As I was reading Don Totten’s story about Walter Kittler’s last trip in the previous newsletter, I really got to thinking about what a pleasure it was to work with him over his final few seasons at Alberta Prairie. It’s too bad that I did not have the opportunity to work with him as often, or get to know him as well, as some of our members have in his career at APST. Even so, in the few trips where he was my conductor back in 2009, and the times since where our paths have crossed, I found that he was not only good for a laugh, but also for a lot of lessons about railroading in general.

When I first met Walter he was well into his 80s, senior conductor at APST, and an old hand at just about every type of railroading imaginable. By contrast, I was 24, six months out of rules class and junior to Walter’s gloves. Luckily he was relaxed, easy-going and patient, which is a welcome thing for any young brakeman. I know that this can’t be as easy as Walter always made it look.

I remember that one of his favourite sayings after spotting a car up was that he would "waddle up for the cut", or, in other words, walk to the joint between that car and the train, close the angle cock, pull the pin, and cut the car off. “Waddle” wasn’t far off: he was in pretty good shape for his age, but his days of getting on and off cars moving at 15 mph were far behind him. Although this might seem like poking fun, I always think of the waddle when explaining to others about working as a three-man crew. Sometimes you have to do it, but the object should be to waddle as little as possible: too much, and you’re doing something wrong. I recall switching with Walter several times, where I would be throwing switches on the lead and he would be in the track with the cuts while we sent cars back and forth to one another. He only ever took a few steps each move, but somehow always ended up exactly where he needed to be.

Walter was a master at what I like to think of as finesse railroading, by which I mean that he never put himself in a position to do something that he didn’t
have to do. As a junior man, it is very easy to lose track of what’s going on, make cuts on the wrong cars, throw the wrong switches, and just generally end up doing (and occasionally redoing) a whole pile of unnecessary work. It was so interesting to watch Walter in the yard; casual, but certain and purposeful. We were putting the train away one day and we had to set a car out – Tracy, I think, -- which involved a small switch at the north end of Stettler. To set the scene, the track on the Alberta Prairie side (the old CN track) runs northeast, and then curves north-northeast just after the north switch to head towards the old CP diamond. About halfway through the curve there’s a crossing known as the “International Crossing” since it’s right by the farm equipment dealer. When the full train is together and pulled clear of the north switch, the engine is over the International Crossing by three cars or so. Walter wanted them to come ahead to set one car in the clear, and so, after I got the line-up, he just said “come ahead clear of the crossing, 41”. There was a moment of hesitation before the train began to move owing to the unusual movement instructions. Nonetheless, the engine crew did as it was told and shoved ahead the required distance and stopped clear of the crossing. “41 stopping,” we heard over the radio, to which Walter replied, “Three-step!” The train had come to rest with Tracy safely in the clear in the elevator track, and the cut right where he had been standing the whole time. Keeping track of what was going on at both ends of the train had allowed him to put himself in exactly the right place with complete ease. Give the move a little thought, get the engine crew to do the work, and waddle as little as possible!

I have a number of good memories of working with Walter, like discussing the Stettler switch on the station platform in Big Valley before we left, listening to old railroad yarns, getting the fire going in the caboose stove on rainy days, or the time he was coordinating the movements in the yard at Stettler from a shady seat at a picnic table in the adjacent park. It was also nice to know that he was confident enough in his brakemen’s abilities that he felt comfortable taking some extra time to chat with passengers or perform his polished recitation of “The Cremation of Sam McGee” while we looked after the train for a few minutes, making a flag stop at Warden or communicating with the head end approaching stations. However, I think the lasting image I have of Walter is him sitting cross-legged in a wooden chair in the caboose, coffee in hand with the back door open, just watching the miles roll by. I don’t have any doubt that every one of them was a mile well made. You were a good guy to work with, Walter: all the best in retirement.

Zac Brewer

Walter and crew after the last 6060 run of 2011
Spring 2012

6060 Work Party

There will be a training session and a work party in Stettler on June 23rd.
We will be going through training to prepare members to work on Alberta Prairie Railway property.
This will involve safety procedures, protective equipment and hazard awareness.
This will be followed by an inservice on running maintenance of 6060.

In the afternoon there will be some time spent at Warden going through RMRS equipment its history and tasks that will need to be addressed in the coming operating season.
If you wish to participate in the Work Party please contact Don Totten email: dontotten@shaw.ca or 403-617-6360.

6060 emerging from the builder in 1944. Photo supplied by David Thomas at www.steamalive.com

Donations

RMRS would like to thank the following people for their donations:
Touring CPR’s Ogden Shops

It is a simple grey steel door with a window in it; like thousands and thousands of other steel doors. But it opens, not only onto a cavernous building, but also onto a cavernous history – a century’s worth of history. Yet that history is now on life support as we pass through that door. In this building, the Canadian Pacific Railway's Ogden Locomotive Shop in Calgary, 1400 men at one time toiled on the construction, maintenance and repair of the iron horse. By the time of our visit only 28 still work there. Shortly none will still call this their workplace.

