

MR. KING WRITES RAILROAD ARTICLE

La Grande Engineer's Story Given Prominent Space in U. P. Magazine

A very interesting article written by Martin King, of La Grande, appears in the April issue of the Union Pacific magazine and is being read with enjoyment by railroaders and friends of the O. W. engineer and ex-senator of the Idaho legislature. A brief biography of Mr. King accompanies the story, both of which follow:

"Since I started working as an engineer for the Union Pacific system more than 40 years ago I have seen the locomotives grow from eight-wheel engines with 16x22 inch cylinders and weighing about 400 tons with tender. And I have seen the rails increase in weight from 52 pounds to the yard to 102 pounds, and a proportionate increase in the size of bridges and other structures.

"In the olden days when an engineer went on duty his first thought was given to rods and bearings to see that the brasses were properly keyed up and that all oil cups were properly filled with the right kind of oil; also that the headlight was in condition—lamp filled, wick trimmed and reflector polished. He would then make a general inspection of the engine. After seeing that the tank was filled with water, the engineer would move his engine from the roundhouse track out into the yard and couple onto the train, and was then ready to go as soon as the brakeman released the hand brakes.

"There were no alternates to be tested and tried out at that time, and trains usually consisted of 20 to 25 small freight cars. While the engineer did not have any block signals to watch and telegraph offices were few and far between, he had to be constantly on the alert and regulate the speed of his train. Also, the engineer had to keep a sharp outlook for stock on the track, as the right-of-way was unfenced, and conditions generally were such as required very careful attention of the engineer to his duties to get his train over the road with safety.

"Modern Duties
"Nowadays when the engineer goes on duty he has to see that the air pump is operating, start the

steam turbine for the electric generator, turn the switch to see that the headlight is burning, oil around and at the same time make a general inspection of the locomotive. After seeing if the tank is full of water and fuel, and the engine ready for service, the engine is moved out into the yard and coupled onto a train of 50 to 75 large cars. It is then necessary to see that the proper air pressure is pumped up on the train line and that tests are made to determine whether the air is operating on each car. Then the train is ready to proceed.

"While the engines nowadays are much larger they are equipped with many mechanical devices that reduce the manual labor in running the engine, such as mechanical stokers, hydrostatic and forced feed lubricators, feed water pumps, mechanically operated fire doors, etc. Modern locomotives also have a booster engine on the trailer wheels or on the tender, which can be cut at low speeds to increase the tractive power of the locomotive about ten per cent, thus assisting in starting trains or to prevent stalling on grades.

"With the small engines and short trains of the olden days, it would seem that the work of the engineer was less arduous than with the present day big engines and long trains but such is hardly the case. With the small engines all the work was done by 'main strength and awkwardness,' while by the numerous mechanical appliances on engines today practically all manual labor is eliminated; but the engineman must study and keep himself posted on the numerous devices applied to the modern locomotive and be thoroughly posted on transportation rules.

Careful Inspection
"Each day as I go over the road on my passenger run between La Grande and Huntington I realize more than ever how dependent the engineer is on the employees in practically every branch of the service in order to safely handle the train over the road and put it into the terminal on time. When I get on my engine at Huntington I know that since it came in on its previous trip it has been thoroughly inspected and any needed repairs to the engine have been made; that it is fully equipped with all necessary supplies, flagging equipment, etc., for the trip.

"When I move the engine onto the train I see the car inspectors place a blue flag on each end of the train and inspect it thoroughly to see if there are any defects on any car which would make it unsafe to run. They also give me

the signal to apply the brakes and then inspect the train to see that the brake is applied on each car; then they make the signal to release the brakes, after which they look the train over to see that the brakes release on each car. They know that all brakes are operative before removing the blue flags, and the train cannot be moved until the blue flags are taken down.

"While the car inspectors are at work the conductor has gone to the telegraph office where he has compared his time with the standard clock and got his orders and clearance card, giving authority to use the time-table schedule of our run. The conductor delivers a copy of the orders to me, waits until I read them and ascertain if I have a correct understanding of the orders; then he compares his time with mine to make sure our watches are together, and when all work on the train is completed and the blue flags are removed he gives me a 'high ball.' Then we are on our way. After leaving Huntington or any terminal, we apply the brakes on the train while running in order to know that the brakes have the necessary holding power to control the speed of the train.

"After we leave the station, during the day, every few miles, I see a section gang at work renewing ties, gauging, surfacing and lining the track, not only to make it safe but to make it ride smoothly. At night I see the track watchmen out with their red and white signals. I see the maintainers going over the road on motor cars, examining and testing block signals to keep them operating properly.

"Approaching various telegraph offices, I look for the post for the train order signal and, if it is in stop position, sound four short blasts on my steam whistle and then, when board goes to proceed position we know that operator is on duty and has no orders for us, and as train is passing by the station we see the operator standing on the platform or in the office watching the train as it pulls by to see that there is nothing wrong with the train in the way of dragging brake beams, etc., and the operator gives the rear brakeman a proceed signal if everything is all right, as he knows rear brakemen will be out on platform looking for a signal from him.

