

BSRA Entertainment Report for March 7, 2015

LONG FORM (for historical record) Entertainment Report for March 7, 2015

March 7, 2015. The Bachelers' NRHS Convention Adventure, Part 1. Leonard Bachelder and his wife Nancy attended the 2013 NRHS convention in Alaska, turning this into a 6-week trip through Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon Territory, and Alaska.

Len started us off in Calgary, Alberta, showing us the C-Train Transit Mall. The C-Train began operating in 1981, and has been expanded several times since. The downtown Transit Mall consists of 7th Avenue with high-level platforms that are usually offset by a block on opposite sides for space reasons. The Transit Mall is entirely within the 7th Avenue Free Fare Zone, and is shared by both C-Train routes (the South and Northwest lines, forming route 201, and Northeast and West lines, forming route 202). As Len also showed us, Calgary Transit buses use the Transit Mall, but not the station platforms. Current rolling stock types are Siemens-Duewag U2 (#2001 - #2083, delivered from 1981 through 1984, and of which 80 of the original 83 remain in service), Siemens SD-160 Series 5 and 6 (#2201 - #2272, delivered from 2001 through 2006), and Siemens SD-160NG Series 8 (#2301 - #2338, delivered in 2007). Len showed us examples of all of these classes of cars. The C-Train also has car #2090 which was made from the remaining good sections of wrecked U2 cars #2019 and #2027, and experimental cars #2101 - #2102 (AC versions of the U2s, originally #3001 - #3002) which also served as demonstrators in Edmonton, but have been retained in revenue service in Calgary (not MU-compatible with the DC motored U2s, so inserted into the middle of SD-160 trains). Calgary has been growing rapidly (25% total population growth in the decade up to 2006, now exceeding 1 million), and the C-Train's ridership has been growing even faster (50% growth during the same period), making overcrowding a recurring problem in the recent past, although the most recent order of light rail vehicles sufficed to relieve the overcrowding up through the time of Len and Nancy's visit. To prevent overcrowding from developing again and enable retirement of some of the U2s, Siemens SD200 cars are on order. The most recent line extension was in 2012. C-Train cars currently run in trains of 3 cars, but the newer stations have been built and older stations are due to be upgraded to accommodate trains of 4 cars in the near future. Electric power for the C-Train is purchased from wind farms run by ENMAX Corporation. High moments of this part of the show were some quasi-aerial photos of C-Train lines taken from Calgary Tower.

Into the show section about modern transit in Calgary, Len inserted a section about Calgary's Heritage Park, starting with a 1989 replica of an old Calgary streetcar, constructed onsite by Heritage Park. Heritage Park consists of a mixture of replica and original late 1800s/early 1900s buildings which were moved to the park. Heritage Park has a half-size diesel replica of an 1898 sternwheel steamboat in tourist service; the original is on display in Kaslo, British Columbia. Heritage Park also runs the Parks Train, consisting of coaches from as far back as 1885, pulled by 1944 vintage 0-6-0 steam locomotive #2024. He also showed us a photo from 1967, using a 1905 vintage 0-6-0 locomotive that had been converted to diesel power.

In addition to showing us Heritage Park, Len also showed us some historical photos, of Calgary Transit electric trolleybus service in 1974 and 1967 on 7th Avenue, which serves as the Transit Mall today, but back then was not reserved for transit. He also showed us vintage heavy rail photos, featuring Canadian Pacific Rail service in Calgary Station in 1974 and Canadian Pacific Rail and Canadian National RDC trains operating in the same time and place.

From Calgary to Edmonton, Alberta, Len and Nancy took a Red Arrow bus. In Edmonton, he showed us Edmonton Light Rail Transit, which started operations in 1978, and also uses Siemens-Duewag U2s and SD-160s, although in smaller numbers (however, they can be found running in trains of anywhere from 2 to 5 cars, with 3 and 4 being the most common train lengths). Currently, only the Capital Line (Clareview to Century Park) is operating, but the Metro Line (Northern Alberta Institute of Technology to Health Sciences/Jubilee) has been completed and is due to open in early 2015. Future lines are planned (3 planned and 1 approved so far), the plans call for low floor cars instead of high platform/high floor cars like the current lines. Len also showed us Edmonton Transit Systems city buses, which are all low floor.

