

# Contents

Foreword, by Robert S. McGonigal.....	4
My first night as a roundhouse foreman, by E.L. O’Connell.....	6
Hell Gate + hurricane = locomotive test, by Forman H. Craton .....	9
Riding K4s 5399—to 94.7 mph! by Raymond P. Delano .....	12
“It’s gonna be one of those trips, Captain,” by William M. Moedinger.....	14
Making time on the Midlander, by Chuck LeFever.....	20
The Lady and the Pennsy, by Margot Fogg.....	25
Time to unload, by John A. Terhune .....	28
Second engine 28, by John R. Crosby.....	31
Do not procrastinate, by Harry Hall .....	40
Six trains at Winsted, by C. Raymond Besheres .....	42
A million miles plus in the uniform of George M., by William M. Moedinger .....	44
Iced and airless at Cascade Summit, by Steve Woodson.....	54
Delivering EMD’s locomotives, by W.A. Gardner .....	57
The mud hop—dark passageways, moonless nights, by W.M. Adams .....	68
“Fireboy, we don’t fit through that bridge,” by Lloyd Arkinstall .....	71
The indestructible locomotive—the E7 experience, by J.W. Hawthorne.....	74
A Georgia/Alabama sleigh ride, by James E. Satterfield .....	80
Maiden run as an M&StL brakeman, by Bob Lunoe .....	84
Running the Big Rebels, by Bill Smith .....	88
Wreckmaster’s moon, by Lloyd Arkinstall.....	91
Tales of EMDs, Alcos, F-Ms, and Baldwins on NYC, by Harold B. Crouch .....	94
Surprise! Tests held the operating end of the railroad together, by W.M. Adams .....	102
Remembering the Malleys, by Barry Anderson .....	106
Love those diesels! by A.M. Rung .....	110
The view from High View Tunnel, by Ron Britzke .....	114
How to be an assistant trainmaster, by W.M. Adams.....	117
Recollections of a professional tour conductor, by Jim Neubauer .....	126
As the Centurys passed slowly in the night, by Chandler H. Mason .....	132
Big tonnage, by Ed King .....	134
To wash, or not to wash—a UP gas-turbine, by Les Clark .....	141
From the Rockies to the Berkshires, by H.F. Cavanaugh.....	144
The Peru 173: A close encounter on the Wabash, by Ed King.....	148
Battling blizzards on the Big G, by Howard S. Patrick.....	150
Of dispatcher Rosey, a blizzard, and a dark signal, by Dan Sabin.....	156
Rookie brakeman on the Camp 20 graveyard extra, by J.W. Schultz.....	163
Of Rule 93, Form S-C, and bow-and-arrow country, by Edward J. Brunner .....	168
Alcos over Lineville: Big Centuries on SCL, by Ed King .....	177
R.I.P., DY—Culver Tower on the Rock Island, by Edward J. Brunner .....	180
Swapping power to keep cars moving, by Gordon Brandvold.....	186
Braking toward Bethlehem: Iron ore on Conrail, by Jonathan W. Reck.....	188

# “It’s gonna be one of those trips, Captain”

A Pullman conductor began his career by spending two weeks in a classroom. Now, two weeks in a classroom was by no means the complete answer to training a conductor, and no one knew this better than The Pullman Company.

Months of in-service experience were required before a man was adequately qualified. Consequently, the company regarded a conductor’s first six months on the payroll as probationary. During this period, which was an indispensable part of the training program, the company reserved the right to dismiss a conductor for any cause without the formality of a hearing.

Actually, dismissals were relatively rare. The company throughout its long history had observed that virtually every conductor hired had threatened at least once during the training period to turn in his punch and keys. Therefore, it was relatively easy for a superintendent simply to accept the resignation of any trainee whose progress in the direction of a full-fledged conductor left something to be desired. By the same token, superintendents needed considerable diplomacy and skill in the not-so-simple art of persuading promising young conductors who were bent on resigning that they should reconsider. If the Kansas City District superintendent of nearly 30 years ago hadn’t possessed those qualities, my career as a Pullman conductor (see page 44) would have ended before I had been on the road for two weeks.

