



## Official Newsletter of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society

P. O. Box 1361, Altoona, PA 16603-1361  
[www.trainweb.org/horseshoecurve-nrhs](http://www.trainweb.org/horseshoecurve-nrhs)

### Winter (January-February-March) 2013 Edition

#### DATES IN RAILROAD HISTORY AND MORE

February 1, 2013: 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of PRR-New York Central RR Merger (1968)  
February 15, 2013: 159<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Opening of Horseshoe Curve to rail traffic.  
February 18, 2013: 66<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Wreck of PRR's "Red Arrow" Detroit to NY  
March 10, 2013 Toy Train Swap Meet, Blair County Convention Center, Altoona  
April 1<sup>st</sup> – 37<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Founding of Conrail from N.E. Bankrupt Railroads  
June 1<sup>st</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, NS/CSX Split of Consolidated Rail Corporation

#### RESTORED TRUCK CONSIDERED RARE - A CONRAIL RETROSPECTIVE By Leonard E. Alwine



Photo D. Seidel

To date, the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS has restored three trucks associated with railroad heritage: (1) Altoona & Logan Valley Electric Railway service truck No. 18, a 1947 Walter SnowFighter; (2) a 1940 Chevrolet Railway Express Agency Truck (for Railroader's Memorial Museum); (3) 1993 Marplex, formerly Conrail (again, for Railroader's Memorial Museum).

Of the three trucks, all are rare today, often referred to as "survivors" of their class. The vehicles missed the scrappers torch and/or crushing machine, and were restored to serviceable use with dedication and hard work for the

history each represents in their place in the industrial story locally. There are not many Walters trucks of this vintage restored, but there were many built and a number have been saved. The Railway Express Agency truck again is a real survivor, brought back to life from junk-yard-status, as a result of countless hours of work; thousands were built but few survive.

But, the Marplex is another story. In 1992, a team of Conrail personnel and members of the Marplex design committee worked together to come up with a truck that would withstand the rough service life of rail yard repair services. The first such truck was built at Marplex Industries in Marquette, Michigan. Marplex builds custom trucks for airports and mining operations mostly.

The first truck was sent to the Conrail Yard at Selkirk (NY) terminal for testing. For 60 days it ran day and night and everyone who used it had to log the pros and cons about the vehicle. It was then shipped back to Marplex and all the recommendations for modifications were re-built into the truck. After it was returned to Conrail, 7 more were ordered in September 1993.

While I have no information on whether or not there were subsequent orders, Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS, nonetheless, restored one such truck which had been donated to Railroader's Memorial Museum, Altoona, PA, a project that lasted more than a year. The story about that restoration was reported previously in the Winter 2011 issue of The Coal Bucket.

Addendum: Leonard Alwine located an article on the Marplex vehicle in one of Conrail's company news magazines, which is re-printed below for your review. As a scanned document, the quality may not be perfect, but your editor felt it contributed significantly to this report. Of course, the material is that of Consolidated Rail Corporation as published in Volume 1, Issue 12, December 1993.

The Coal Bucket issue containing our original restoration story can be found on the Horseshoe Curve Chapter website: [www.trainweb.org/horseshoecurve-nrhs](http://www.trainweb.org/horseshoecurve-nrhs). The restored Marplex truck is located at Railroader's Memorial Museum, Altoona, PA (housed inside the old Memorial Hall shop area).



Marplex Restoration Team: Dave Seidel, Mark Yingling, Joe Harella, Joe DeFrancesco, Frank Givler, Dan Moriengiello. Absent from photo was Scott Houseman, Ron Givler, Neil Myers, and friend Jake Dolheimer. Apologies to those we may have missed on the list as there were many over the two year work period.

A restoration project of Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society – for – Railroader's Memorial Museum, Altoona, Pennsylvania.