Interleaved with photos of Edmonton Light Rail, Len also showed us streetcars and parts of the routes of the Edmonton Radial Railway Society (ERRS). The ERRS has a High Level Bridge Streetcar route, which runs over the High-Level Bridge (which once had 2 streetcar tracks, long since removed, and 1 heavy rail track, which has now been made into the streetcar track); this route runs from the Strathcona Streetcar Barn and Museum and the former Canadian Pacific Railway Station to Jasper Plaza downtown. Separately from the High Level Bridge Streetcar route, the ERRS also has a Fort Edmonton Park streetcar line, which takes passengers between historic and replica buildings of the early 1900s. In addition to photos of the Historical Park, including several of historic buildings, the Strathcona Streetcar Barn and Museum and the High Level Bridge itself (with streetcars going over it), Len showed us photos of a subset of the streetcar collection: Edmonton Radial Railway car #1, built by the Ottawa Car Company in 1908; Toronto Transit Commission car #4612, built by Canadian Car & Foundry Company in 1951, and Edmonton Radial Railway car #42, built by St. Louis Car Company in 1912. In addition to the ERRS Fort Edmonton Park streetcar line, Fort Edmonton Park also has a steam train line, on which we got to see coaches (including two originally built for the Boston and Albany) hauled by a 2-6-2 steam locomotive built by Baldwin in 1919.

The next segment of the trip was a Sun Dog Tours bus, first going to the much smaller community of Jasper, Alberta (population 4,051 in 2011). We got to see a Canadian National steam locomotive built by Canadian Locomotive Company) on display in Jasper. We saw an interlude of Canadian National trains in Jasper in 1993. Back to 2013, we saw a photo of the train that Len and Nancy were about to board for the trip to Prince Rupert (see below), featuring a 1955 Budd observation/dome car in back, following a "Panorama" car built by Colorado Railcar in 2003. On the way to Prince Rupert, this train went through the towns of Dunster (which was even smaller), featuring a 1913 vintage train station moved away from the tracks for preservation; McBride Station; Prince George Station (a modern VIA Rail station); Smithers, featuring a photo from 1993; and the port of Prince Rupert, British Columbia. Reminiscent of common problems with Amtrak, VIA Rail travel was severely delayed by the large amount of freight traffic coming out of Prince Rupert over the single track line. In Prince Rupert, Len showed us local bus service, run by BC Transit, which operates nearly all of the bus transit outside of Vancouver; this included a view of the bus yard, showing 1999 vintage Scottish-built Dennis buses. At Prince Rupert, Len and Nancy got onto Alaska Marine Highway ferries (specifically, on the MV Taku) to go to various islands in the Alaskan Panhandle. The Alaska Marine Highway started as a private ferry line (Chilkoot Motorship Lines) in 1948 using a converted landing craft, was purchased by the territorial government 1951, and became a state ferry system in 1959, when Alaska became a state. Service was extended south to Seattle, Washington in 1967. The MV Taku and similar ferries are of size comparable to cruise ships and do offer staterooms for extra charge, but carry most passengers in coach-class cabins; they also carry automobiles; most Alaska Marine Highway ferries are of this design (for overnight service), but Len also showed us an Alaska Marine Highway fast catamaran, which does not have overnight accommodations. The MV Taku stopped at several Alaskan Panhandle islands of very large size but very small population. Among other settlements, we got to see Sitka, which was the capital of Alaska from Russian colonial times until 1906, when Juneau became the territorial capital; Juneau, which has a population of 32,167 but an area larger than the state of Delaware; and Skagway, where Len and Nancy got off. Skagway is on the Alaskan Panhandle mainland, and started as a gold rush town, but is now a tourist town. Len showed us the "Skagway Streetcar", which is actually a converted bus built by Mack in 1927, which then and now was used for giving tours of Skagway.

From Skagway, Len and Nancy headed inland on the 3 foot (914 mm) gauge railway of the White Pass & Yukon Route, constructed to meet the needs of the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897 and completed from Skagway to Whitehorse, Yukon in 1900. After the gold rush subsided, the railroad and its associated riverboats carried copper, silver, and lead, also with significant passenger service. The railroad had a spike in military traffic during World War II, under operation by the US Army, and then reverted to freight haulage with some passenger service until 1982, when a plunge in metal prices sent it into bankruptcy. With pressure from cruise ship operators, the railroad reopened as a heritage railway in 1988, providing tourist service from Skagway to Carcross, Yukon, using cars built all the way from 1881 (before the railroad itself) up to 2007 (replicas of heritage coaches, built by the Hamilton Manufacturing Company). Apart from some of the tracks in Whitehorse itself that have been torn up, track still exists from Carcross to Whitehorse, and the line could be reopened in the future, and restoration of this part of the line, including restoration of freight service, has been considered recently. Most motive power consists of General