From the beginning—even in the classroom—I found the work extremely attractive. I had some bad moments, of course, but they only served as challenges which tended to make the work even more interesting. Then came the inevitable bad trip. I was westbound on a military move between Fort Mitchell, Ala., and Fort Ord, Calif., when my tour of duty was suddenly terminated at Kansas City. There I was issued a trip pass on the Burlington and ordered to Denver for duty the following

day, where I was signed out on the Santa Fe’s *Centennial State*, which departed in mid-afternoon for Kansas City. The *Centennial*, normally a one-car Pullman operation manned by a porter-in-charge, that afternoon had in its consist three tourist sleepers in addition to the regular line car *Red Pheasant*. Although the brakeman who was assigned to work with me was fresh out of freight service and would have accepted a Chinese wash check as a ticket, our initial lift moved along smoothly, albeit slowly. My diagram for the regular car and my orders for the three tourist sleepers (which were to be boarded at Colorado Springs by military personnel from Camp Carson) indicated a comfortable load, with enough space left over to take care of a duplicate sale or two and to provide me with office space. The tourist cars were manned by relatively inexperienced porters, but my porter on the *Red Pheasant* was a good-natured, knowledgeable veteran whose long years of service and ample qualifications were manifested by gold service bars extending halfway to the elbow of his blue uniform sleeve. I was thoroughly confident that if I ran into any serious problem, my veteran porter’s vast experience and co-operative attitude would stand me in good stead. Santa Fe train No. 101 arrived in Colorado Springs precisely on the advertised that early spring afternoon with its Pullman conductor right on top of his job.

**After Colorado Springs** the story was altogether different. The trip became a grim tale of a steadily deteriorating situation that finally reached its climax four hours later as the *Centennial’s* marker lights disappeared into the chilly night just east of the little plains town of Lamar,

By William M. Moedinger  
Pullman Conductor

# 1939

From *Trains* magazine,  
February 1972

Colo. My tourist sleepers, with a combined maximum capacity of 120 soldiers (based on the military wartime standards of two men to each lower berth, one man to each upper, and occupancy of the three drawing room sofas), were boarded by 130 men with their duffel bags, nearly 30 more men than my orders indicated. I rationalized by consoling myself that the problem was the responsibility of the train commander. But I learned that he was in charge of only 69 of the men; the other 60 were traveling on individual orders. This would have presented no problem for an experienced conductor; he simply would have honored the individual TR’s (Government Transportation Requests) first. In this way every TR would have been honored for at least some space. A TR was nothing more than a blue piece of paper about the size of a dollar bill which entitled the bearer to berth space, if available, between two stipulated points. Most GI’s, however, believed that a TR was the equivalent of a ticket; if no space was available, the GI’s thought they were being deprived of a berth for which the government had already paid. In my ignorance, I first honored the blanket TR covering the train commander and the 69 men under him; the result was that I could honor only 34 of the individual TR’s. By doubling up in lowers, as Army regulations dictated at that time, only 10 men were left without sleeping space. Nevertheless, all 26 men believed that The Pullman Company had shortchanged them by not providing the individual berths their TR’s authorized.

Any wishful thoughts I entertained about accommodating the 10 men in the *Red Pheasant* were promptly dispelled when I commenced my lift there. Somewhere the Pullman reservation system had blown a fuse. To a plaintive glance in the direction of my veteran porter came the disquieting response, “It’s gonna be one of those trips, sure as you were born, Captain.” There were a couple of duplicate sales, which was just about par



Pullman conductor William Moedinger strikes a pose for a staged photo after his career had concluded. He learned quickly that some situations weren't covered in the classroom or training, and that some trips were certainly better than others. JON W. SIMPSON.

for the course in those busy days. At Colorado Springs, a ticket had been issued each for a lower in space normally held for Pueblo sale and for a lower marked "on Rocky Ford" on my diagram.