# Mechanically Speaking

Volume 1  
Issue 12  
December 1993

**Safety Luncheon At Avon**

**Safety Incentive Program**

**Archive At Lewistown**

**The Boys And The Hoods**

**Marplex**

**Juniata's Department 360**

**Oak Island Car Shop**

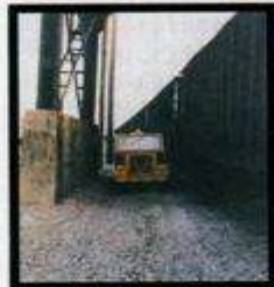




## The Quality Process at Work

The Continuous Quality Improvement Process promotes employee empowerment, involves people with knowledge of a problem and ideas of how to solve that problem using problem solving skills. It promotes the principles of working together in a win/win relationship. Yet we often hear the statement, "What's happening with the quality process? I don't see anything happening". Well, the process is alive and well. To prove it we would like to share the following quality success story with you.

The operating conditions on the railroad can often be harsh. This means the equipment used must be able to withstand use and sometimes abuse. A good example of this is the vehicles used by the yard repair crews. They required vehicles that must navigate close clearances and tight turns.



The vehicles must be capable of carrying all the necessary repair equipment over some terrain that is less than ideal, and they must operate twenty four hours a day seven days a week.



For years the vehicle used was a 1-ton pick-up truck, but because of their width, weight restrictions and constructions, they became badly dinged, dented and just plain wore out. Next small compact trucks were purchased for these jobs like the S-15 Sonoma and the Dodge Dakota. These models were compact and solved some of the clearance problems, but often their gross vehicle weight was too low to carry the loads required. Also their physical construction was too light resulting in excessive breakdowns. For Conrail this meant numerous work delays and costly repairs.

In 1992 a team was formed by Purchasing and various members of Fleet Operations. The purpose of the team was to identify a company who could develop a truck to fit the Mechanical Departments needs.

***A Sherman tank was recommended but some members of the group didn't think even that would hold up to the 24 hour a day, 7 days a week demand.***

At the same time members of the Albany Division were reviewing budget information and focusing their attention on high cost items. They didn't need to look far to realize that "vehicle repair cost" was a high priority item. Their discussions were typical and not surprising, "We don't have the right type vehicles, we keep them too long, we spend twice as much on repairs as the vehicle is worth, the abuse of the vehicles and the conditions of the roadways help destroy the vehicles". The consensus was that no one made a vehicle that would stand up to the demands of the job. Jokingly, a Sherman tank was recommended but some members of the group didn't think even that would hold up to the 24 hour a day, 7 days a week demand. When the two teams learned of each others efforts it was decided that each had information the other required and they should combine their efforts. A cross functional team was formed which included all appropriate parties. The team soon identified Marplex Industries as a possible builder of the type of vehicle required. Marplex builds custom trucks targeted for the airline and mining industries. Marplex was made up of a close knit group of craftsmen who took great pride in their work. Their aim was customer satisfaction. George D. Hagans, Marplex President and CEO, states it like this, "We have craftsmen here, and we're privileged to have all of them. I wish I could pay them all a million dollars but they know they'll reap the benefits as we grow." He was referring to

CONGRATULATIONS !!!  
to  
Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS 25-year Pin Recipients:

Duane Miller  
Joseph K. Harella  
Virginia Seidel

Pins will be presented at the February 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting



**Problem:** Seats are too stiff.  
**Solution:** Air seats are installed.

**Problem:** Rides too hard.  
**Solution:** Many axle changes and changing of tire size.

**Problem:** Not enough work lights.  
**Solution:** Work lights installed on both sides of vehicles for better working illumination.

**Problem:** Gear Shift too low on floor.  
**Solution:** Shift raised about 8 inches.

**Problem:** Oxygen and acetylene racks located on wrong side of vehicle.  
**Solution:** Relocated to other side of vehicle.

**Problem:** Welders too large obstructing rear view ability.



**Solution:** Smaller welder installed correcting concern.

The uniqueness of what was happening was not at first evident to all to see, but in time all concerned realized the situation. Conrail was working together first with its various departments, second within the respective departments all the "right" people were being involved (the actual workers who rode and operated the vehicles whose efficiency and quality of work performed was greatly affected by the type of vehicle they had to work with), and third with a supplier (Marplex) who was interested in what we were looking for and worked together with us to design a vehicle which will not only be the "right" vehicle, but the most "cost efficient" vehicle of the future for the Mechanical Department.