Electric diesel locomotives from 1956, including some of streamlined appearance reminiscent of diesel streamliner trains of the 1930s (all originally 900 hp units, but upgraded through 2013 to have 1400 hp engines), but the railroad also has a Baldwin 2-8-2 steam locomotive in operation, a 2-8-0 steam locomotive, and an 1881 vintage Brooks 2-6-0 locomotive (bought by the White Pass and Yukon Route in 1898) that was damaged in a roundhouse fire but could be restored, and several White Pass & Yukon Route steam locomotives ended up in museums or theme parks elsewhere in the United States when the railroad dieselized in the 1950s. The railroad also has a steam rotary snowplow (usually pushed by diesel locomotives) that is still used occasionally for special railfan trips (it is not required for the regular tourist service, which only runs in the summer). Len showed us some spectacular mountain railway photos taken from the train, including photos of a following train and the no longer used but still standing original cantilever bridge for the railroad (replaced by a new alignment and bridge in 1969). The train had a lunch stop in Bennett, British Columbia, which has been mostly a ghost town since completion of the railroad, but retains some use for servicing the railroad; the only building not related to the railroad that is still standing is a church. After this, the train passed into the Yukon Territory, ending up in Carcross, which as noted above is currently the end of the line. Carcross has the remains of a historic steamboat on display, that was being restored in 1991 but then mostly burned up in a fire; it also has an 0-6-0 tank steam locomotive ("the Duchess") on display, which was converted to an 2-4-0 for much of its later service history by disconnecting the front drivers (although judging from appearance, this change was undone some time before it was put on display).

Len and Nancy had to travel from Carcross by road vehicle to Whitehorse (capital of the Yukon Territories), where we saw the Whitehorse Trolley, which is a 3' (914 mm) gauge heritage streetcar of 2 axles (originally from Lisbon, Portugal) powered by a generator car (no electric overhead is in place), running on remaining track of the White Pass & Yukon Route. Len also showed us Whitehorse transit Nova model LFS buses built in 2006 and 2008. Whitehorse also has the Yukon River for potential transportation, and although it is not used for non-tourist transportation today, we got to see a preserved steam riverboat originally used for transporting silver, and refitted in 1953 as a tourist boat. Len also showed us the Yukon Transportation Museum, featuring a mounted Canadian Pacific Airways DC-3 airplane and a miniature tank 0-6-0 steam locomotive. In Whitehorse, we also saw the SS Klondike, a steam riverboat formerly used for mixed freight and passenger service (more freight than passenger); the SS Klondike was refitted for tourist service in 1953, but has been almost completely restored back to its original appearance. From Whitehorse, Len and Nancy went by van to Dawson City, Yukon, which appears now much as it did in 1898, featuring unpaved roads and buildings from the 1800s, along with new buildings built in the style of the 1800s. Dawson City was a gold rush town and the capital of Yukon until 1952, when Whitehorse replaced it as capital. In Dawson City, we saw the steamboat SS Keno on display; this is a partially restored steam riverboat used mostly for freight service (including the transport of silver) until 1950. After going out of service, the SS Keno was donated to the Canadian government for historic restoration, and in 1959 made the last trip to date of a sternwheel steam riverboat under its own power down the Yukon River from its old home port in Whitehorse to its current home in Dawson City. We also saw a diesel sidewheel paddleboat in tourist service, which gave a narrated tour that earned Len's recommendation for visitors; and an on-demand ferry that provides service to West Dawson. Finally, Len showed us a photo from the Top of the World Highway crossing into Alaska, which is where Part 2 of this show will pick up on October 3, 2015.

SHORT FORM (for Annual Report) Entertainment Report for March 7, 2015

March 7, 2015. The Bachelers' NRHS Convention Adventure, Part 1. Leonard Bachelder and his wife Nancy attended the 2013 NRHS convention in Alaska, turning this into a 6-week trip through Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon Territory, and Alaska. In addition to incredible scenery, they sampled light rail systems in Calgary, Edmonton, and Seattle; VIA service to Prince Rupert; the Alaska Marine Highway; and the narrow-gauge White Pass and Yukon Railway. Along the way, we also got to see slides from earlier times.