During 1911-1912, up to 1500 men at any time laboured to construct this massive building in only 11 ½ months, employing 4,570,000 pounds of steel to do so, and without having the heavy machinery available today. This great hall in its first half-century saw the full evolution of the steam locomotive from the 4-4-0 and 4-6-0 classes operating at the time of its opening, to the 4-6-2 Pacifics, the 2-8-2 Mikados, the 4-6-4 Hudsons and ultimately the mighty 2-10-4 Selkirks. In its second half-century it witnessed the full evolution of the diesel dynasty, going from the first generation F-units and GPs to the current 4400 horsepower computerized machines. Alco and Fairbanks-Morse diesels seen here eventually were sidelined when CP became almost a GM-only railroad. Then GE became the favoured child and has for some time now comprised virtually all of its new acquisitions.

One of the more interesting machines to be repaired here on several occasions was CP’s experimental 2-10-4 steam locomotive #8000. This machine was built in 1931 to test new technology which had as its aim a reduction in fuel used. It had three boiler systems: a closed circuit boiler that ran at 1350 p.s.i. (pounds per square inch), which provided heat to a high pressure boiler which ran at 850 p.s.i, and drove a single high pressure cylinder located centrally at the front of the locomotive, and a low-pressure boiler which ran at 250 p.s.i. and drove two conventional low-pressure cylinders. The machine demonstrated fuel savings of 15-25% depending on track conditions, but was very complex and costly to maintain. The design pushed the available technology of the time and was simply not reliable, as a result of which it was withdrawn from service in 1936 and scrapped in 1940 to provide steel for the war effort. Particular problems occurred with the high-pressure water pump whose seals available at the time could not endure the high temperatures and pressures involved. #8000 was assigned to run on the Mountain subdivision between Field and Revelstoke, B.C. On several occasions the locomotive was withdrawn from service and given extensive repairs at these Ogden Shops.
Twice during its lifetime the shop’s railroad work was interrupted when most of the locomotive maintenance equipment was removed from the building to make way for other machine tools used to produce artillery guns and their mounts for the Canadian forces fighting in two world wars. During the second war, 1,900 men worked on gun production and the total work force, including the essential railway work that continued, amounted to 2,500 men.

Thanks to the good graces of Superintendent Peter Chilasok and Production Manager Richard Taubert, some 25 members of the Rocky Mountain Rail Society, bedecked in hard hats and high visibility vests, have come to this building to view what remains of the fascinating work that occurred here. When we pass through that steel door we leave a mild day of February sunshine to enter into the soft tangerine glow of hundreds of sodium vapour lights hung far above us, bathed in the varying hum of an orchestra of machinery that is only a shadow of the noise that pervaded the building at its peak. There is a faint smell of machine oil and diesel fuel as we step farther into this industrial cavern. At 21,831 square meters, or 238,000 square feet, this locomotive maintenance shop was the largest building in Calgary for a good many years. It is 307 ft. wide and 771 ft. long, making its length exceed by 150 feet the height of the Calgary Tower. The shops were fed energy by 6 350 h.p. boilers in its separate power plant (later replaced by 4 even more impressive units), and by large generators and air compressors. It was by far the largest of the 10 major buildings on the site which were all linked by 43 kilometers of railway tracks, and it is still mighty impressive to see from the inside.

We are guided around by our amiable and knowledgeable C.P.R. host Arthur Wieckowski, who has worked at the shop since 1979. He explains what work was performed by men at each of the 19 work stations in the building. Much of that work has already come to an end here, transferred to CPR’s remaining large maintenance shops: in Winnipeg, Toronto, and also to a company shop in St. Paul, Minnesota. Some of Ogden’s work will be performed in future at the nearby Alyth diesel shop once expanded facilities for it are built there. Other locomotive rebuilding will be performed by the maker of its GE locomotives at that company’s own shops in Erie, Pennsylvania since locomotives have become so complex that their original builders are sometimes best suited to perform such work now. When the Ogden shop closes two months after our visit, the buildings themselves will go onto to the real estate market. CP does not intend to demolish the shops, but hopes that some other company will see great potential in the huge building with its 250 ton overhead crane travelling down its full length, and that it can thus be leased out to commence a new life housing a new industry.

In the meantime we glory in the chance to see what work remains here and fill our imaginations with visions of the shop in busier times, when its bays were at times fully filled with steam locomotives, and later with diesels, being lifted off their driving wheels by that huge yellow travelling crane overhead. Arthur leads us firstly through the blacksmith shop where all manner of iron work was performed by over 100 men using forges, huge ovens and three towering steam hammers that deafened the building with 115 decibel noise and shook its very foundation. CP has generously donated a number of these pieces of equipment to the Museum of Making located near Cochrane, Alberta.

