work as an engineer, thus he was "cut-back" to conductor. *"Well, that certainly explains a lot,"* I thought. At this little revelation, I sank back in the chair, relieved that we weren't fired after all, and then laughed along with David. I had to admit, they had gotten me good. He told me how he and Kenny had premeditated the whole thing back at the hotel before we went to work. They both deserved an Academy Award for their respective acting jobs.

We ended up "dogging" (reaching our federally-mandated 12-hour work limit after which we cannot work) on the single main, thus we had "the whole world blocked," as railroaders love to say. In some situations, doing this cannot be helped, like if you have major engine trouble or a train separation. But this was no such instance and, as such, it was a *huge* no-no. But, when we still had a couple of hours left and it was obvious, we weren't going to make it all the way to Louisville, David 'buzzed-up' (called) the dispatcher on the radio to ask what siding he was going to put us in to tie the train down and he simply said, "Go as far as you can." So, that we did, and blocked the whole railroad in the process! This caused no small stir at the dispatching center. It also gave David and Kenny no small amount of amusement and satisfaction at causing such a ruckus simply by doing what we were told. This was 'their baby' (the company's fault). To resolve the mess, a southbound train had to cut their engines off, come couple to our train, and pull us into the next siding so that they could make their way on to Nashville.

By then it was about 8:00 AM and, as we sat waiting for our ride on into Louisville, word of our unseemly demise had reached Mike Chapman, the Road Foreman of Engines, and he pulled up beside our engines in his green Bronco. "Uh oh," David said to Kenny, feigning nervousness, "here comes Chapman." They both laughed. I had never met him before, so I sat a little straighter in my chair and waited to see what he would say to these two, as at this point, I was merely just along for the ride. Mike was a big, easy-going fellow who spoke with a slow drawl indicative of his West Virginia roots. He climbed up the steps in the nose of the engine and with kind of a half-smiling smirk on his face, took a long look first at Kenny, then at David, and finally said with mock irritation, "What the $#&@ are y'all doing dogging on the single main?" David explained he had tried to "hold the hand" of the dispatcher in telling him to put us in a siding, as there was no way we had time to make double track, but that he told him to just go as far as he could. "Huh…," Mike said as he nodded his head slightly in acknowledgment that this was totally on the dispatcher. "Well…," he drawled, then after a pregnant pause said, "Y'all wanna go over here to Ryan's and eat breakfast?"

Author's Note: The preceding are excerpts from an upcoming book with much more similar content about what it's like to work on the railroad and how things work on the railroad itself. I would greatly appreciate any feedback on the above and on topics you'd like to be covered in the book. This info. will be very helpful to me and also enable me to provide updates on the book. Thanks in advance!
Email: mattwalker1975@gmail.com



Map of the area in which the tales told by Matt Walker take place.

It has been a good day as Mike Walker prepares to go home. All the work was done as the customer wanted and the locomotive developed no defects.

. TEXAS LINE SURVIVORS

In 1882, the Commonwealth of Kentucky issued a charter to the Louisville, St. Louis & Texas Railroad (LSL&T) to build a railroad from Louisville, Kentucky, to a point somewhere in Texas. The LSL&T would, however, only construct 137 miles of track. This track ran from Strawberry, Kentucky, located five miles from downtown Louisville to Henderson, Kentucky. The LSL&T never reached the three locations that made up its corporate name. The LSL&T, as built, hugged the south shore of the Ohio River and connected with the Louisville & Nashville Railroad (L&N) and the Illinois Central Railroad (IC) at both ends of its line. The LSL&T's roundhouse and shops were located at Cloverport, Kentucky, the midpoint of the line.

In 1896, the LSL&T was reorganized as the Louisville, Henderson & St. Louis Railroad (LH&SL). The LH&SL would only reach one of the cities within its name, Henderson. In 1905, the L&N gained control of the LH&SL and operated it as a separate company until 1929 when it was merged into the L&N. At that time, the L&N closed the Cloverport locomotive service facility and Cloverport almost became a ghost town. In November 1958, L&N ceased passenger service over the Texas Line.