The costs benefits and analysis of this particular project are not included in this article but are assessable for reviewing at the Albany Division headquarters.

As of September, 1993, Conrail has just agreed to purchase 7 additional vehicles for placement around the system. I'm sure there will be further suggestions and recommendations made by our employees to enhance the efficiency of the Marplex truck. I'm also confident that Marplex and their workforce are patiently awaiting our comments, recommendations and our future

business. In our vision we refer to meeting or exceeding our customer's expectations. We also go on to say that we are committed to continuous quality improvement as a means of supplying superior service to our customers. Look no more, this is it....Marplex is a supplier who is attempting to meet or exceed our expectations. Our expectations are being developed by our internal customers (our employees). True customer satisfaction is internal and external.

The "Marplex Story" is a perfect example of Quality in action. It answers the question, "What's happening with the Quality Process"? It's alive and well, use it.

This story would not have been possible without the efforts and dedication of many people from both Conrail and Marplex. As a form of recognition of their efforts we would like to thank the following people for their help and input.

#### **From Conrail:**

Bob Clark, Asst Vice President of Quality Control  
Frank Fenice, Mgr. Field Operations  
Lou Frangella, Albany Division Vehicle Manager  
Gene Heiler, Supr. Automobiles  
Tom Koster, Local President of the TWU  
Dan Lowman, General Car Foreman - Selkirk  
Harry McCann, Car Foreman  
Mike Reddick, Terminal General Car Foreman - Buffalo  
Paul Rossi, Mgr. Flt. Operations  
Tom Somers, Terminal General Car Foreman - Selkirk  
Jerry Whatmough, Vice President Purchasing  
Ron Williams, Albany Division Mechanical Supt.

#### **Selkirk's Car Department Carmen:**

R. Farr  
V. Masala  
A. Mattice  
K. Olmstead  
J. Sawyer  
J. Therrien  
M. Waldenmaier  
R. Welsh

#### **Marplex Industries:**

Mike Collier, Sales Engineer  
George D. Hagans, President and CEO



### COURTESY ANNOUNCEMENTS

HARRISBURG CHAPTER NRHS is sponsoring the "Railroad Show & Collectors Market", March 16, 2013 from 9 AM to 3 PM at the I. W. Abele Union Hall (USWA) 200 Gibson St., Steelton, PA. A special presentation at 11 AM by Craig Sansonetti will feature the Maryland & Pennsylvania RR.

TRAIN & TOY SHOW February 16 & 17, 2013 sponsored by Western NY Railway Historical Society: Fairgrounds, Event Center & Expo Hall, Hamburg, NY 10 AM - 4 PM

## PUBLICATIONS WORTH YOUR REVIEW

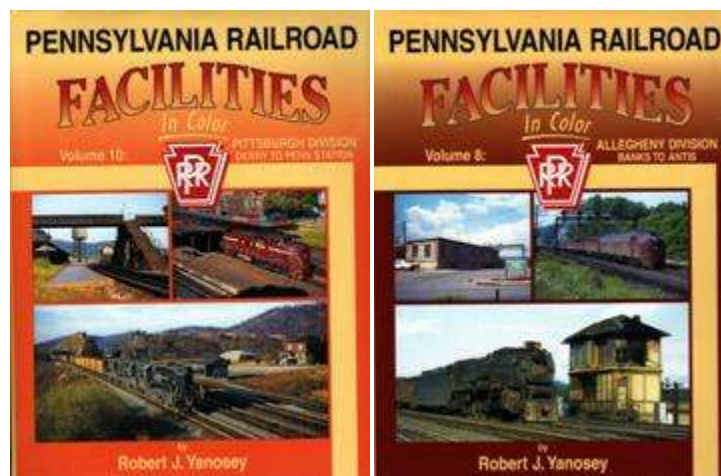
Coal Bucket columnist Leonard E. Alwine strongly recommends your consideration of TRAINS Magazine Special Collectors Issue about Norfolk Southern Railroad's Heritage Locomotives (Summer 2012). Although that issue has been out for several months, the event is significant, not likely to be repeated, and is worthy of inclusion in every rail fans library. As has been seen in other publications and on the internet, the grand photograph was that taken last summer on July 4, 2012 at the roundhouse of The North Carolina Transportation Museum, Spencer, NC. Of particular note, is the article about artist Andy Fletcher, whose artwork convinced Norfolk Southern to launch such an ambitious project. Andy, as it turned out, lived in Altoona for a short time. As most know, this project highlighted the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Norfolk Southern Corporation by heralding all railroads who are within the umbrella of this transportation company.