Then we pass a GE AC4400 locomotive #9503 which suffered a fire in the Alyth yard some weeks previously. Many of us had heard of this incident and we now get to see the injured machine up close as it waits patiently for a “forensic” analysis to determine whether the onus of repair will fall on CP or the GE builders. In the remainder of the building we tour work stations at which springs were made, trucks overhauled, frames straightened, generators and armatures rebuilt, traction motors rebuilt, truck frames and engine blocks washed, air compressors and braking components renovated, and engines rebuilt. Along the way Arthur points out and explains many of the components of a diesel locomo-
Touring CPR’s Ogden Shops (cont.)

tive, which are now completely visible, removed as they are from the main locomotive chassis. We have the chance to get up close and very personal with self-steering trucks, generators, traction motors, engine blocks and more.

Along the way we learn some interesting trivia about the diesel locomotives moving through the shops. On GE locomotives the engine and generator are removed as a unit, while on EMD locomotives the engines are removed separately. On GE locomotives the alignment of the engine and generator is performed by measuring how much the crankshaft bends. On EMD engines workers measure the air gap between the generator and the engine frame to make the proper alignment. GE engines are started from the generator. EMD engines are started from a starter. If the EMD engine is older however, it was also started off the generator. The frames of hump yard locomotives can be bent by as much as 3” or more out of alignment due to the hard couplings they endure, and they must at times be brought back at the shops into the correct specs of only ¾ inch misalignment. Learning these facts will hopefully give us a leg up when the Railway edition of Trivial Pursuit hits the market!

We are lucky enough to be offered a tour of the cab of Electromotive Division (GM) SD90-MAC locomotive #9110, one of 16 such 4300 h.p. locomotives being kept in warm storage so that they can be rapidly put into service in case CP experienced another winter as severe as that of the preceding year. Later we tour the cab of GE AC4400 locomotive #9529. The latter is in the process of being upgraded to the latest version of Locotrol which will allow it to act more effectively as a remote locomotive inserted into long trains but controlled via radio by the engineer in the leading locomotive on the train. What would the men who worked on steam locomotives in the shops nearly a century ago think were they to hear of such modern technology? Some would surely have called it the work of the devil. But today our member Mark McNair, who performs locomotive maintenance for another company, simply revels in the chance to see such work in progress as he scans the new electronics with the headband light he wisely brought along.

We take much of Arthur’s time with our myriad questions and with our close scrutiny of all we see, but he seems to appreciate our keen interest in the work he and his colleagues have performed here. We take so much time of his time in fact that during our last cab tour the lights in the building are turned off, along with the major machinery, as the work day comes to an end, and we must make our way to the door in minimal illumination. The darkness and comparative silence is a sad foreboding of what awaits this fascinating facility in the months ahead.
Notes from the Board

After a winter of deep sleep it is time to get our lady ready for the new season. Our dedicated Mechanical Committee will be contacting members soon to sign-up for various jobs that need to be done prior to operation and during the operating season. The speeder will once again be operating at Big Valley and we will need crews to run on Canada Day and over the Railfan Weekend. There may be another event added at a later date so stay tuned. The speeder operation requires a minimum of four members to operate safely. This year we could use the operation of the speeder as more of a fund-raiser to help RMRS deal with the costs of operating and maintaining this popular piece of equipment. We will have donation boxes placed on the speeder cart to help encourage riders to donate.

We are looking forward to at least one work party at Warden to help with the preparation for the coming season. The Tool car will need to be cleaned up the equipment in our containers will need to be serviced and the caboose will need some work. In addition this will be an opportunity to check out the speeder and its equipment. This work party will be in mid-June. The announcement of the date will follow the May 8th Board of Directors meeting on the RMRS website.

Have a look at the upcoming dates for 6060’s operation at Stettler. We have a number of opportunities for fund-raising this year. We will be offering cab-rides that will be available to the public. These cab-rides will be made available at a cost that will be announced soon. The cab-ride will be for the return trip from Big Valley to Stettler. Stay tuned for details. Another fund-raising opportunity will be a fund-raising excursion trip that will be held in the fall. We will need volunteers for this one so stay tuned.

Alberta Prairie Railway have made generous offer for RMRS volunteers. If you have been a supporter of RMRS activities and might be interested in making a cab-ride in the steam locomotive 41 please stay tuned to the RMRS website for an announcement.

As members may be aware Bill Williams is serving his last term as President of the Rocky Mountain Rail Society. Bill became the President in 2001 and has served us faithfully for many years. He plans to continue in business in the Calgary community.

Please join the Board of Directors in wishing Bill and his wife Lil our best wishes for the future.

OK folks, we are in the clear to proceed let’s give-er-a-pull.

Rocky Mountain Rail Society 2012 - 6060 Operating Crew

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These operating assignments are subject to approval by the Rocky Mountain Rail Society and Alberta Prairie Railway. There may be additional operations and student training opportunities. This is a draft and is subject to change.

If there are any questions please contact Don Totten by email dontotten@shaw.ca or by phone 403-617-6360.
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Last run of the 2011 year for 6060