Under L&N ownership, the former LH&SL Line was listed on their timetable as "The Texas;" this title is used in 2014 by CSXT to describe the line. Amazingly, eight structures built by various railroads still survive along the line. At Irvington, Kentucky, the LH&SL Depot is now a museum and community center. Standing next to the depot is an abandoned coaling tower that has become the symbol of Irvington. At both Cloverport and Hawesville, Kentucky, their train depots are used as local history museums. At Owensboro, Kentucky, the coaling tower still stands within the CSXT Yard, and the Union Depot (L&N, IC, LH&SL) has been converted into an office building. At Henderson, there still stands, but not for much longer, the Union Passenger Station (L&N, IC, LH&SL) and the adjacent Express Baggage Office. The Henderson Union Station and the Express Baggage Office have stood abandoned for the past 30 years and now in 2014 their walls and roofs are crumbling. Over the years, a number of uses have been explored for these two buildings by the Henderson City Council, but all have failed to survive, the Senior Citizen Center being the last venue that was housed in the depot. The two buildings suffer from being located in an old industrial area located three miles from downtown. In addition to the above structures, cabooses are on display at Irvington, Cloverport, Hawesville, and Henderson.

This sign is located on the CSXT Doe Run Yard Office.

Above and below are photos of the Irvington Depot. The depot was built by the LH&SL circa 1922. In the above view, we are looking east from the street side toward the coaling tower. The view below is from trackside. The two-track mainline has been reduced to one track and the entire yard track has been taken up. An LP gas jobber still has a siding to the rear of the photographer.

This Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) caboose painted in L&N paint stands to the west of the Irvington Depot. The caboose serves as the hub of Irvington's Railroad Days Festival held annually in May.

CSXT 769 is westbound at the Irvington coaling tower. (Irvington Museum)

Above and below is the Irvington Coaling Tower located at mile post 48. This was the only coaling tower between Strawberry and Owensboro. Irvington is located at the top of the grade for both east and west running between Strawberry and Owensboro. In the photo below, the Irvington Depot can be seen through the arch formed by the coaling tower's legs.

The Cloverport Depot was built circa 1924 by the LH&SL and now houses the Cloverport City Museum. The above photo is from trackside looking west toward downtown Cloverport. The double track that previously ran in front of the depot has been reduced to single track and the yard track taken up. In the photo below, the depot is seen from the street.

Located next to the Cloverport Depot is another ex-C&O caboose painted in L&N markings.

This photo of the Hawesville Depot is thought to mark the opening of the "new" depot in 1902. The two LSL&T locomotives are both facing eastbound. One would suspect that a passenger train next to the depot is overtaking the local freight parked in the siding. President Harry S Truman spoke to a crowd here on September 30, 1948, during his whistle stop Presidential campaign.

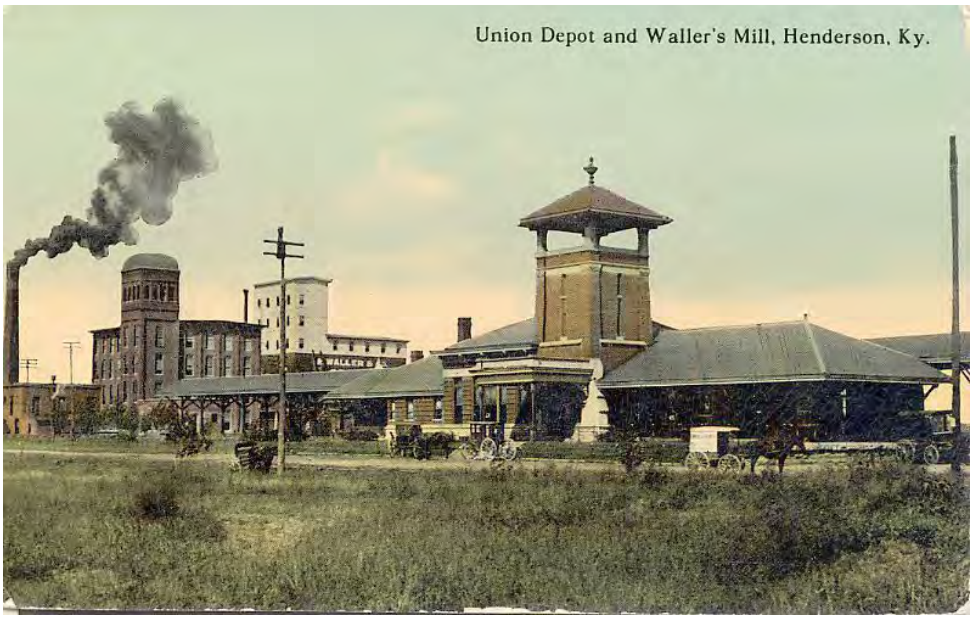
Above and below are views of the Hawesville Depot in service as the local museum. The above photo from the street looks east while the trackside view is toward the west.