Also there had been the problem of two misdated tickets which I had honored leaving Denver, the solution to which entailed issuing refunds for the difference in price between a lower and an upper. At Pueblo someone boarded with a ticket for the space that had been released to Colorado Springs. Between Pueblo and Rocky Ford I discovered that I was short one porter on the tourist cars; the porter on another car said the missing man had gone into the Pueblo station for a snack, and the train had left without him. Somewhere along the line one of the tourist cars had lost its generator belt, so its lights, along with those in the car train-lined to it, were failing rapidly.

"On Rocky Ford" was a sample-case-laden drummer holding a ticket for the lower that had been boarded at Colorado Springs. At the very mention of a duplicate sale he waxed belligerent,

refused either an upper or a refund, and threatened to roust the other passenger who had already retired. Fortunately, the salesman's bark was worse than his bite, and he ultimately but reluctantly accepted an upper. He refused the refund and let it be known that he had powerful and influential friends in high places within The Pullman Company who, at his merest nod, would cheerfully accommodate him by having me fired on the spot. At this point the porter from the one remaining tourist car with lights informed me that the ladies' room of his car was flooded and that his car at the moment was out of water. The GIs in his car had piled their duffel bags on the washstands, and one of the supports had snapped under the weight, causing the whole fixture to collapse, breaking the cold-water pipe in the process.

The Pullman way of life had lost much of its glamour in those past three hours. One more encounter with an irate passenger or with a malfunctioning sleeper could very well have left me completely disenchanted with the business

of conducting. That encounter was just minutes away, waiting impatiently on the Lamar station platform for the *Centennial's* headlight to appear over the western horizon.

After we left La Junta I settled down in the *Red Pheasant's* smoking room, by then deserted, to catch up with the paperwork which had accumulated since Colorado Springs. One upper was due on at Lamar, but my porter offered to cover the stop for me. Except for two brief interruptions by the 10 berthless GIs, who had stepped into the smoking room to glare menacingly at me as though they were contemplating mayhem on my person in retribution for the shabby treatment they had received from The Pullman Company, no one entered. This was just as well, for I had discovered that the 34 individual TR's were for points east of Kansas City, which meant a transfer for each one had to be cut.

I heard the muffled clasp of brake shoes as the train slowed for Lamar, but I kept working. To properly endorse 35 TR's with all information the government required before it would pay the company



Conductors had a tremendous amount of paperwork to complete, not to mention dealing with unhappy passengers, equipment problems, train schedules, and seating issues. NORFOLK & WESTERN.

was a long, tedious task. My mountain of paperwork had melted considerably, but more of it still was ahead of me than was behind me, and the prospect of having to issue 34 transfers had not improved my disposition one iota. A Pullman transfer, incidentally, was more than a foot long and rather difficult for an inexperienced conductor to fill out and punch. If the transfer was not executed properly, it could be worthless to the bearer and a headache later to the issuing conductor.

Suddenly the curtains parted. A tall man stepped into the room and asked for the Pullman conductor. Even though I was surrounded by a vast assortment of tickets, TR's, Pullman forms, and sundry other tools of my calling and was wearing a cap with the words PULLMAN CONDUCTOR emblazoned across the front, he was certain that I was not the Pullman conductor of the *Centennial State*. The Pullman conductor was to be on the platform at all station stops without fail to render assistance to his passengers. Also, the Pullman conductor wore the regulation uniform, not a blue-patterned sports suit which happened to satisfy his sartorial whim at the moment. Before I had an opportunity to vent the venom which was

building up within me, he proffered a Pullman annual pass which identified him as one of the company's roving inspectors.