As mentioned in a prior issue of The Coal Bucket, we are certainly impressed with the paintwork accomplished by the respective Norfolk Southern paint shops, especially (of course) Altoona. As a result, other railroads have had some heritage units prepared as well.

In addition, the current issue (March 2013) TRAINS Magazine has an excellent article and photo-essay marking the CENTENNIAL of GRAND CENTRAL STATION, New York, NY. It is definitely a keeper and also recommended for any railfans library. Hurry before the issues are exhausted.

The same issue of TRAINS has an exceptional article and photo-essay by Kevin P. Keefe: "Inside America's NEWEST ROUNDHOUSE". Known as the Age of Steam roundhouse, which is located near Sugarcreek, OH, the article describes the home of NKP 2-8-4 No. 763 and Grand Trunk Western 4-8-4 No. 6325. What is remarkable is the detailed construction of this roundhouse, which follows the genuine architectural designs of most railroads in the steam age...yes, rolltop desks, tongue-and-groove lumber, window shades and wind-up pendulum clocks, black dial (rotary) telephones and typewriters. The result is breathtaking !

AND



Volumes 8 & 10 carries superior photographs and information on the Pennsylvania Railroad running from central to western PA. Remarkable images from color transparencies. Kudos to the many photographers for their documentation of operations and structures. Rare views in great detail.

## TOY TRAIN SWAP MEET ANNOUNCED

A "Toy Train Swap Meet" sometimes referred to as *Scalefest*, is planned for the Blair County Convention Center, One Convention Center Drive, Altoona, PA 16602, on Sunday, March 10, 2013 from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The event is sponsored by the ALTO MODEL TRAIN MUSEUM of the greater Altoona area and offers scale-model sizes such as O-gage, 0-27, S, HO, N and G-scale, as well as a wide variety of new and used accessories. Events such as this are popular with the model or seasonal railroad enthusiast or those wishing to add to their home layouts. The venue offers the opportunity to showcase the newest products from manufacturers such as Lionel, MTH-Rail King, Weaver, Williams, and others, as well as vintage stock offered to complete older collections.





Customer Mark Yingling peruses inventory of vendor Dick Mitchell.

This event benefits the ALTO MODEL TRAIN MUSEUM which is a registered educational and non-profit 501-C-3 organization. Alto Model Train Museum is located at the Antique Depot, Duncansville, PA, open every weekend. Events such as *Scalefest* helps the organization to provide education, interaction, and sustain this avocational interest for all age groups as well as preserve some of Altoona's significant railroad heritage.

There is a modest admission fee of \$5.00 (which includes a chance on a Lionel Train Set), but there are 800 free parking spaces at Blair County Convention Center, located at One Convention Center Drive, Altoona, PA, 16602 which is easily accessible from all major highways. For vendor table reservations or additional information, contact Mr. Ron Kennedy, 245 Richards Drive, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648 (814) 696-9671. Over 100 table spaces will be available and food service will be available on the premises. For additional information please go to [www.altoonatrains.com](http://www.altoonatrains.com). The next Toy Train Swap Meet is scheduled for October 2013.