Adjacent to the Hawesville Depot is this ex-C&O caboose painted in L&N markings. Note the track running through the floodwall in the upper right. When the Ohio River floods, the track here is taken up and steel beams inserted to close the opening.

This is a 1900 postcard view of the Owensboro Union Depot. Trains of the L&N, IC, and LSL&T all called here.

The Owensboro Union Depot, as seen from street side, was designed by John B. Hutchings and Henry F. Hawes and built by Walter Brashear during 1905-06. A streetcar line during the period 1890-1930 ran from the street in back of the photographer the one-mile distance from the depot to downtown Owensboro. The photo below is from trackside. Instead of three tracks that were once at the depot, only one remains. The IC abandoned its line to Owensboro in the 1970s and today only CSXT trains run past the depot. In the photo, one is looking east toward Louisville.

We are standing in CSXT's Owensboro Yard looking west. The coaling tower sits in between the legs of a wye. The tank car and covered hopper are tied down on the east leg of the wye. The coaling tower was last used circa 1960.



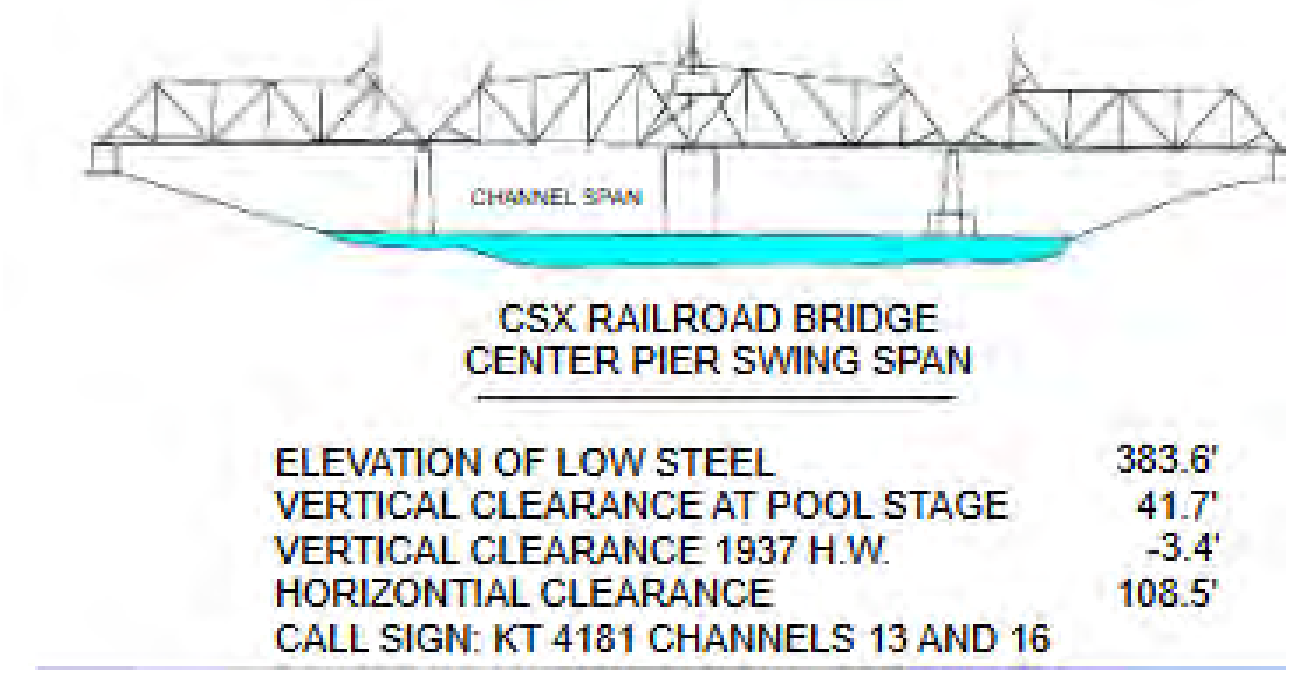
Above and below. Circa 1900 postcard views of Henderson's Union Depot. It is evident from the photo that the depot sits in an industrial area. It is unknown if the observation tower was ever open to the public. The L&N, IC, and LSL&T all approached the depot from the right. Just to the left, the L&N line swung south for Hopkinsville, Kentucky, a 72-mile journey, while the IC Line ran west to the coalfields of Union County, Kentucky, to take a roundabout journey of 120 miles to connect with the Tennessee Central Railroad at Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