"We also know as soon as engine passes the telegraph office the operator will restore train order signal to stop position and immediately report to dispatcher that train has passed, so the dispatcher will know the location of train and be able to move inferior trains

against us to the best advantage. Confidence from Real Co-operation
"When we get to the top of 2.2 per cent grade at Encina, running air test is made, by making an application of the brakes, and after engine is satisfied the brakes are holding train as they should, he releases brakes and then looks back for proceed signal from flagman who is out on rear car. When I get this proceed signal I know that flagman is on the job and that the brakes are operating throughout the train, and I am sure of my ability to control the speed of train on the descending grade.

"All along and particularly coming into larger stations and yards like Baker, I see a number of switch lights burning brightly, indicating switches are properly set, and I know section foreman is attending to his duties in this respect. Leaving Baker, there are fourteen miles of tangent track where we have no hesitancy in increasing speed to the maximum permitted of 60 miles per hour, and as we go over the bridges with a rumble we are reminded that the supervisor of bridges and buildings has inspected same frequently and that any necessary repairs to keep them in first-class condition have been made by bridge gangs.

"Passing a siding we notice a freight train into clear and the members of crew are out at either end of train. They watch our train moving by and after our train has passed, if everything is 'O. K.' give proceed signal to the flagman who is out on the rear looking for same.

"In addition to his responsibility in connection with the safe operation of trains and economical operation of engine, the engineer has another important duty, and that is the smooth handling of trains.

How the Air Brakes Work
"When one considers that the application of brakes on the train is caused by operation of engineer's brake valve, so as to open a vent and reduce the train line pressure; and that as the train line pressure is reduced the brakes are applied on the engine, then on the first car, and on back to the rear of train; and that about one minute elapses from the time brakes apply on the first car until they apply on the rear car of a seventy-five car freight train, and that there is about a foot of slack for each car and train is about three-fourths of a mile long, it will be realized that it requires considerable knowledge of automatic airbrakes and also skill to be able to so apply brakes on the train as to avoid rough handling and damage.

"The engineer, the same as other employees, as he goes about his daily duties is guided by the book of rules, directing how certain things should be done, and in addition he has to have a current time-table which contains the schedules of classified trains showing the time at different side tracks and stations on the road, and the speed is distributed so engineer can maintain schedule and at the same time live up to speed restrictions required. In addition, in the time-table are certain special rules covering conditions on certain pieces of the track that cannot be taken care of in a general book of rules.

"The engineer on a superior train realizes the importance of keeping his train on time at all stations, as he knows the engineers on inferior trains are running against his time and will go as far as possible before getting into clear on siding, but must be into clear at time prescribed by the rules. As a superior train gets off its schedule it is necessary for the dispatcher to put out orders for it to meet other trains of the same class at stations other than scheduled meeting points in order to avoid delay to trains, and also to put out time to inferior trains so they will be able to go as far as possible against superior trains.

"When the engineer gets a train order signed by dispatcher's initials to run thirty minutes late, he knows that the order cannot be disregarded, but remains in effect until it is fulfilled, superseded or annulled. When the engineer of inferior train gets an order that superior train will run thirty minutes late, he knows that he can without any hesitancy use that much time before clearing main track for the superior train, all of which means that the engineers have confidence in the dispatcher.

Working Together
"The business of operating a railroad centers around the movement of trains, as that is the business of a railroad, and the duties of all classes of employees fit in to make the operation of trains safe and to see the engines, section men, signal maintainers, operators and trainmen alert and attending to their duties gives the engineer confidence and enables him to run his engine with the assurance that the road ahead is clear and safe. I am glad to be able to say that in all my experience in the engine service I have never had the misfortune to have anyone injured by an engine which I was running, either employee or passenger, and I realize more and more that this is due not so much to my own efforts as to the co-operation of all classes of employees whose duties have anything to do with the operation of trains.

"The relations between employees of the different departments are cordial, as all realize they are working for the same company and to the same end. As an instance, I am asked almost daily by section foremen, as I happen to see them, and am able to talk to them on my trips between La Grande and Huntington, to be sure and drop off a note if I see anything wrong with the track at any place as they can get after it and get it fixed quickly."

The biographical sketch of Mr. King follows:
"Mr. King was born in Clarksville, West Virginia, October 24, 1862. He started railroading at the age of 15 years as section laborer at Alexandria, Nebraska, on the St. Joseph & Denver railway, now the St. Joseph and Grand Island. Eighteen months later he

went to Denver and worked on the construction of the Alpine tunnel between Remon Vista and Gunnison, Colorado. He was employed after that on the old Denver & New Orleans, now the Colorado & Southern. Following this he was

employed eighteen months as boiler washer and machinist helper on the O. & L. at Shoshone, Idaho. In 1884 he became a fireman out of Pocatello and was promoted to engineer in 1887. He was engaged in mining operations in Idaho from

1894 until 1900. He was elected a member of the first state legislature of Idaho. In 1904 he went to La Grande, where he became an engineer for the O. W. and has since been continuously in the employ of this company."

Some people are hardly ever heard of till some day they come up with a request for an increase in salary. Moral support may be excellent, but it doesn't win elections.

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