I admitted to being improperly attired because I did not yet own a uniform — wartime shortages, you know. I also admitted to not hitting the platform at Lamar, but I assured him it would not happen again. Yes, he had my solemn word that I would hit the platform at Syracuse, Kan., the next stop, because that was where I was getting off. Anyone as stupid as I had no business masquerading as a Pullman conductor. To make sure that he hadn't missed the point, I removed my cap and tossed it, along with my keys and punch, on the leather sofa beside him. From there on in he was to be the conductor.

When he finally regained his speech, he argued and pleaded for me to reconsider. I suggested that he save his breath, for after he endorsed those 35 TR's, completed his earnings diagrams, posted his call cards, restored the lights in the two dark tourist sleepers, and repaired the plumbing in the ladies' room of the third, he still had 34 transfers to issue for the GI's destined for points east of Kansas City. He threw his arms up in despair. He hadn't

worked as a conductor for years; what was he to do? I informed him just what he could do. While my precise words do not bear repetition here, the essence of my suggestion was that he ram four 80-ton sleepers up a particular area of his anatomy. Meanwhile, I proceeded to assemble my personal belongings in preparation for detraining at the next stop, which was just minutes away.

The curtain parted again, and my porter on the *Red Pheasant* beckoned me to follow him. We retired to the ladies' room at the far end of the car, out of hearing distance. He had overheard the whole exchange, and he didn't blame me one bit. But would I, as a favor to him, stay on to Kansas City? If I didn't, he would have to write out those transfers, because he knew the inspector wouldn't. I went forward and told the inspector that the porter had talked me out of getting off at Syracuse. A trace of humanity had crept into the inspector's personality, and he suggested that I retire—he would cover the next three stops for me. I asked the porter to call me at 4 a.m.; I wanted those GI's to get their transfers.

My entrance into the Kansas City District office on the following morning

was accompanied by an unusual attitude of friendliness and efforts to be of help by everyone I met. As I sat down at a table in the cashier's office, another inspector introduced himself and offered to help me finish my work. He insisted on taking me out for breakfast and wanted to hear all about my trip from Denver. When I finally returned to the office in midmorning, there was word that the superintendent wanted to see me. He was all apologies, and he commended me on my handling of the situations on the *Centennial State*.

Both the porter and the traveling inspector had stopped by that morning, and from what both had told him, he was proud to have me as a member of the Pullman family. All thoughts of quitting vanished from my mind. I could see I was a very important person. Fifteen minutes later when I emerged from his office with his promise of a very interesting assignment later that day, I realized I had done the right thing by not resigning. I was not merely a VIP; I was virtually indispensable. Pullman district superintendents earned their salaries.

**The assignment was interesting, too,** introducing me to three railroads new to my travel diary: Union Pacific, Alton, and Illinois Central. The IC portion included a segment of the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley between Memphis and New Orleans via Vicksburg and Baton Rouge, a quaint part of the world along the levees that seemed completely removed from the feverish wartime activity of the rest of the nation. At Baton Rouge my sleepers were coupled to the rear of an accommodation local with a 3 hour, 15 minute schedule for the 89 miles to New Orleans. This was not a fast carding overall but was one that required some pretty fancy throttle and brake artistry in order to arrive on the advertised after 15 intermediate stops. The trip was 89 miles of fast starts, lively sprints, and quick stops by a man on the righthand cushions who was an engineer in every sense of the word. No. 33, trailing seven heavy tourist sleepers in addition to its regular consist, arrived in New Orleans right on time.

That arrival at 5 p.m. in New Orleans marked the completion of my fifteenth day on the road. That night I drenched myself in the hospitality of the French Quarter and was able to sleep in a bed that wasn't on the move. The next afternoon I was signed out as second conductor on Louisville & Nashville's *Piedmont Limited*. Instead of going through to Philadelphia as second man, I was pulled off the train at

Atlanta, deadheaded to Sand Hill, Ga., and assigned to a military move bound from there to Camp Miles Standish, Mass.— Pullman conductors, like tires and gasoline, were in short supply. Deadheading back from Boston, I was nailed at Penn Station for duty as second conductor on the *Havana Special*. I finally arrived back in Philadelphia after having been on the road 24 days and traveling 10,599 miles. The Pullman way of life had much to recommend it.