While in the above photo the Depot appears to sit in a well-maintained grassy area, the photo below taken from trackside tells a different story. However, as can be seen, the rear photo of the Depot is surrounded by an orange “No Trespassing” fence and the Depot’s windows are all boarded up. What is not visible in the lower photo is that the Depot’s exterior walls have bowed outward a half inch. In the above photo, the view is to the west and the bottom to the east. The Express Baggage Office is seen at the far right in the bottom photo.

Above and below are views of the former grand enterance to the Depot. Note in the lower photo that the entry doors have been removed and the entrance bricked up.

Above and below are views of the Henderson Express Baggage Office. While its walls are in good shape, the roof and the wood floors are rotten, and it is only a matter of time until the roof collapses during a major snow storm.

This L&N caboose was obtained as a display by the city of Henderson to complement the Henderson Depot but was instead moved to the city's riverfront park near the CSXT, ex L&N, Ohio River Bridge between Henderson and Evansville.



U.S. Corps of Engineers drawing of ex L&N bridge over the Green River.

Above and below. The Spottsville Bridge over the Green River still stands but it is locked in the open position. All CSXT traffic on the Texas now originates and terminates at Louisville. (Everett Young)

EMDX 1610 AND EMDX 1602 VISIT RUSSELL, KENTUCKY

Henry Nobbe

In November 2021, EMDX 1610 and EMDX 1602, both ElectroMotive, Next Generation, SD70ACe-T4 locomotives, stopped at Russell on their way to Progress Rail's Raceland, Kentucky facility. These photos are presented here to help the modeler craft a replica locomotive for their layout.


ELECTRO-MOTIVE
EMDX
1610
1602


ELECTRO-MOTIVE
EMDX
1610
1610


1610
1610


1602
1602

Also visiting Russell was RNRX 3274

CSXTHS 2022 RAILFAN EVENT
EASTERN KENTUCKY
CV AND EK SUBDIVISIONS
SEPTEMBER 7-9

HAMPTON INN, HAZARD, KENTUCKY
70 MORTON BOULEVARD
HAZARD, KY 41701
606-439-0902

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 7 – CV SUB - HARLAN AND LYNCH
THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 8 – EK SUB – HAZARD AND KITE
FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 9 – EK SUB- RAILROAD DAYS RAVENNA

At Ravenna we will be a guest of Kentucky Steam Heritage, and we will get a tour of the work being done on restoring C&O 2716

IF INTERESTED IN ATTENDING EMAIL
csxthsociety@gmail.com
WITH NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS