

Profile This Week

CP Rail - Schreiber Division

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article was taken from the CP News letter. The article is written by Robert Stewart and photos are by Maurice Quinn, and is reprinted with permission of the CP Public Relations Department, Toronto.

The people who keep the wheels rolling over the Schreiber Division know the meaning of the phrase, "man against nature." In this rugged part of the country, that is what railroading is all about.

The division spans 513 miles (825 kilometres) of main line track across a wilderness of forest, rock and muskeg which was once declared an "impass-



Bud Andrews

able barrier" to railway construction. As nature would have it, it still becomes impassable for brief periods from time to time.

On May 10th this year, for instance, about 1,000 tons (987 metric tons) of rock crashed down at the mouth of the Mink tunnel. A week or so later, a blizzard on the Nemeegos subdivision blew trees and telegraph poles across the track and buried it in nine inches of snow.

"Everything happens on the Schreiber Division," says Chief Dispatcher John Kowalchuk. "Like a snow-storm in the middle of May. It jammed the power switches so that our dispatchers couldn't



B.H. Bongard

throw a switch, and it knocked out our data line so that we couldn't tell on our board where the trains were. But we communicated by voice and the train crews dug out the switches. All in a day's work around here."

Even without such unreasonable occurrences, the division is constantly vulnerable to the assaults of nature.

With 112 bridges and an average of 16 culverts per mile, the roadbed is like one long control

dam between the great watersheds of the north and Lakes Huron and Superior.

Spring run-offs pose a chronic threat of wash outs. In the summer, fierce thunderstorms may cause flash floods. When the weather is dry, every spark is a potential forest fire.

Autumn is perhaps the easiest season, but it hardly exists. "The ballast starts freezing at the end of September, and from then on, you can forget about major track work," says General Roadmaster Romeo Thibault. Winter sets in a month or so later. It usually lasts until mid-



Dispatching: The dispatching responsibilities on the eastside of the Schreiber Division are handled by George Lengyel, who also writes poetry in his spare time.

April at least.

The region north of Lake Superior has one of Canada's harshest climates. For many years, White River held the national record for the lowest recorded temperature - minus 72 fahrenheit (-22 Celsius). The mercury regularly sinks to 40 below; it hit 60 below two years ago and 55 below last winter. And it can stay very far below zero for five or six days at a stretch.

While taking its toll in frost-bitten flesh, the extreme cold also hampers operation. It occasionally cracks the rails, sending maintenance-of-way out to replace them at 40 to 50 below.

Little Relief

"And just try keeping air in a train in that kind of weather," says Peter Josefchak, Assistant Superintendent at Schreiber. "The hoses and gaskets contract, and you get leaks all over. A train that starts out of Toronto with 65 to 80 cars will lose so much air that it will leave White River as two or three trains of 30 to 35

cars each."

A mild spell does not necessarily spell relief. Chunks of melting ice and snow falling from the tops of rock cuts and tunnels smash the rock fences, automatically turning the signals to red until the blockage has been inspected and, if necessary, cleared.

Thawing and re-freezing builds up ice blocks in the culverts and weakens rail bolts and anchors. It causes the roadbed to heave, so that

it has to be shimmed to level it off. When spring finally comes, there is a rush to do all the work that can't be done in the cold weather. "We have approximately two months less time to get things in shape than on most other divisions," Assistant Divisional Engineer Jack Cline explains. "Five months instead of seven or even eight months elsewhere. And we have more work to do because of the wear and tear of the longer and colder winters. It takes more out of the roadbed, the track, the equipment - everything."

The nature of the line itself adds to the beating it suffers. As Romeo Thibault puts it, "this division is mostly curves." There are some 1,300 curves between the east-end of the division at Cartier and the west-end on the outskirts of Thunder Bay at Current River. "It's a problem," says Mr. Thibault. "We're always having to transpose curve-worn rack."

Peter Josefchak cites the big rockslide at the Mink Tunnel in May as an example of how railroading here differs from other parts of Canada.

"In most places you'd bring in bulldozers to clear the rock, but we were nowhere near a road, and anyway, bulldozers would be no good in that narrow space between the rock wall and the lake," he said.

"Some of those rocks were half the size of locomotives. So we dynamited them to break them up, and we called in two big backhoes to scoop up the rubble and dump it into the water."

Any track obstruction or road equipment breakdown on the division may affect CP



Making it fit: Section gangs under foremen Ken Michano and Robert Rasmussen struggle with pry bars to fit in a section of rail after a new culvert was installed on the division. Also assisting is Terrace Bay's own Dave Spear.



Going over the plans: From left, Assistant Superintendent Pete Josefchak, General Roadmaster Romeo Thibault and B&B Master Aime Rossignol review plans for the division's summer track work currently underway.

Rail's whole transcontinental system. Apart from a 40 mile (64 kilometre) spur line to the mining and logging centre of Manitowadge, the Schreiber Division is virtually all main line.

High-Priority Trains

This means that with the exception of three local trains, all the traffic that passes through is high-priority fast freight and passenger service.

"We're a kind of land bridge between Eastern and Western Canada,"

continued on page 6

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT



MARQUIS - Perry and Marta are pleased to announce the safe arrival of a new brother for Tyler.

JAMES ALEX

was born on August 23, 1983 weighing 8 lbs., 10 ozs.

Proud grandparents are Shirley and Alex Krystia, Schreiber and Phil and Iris Marquis, Rainy River.

The C.N.I.B. ONTARIO MEDICAL MOBILE

EYE CARE UNIT

will be in

TERRACE BAY

from

Sept. 19 to Sept. 23

Sponsored by

Terrace Bay & Schreiber Kinsmen

Complete eye examinations will be given by an ophthalmologist assisted by staff from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

If you are experiencing a visual problem and are not under the care of an eye specialist

Phone 825-3840

for an appointment

Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 12 noon

NOW IS THE TIME TO GET YOUR **Pilot's Licence**

BEFORE THE WINTER COMES!

TERRACE AVIATION INC.

is the first local, all year-round air service based in Terrace Bay Airport and fully licensed by the Dept. of Transport.

We offer:

FLIGHT TRAINING (private, commercial, night)
AIRCRAFT RENTALS
RECREATIONAL FLYING
AERIAL INSPECTION
PHOTOGRAPHY, ETC.

Private pilot ground school starting soon.

For information please call:

825-9485 or 825-9017 (after 5 p.m.)