Anyone having an interest in model railroading is also encouraged to stop and visit the operating layouts at the organizations location at the Antique Depot, 1401 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave, Duncansville, PA 16635, on any weekend.

#### CHAPTER EXCURSION PLANNED

As some members already know, there is a private car based out of Pittsburgh (at this time) with heritage from the former American Orient Express aka Grand Luxe. When that train entity entered bankruptcy, the equipment was sold, and one bedroom car was acquired by Dr. Kevin Moore, DDS, of Brookville, PA. Kevin has assisted on Railfest Trains in previous years acting as porter aboard the Kitchi Gammi Club (below).



Kevin has also been involved with the ownership of private railcars for some time, and acquired the former American Orient Express Pullman car “BERLIN”. The car still retains its ivory and royal blue AOEE lineage, replete with a refurbished interior of six bedrooms with mahogany paneling.

A trip is being planned aboard the car in mid-June, arranged by Dick Charlesworth covering three days. This will entail two travel days and a free day in NY City; accommodations will be at the Hotel Pennsylvania opposite Pennsylvania Station (walking distance). Trip costs are being calculated at this time. Space aboard the BERLIN is very limited so contact Dick Charlesworth at 695-1428 asap if you are potentially interested. Trains costs could be double that of Amtrak due to Amtrak costs and fees. There will be two nights hotel in NY plus meals and other entertainments of your choosing. Passengers may elect to stay in a group or see NY independently. We recommend a visit to Grand Center Terminal in it's Centennial year. In addition to excellent restaurants in Grand Central, you will also find a satellite of the New York City transportation museum not to mention the grand architecture in this “cathedral” of transportation.

#### PHOTOS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST

Photos by Dave Seidel Except where noted



Loram Rail Grinding train works in and Around Altoona  
January 25, 2013



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January 25, 2013



Norfolk Southern's venerable "F" units from the Business Train were in Juniata Shop during the month of January for running repairs. Specifics unknown.



Courtesy Photo

Norfolk Southern's venerable "F" units from the Business Train were in Juniata Shop during the month of January for running repairs. Specifics unknown.





Photo: Jim Sands

Norfolk Southern is also acquiring additional “F” units to provide more versatility with the business train (multiple train-sets in operation [Photos: RailPictures.net]).



Photo: Marc Malnekoff

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Photo: Steven Hamilton

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Norfolk Southern Class D9-40CW picked the “Wye” switch at South Fork PA on January 9<sup>th</sup> necessitating a crane lift by Saylor Crane of Altoona.



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SD-70M Heritage Unit No. 1071 / New Jersey Central Lines, at Juniata Shop Jan 28 2013

The unit honoring military veterans also had a shop visit earlier in January.

### CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

Mr. Mark Eyer, of Central Pennsylvania Chapter, NRHS (White Deer Station), has been appointed as the NRHS District 2 Director. The region served covers most of the State of Pennsylvania. He has offered to attend a meeting of Horseshoe Curve Chapter on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, and he will present a slide program for us at that time. Mark is also the newsletter editor for Central Pennsylvania Chapter. We wish him well in his duties and look forward to the April visit. Please mark your calendars.

Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS will be leasing their coaches for a private charter on the Everett Railroad, in the Claysburg area, tentatively scheduled for June 22<sup>nd</sup>. More information will be forthcoming.

As most of us know, electric lights on our chapter coaches depends on a generator under one of the car bodies. Age is necessitating some repairs and modifications to continue trouble-free operations. In the near future, the generator will be removed and sent to EMS (Electric Motor Service) Co. in Altoona for repair.

During 2013, brake system modifications will continue on two of the three coaches. One car was modified in 2012. These changes will eliminate the need for brake valve re-certification every 15 months which is costly.

January 2013 was a 5 Tuesday month. How many missed the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday Chapter Meeting ?

### CHAPTER OFFICERS

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Chapter meetings are always on the fourth Tuesday of each month at Railroader's Memorial Museum, 1300 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Altoona, PA, beginning at 7:30 PM EXCEPT DECEMBER unless announced otherwise.