**When I walked** into my home district office I was advised that I had been assigned to a regular parlor car run between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The conductor who had been on the run had resigned, and no one had submitted a bid for it, a circumstance which automatically awarded it to the youngest man on the district's conductor roster. I was that man. Before my first month on the road ended, I made one round trip on my new assignment. In that month I had logged 11,479 miles, every one an experience if not a joy.

The itinerary of my new assignment was westbound on the Pennsylvania's Philadelphia section of the *Metropolitan*. It carried two straight parlor cars, one of which was a Buffalo-bound car I swapped at Harrisburg for a Washington-Pittsburgh parlor. Eastbound my run was on the *Duquesne*, which carried one straight parlor and one 16-seat parlor-buffet-lounge. It operated on a 7-hour, 5-minute carding that was just 3 minutes longer than the *Broadway's* time between the cities. Despite the critical motive power shortage of that time, the *Duquesne* usually was doubleheaded as far as Altoona, for No. 74 was a fast stepper which made six more stops in its 349 miles than the *Broadway*. I had been very disappointed at being pulled off the extra board with its long and varied troop runs, but I soon learned to like my new run. Parlor car operations kept a conductor busy every minute, and the time passed only too quickly.

The run was lucrative too, particularly on the *Duquesne*, which left Pittsburgh at 2 p.m. and carried a heavy-tipping clientele—a \$10 tip for a seat was not unusual. Plenty of \$10 tips were waiting, but the problem for me was finding enough seats. However, few potential tippers were not accommodated after I learned how to read my diagrams and how to maneuver my cash customers accordingly. Coaches were so crowded that the first-class trade would sit anywhere just to

ensure that they had space in a parlor car. By exacting a promise from passengers that they would be willing to move around from time to time if I sold them a seat, I often could accommodate up to half a dozen more passengers than the two cars actually seated. This was possible by utilizing the space held by intermediate stations, such as Johnstown, Altoona, and Harrisburg, and by observing who had gone to the diner and when. The typical trip was like a giant game of checkers in which the seats were the squares and people were the checkers.

**The timing** of my new run ultimately led to a confrontation with my district superintendent. The company paid its employees twice a month, 15 days after the end of each pay period. Consequently, when I returned from my first 24 days on the road, I received the pay for my two weeks in the classroom. My regular assignment arrived in and departed from the old Broad Street Station, while the cashier's office was in 30th Street Station. This office was closed each day when I arrived back in Philadelphia, and my only opportunity to pick up my checks was before departure time in the morning. As a result, I simply neglected to attend to this little detail. I didn't need the checks; gratuities kept me living in fine style.

After nearly three months on the road, I was met by the Pullman platform man (the Pullman version of the railroad stationmaster), who handed me a small brown envelope containing a terse note signed by Superintendent W. A. Hartley. The note ordered me to report to Hartley's office on the following morning without fail. The platform man seemed reluctant to discuss the matter, but he hinted that it was likely not a socially oriented invitation to a meeting at which Mr. Hartley traditionally served tea and crumpets. W. A. Hartley was something of a legend in the world of Pullman, and I was one of the few conductors who had not been hired personally by him; I had been hired by his assistant. However, it was gospel around the district that an invitation to his office was never inspired by something of a picayune nature.

On the following morning, I was met by Hartley's assistant, who informed me that his boss was not in a good humor and that I should conduct myself accordingly. He proceeded to Mr. Hartley's door and announced me, and I heard the boss instruct him to send me in at once. We shook hands, and I took the proffered chair while he settled back in his chair to