

# **The Final Trip of the Big Rock Point Reactor Vessel**

**By**

**Mick Papp**

## **PREFACE**

Three, four, five weeks and even two months have been quoted for this historic journey from Gaylord, Northern Michigan to Barnwell, South Carolina.

What will it be?

Does anyone really know? Well let's see.

What follows is my personal diary of this trip.

I hope you enjoy and that you get some of the emotions, thrills, frustrations and hopefully not many, disappointments from this epic 21<sup>st</sup> century rail journey.

I thank my traveling colleagues for their humor and support throughout the trip and dedicate this wee journal to my family, friends and great colleagues at Big Rock, without them there would be nothing to write about.

This is a completely personal view of the journey and associated facets. None other than my personal opinions and views are expressed herein. No affiliations or corporate opinions are expressed directly or inferred. Copyright both text and photographic, Michael David Papp, 2003.

## Day 'Minus' 1 Monday, October 13<sup>th</sup> 2003 - Apprehension

Loading the FZ1, my Yamaha motorcycle, onto the ETMX1001 rail car (the special rail car loaded with the reactor), well done by the guys but still not a pretty sight when your pride and joy is hanging off the end of slings suspended 15 feet above terra firma. I tie the bike down with two strong straps, place some covers over the mirrors and muffler and return home.



**The FZ1, ETMX and the RVTS**

I packed my bike luggage and an extra bag and placed them in the garage ready for my lift in the morning – Dave Baldwin had the hired van and was scheduled to do the chauffer service for the first day. A farewell barbeque had been arranged with some friends followed by a visit to the Weathervane, our local haunt, for farewells and a meeting with my new boss - Jim Bolan.



**Jim Bolan, D&D Manager, BNFL Inc.**

The meeting with Jim was very interesting and an opportunity was presented and discussed for my future post reactor vessel disposal career. All good stuff but the detail of that and the outcome will be the subject of another story after the trip although I'm sure there will be some references to this throughout this journal.

Had a goodnight pint when I got in, discussed the offer with my wife, Wendy. Following a couple of hours discussion it was time for bed 01:10, yes a little late but there'll be plenty of time to rest once we get moving, believe me.

## **Day 1 Tuesday, October 14<sup>th</sup> 2003 – Too Late To Look Back Now!**

Up at 06:00 dark and drab, not the usual beautiful Charlevoix, onto the computer, emails reviewed with nothing of any great interest apart from PJ's new computer will be delivered Thursday this week. That's good as PJ, Cutting Edge, is leaving at the end of the week following the completion of his activities in preparing to remove the steam drum at Big Rock.

Had some breakfast and dead on 07:00 Dave arrives. With Bill Hoaglund onboard I loaded my luggage into the van, and some Guinness of course, went back upstairs to say bye to the family. As usual Mick Jr. wasn't too happy, Wendy certainly wasn't but Piri, 15 and all that, was too interested in getting herself beautiful before going to school. Any way, with that behind me I got into the van and off we went to Gaylord via Boyne City and Boyne Falls, a 50 mile trip with day breaking as we approach the rail siding.

At 07:40 got a call from Ray Wonnek, one of the ETMX1001 car operators from Mammoet "Where are you, I thought we were going to get on the train at 08:00?" "No problem" I retorted, "We're only 20 minutes from your hotel. See you soon"

Exactly 20 minutes later it is 08:00 and we arrive at the hotel. The rain has stopped and our three Mammoet friends, Ray Wonnek, Bill Heron (2<sup>nd</sup> operator) and Ron Scagnetti (rider) were there at the foyer. We loaded them up, loaded being the operative word, and headed to the rail siding. We decide that Dave will pick John Vorees, BNFL Inc. Licensing Manager, up after Dave's dropped Mammoet, Bill Hoaglund and myself off so that John has a chance of loading his luggage into the already crowded van.

Wow, we arrived and both the idler cars and the caboose were attached to the ETMX1001, the rail car loaded with the reactor, and my bike of course. The rail road guys (Lake State Railway Company, LSRC, who operate the rail road to Saginaw) advised that the engine and the Blue Ridge open platform business car were en route and should arrive around 09:00. This was great news a great start to the first day of this potentially very unusual and hopefully uneventful journey.



**Ken and the Blue Ridge Business Car**

As a matter of interest the Blue Ridge business car was built in 1914 for the Norfolk and Western Railway by American Car and Foundry. For you rail enthusiasts original number was 1010, now known as SDBB101, and can be viewed on <http://classicrail.com>.

After a lot of photographs and tours of the rail cars by both those who were traveling and those who were not, our luggage was loaded. Following safety guidance for traveling on the train and accompanied by 2 'high-rail' cars, one at the front and one at the back, at 09:40 we headed out. (High-rail cars are basically road going trucks with hydraulic operated rail wheels, front and rear, in this case modified Ford F150 trucks. These accompany shipments to identify any damage or problems)

Ken Bitten, the attendant and one of the owners of the Blue Ridge car, showed us around and advised that the Rolling Stones and Oliver North had both used the car, how cool. Coffee was prepared, very tasty and timely, Folgers, Ken advised later. Started to receive calls! Mike Lakel, CSXT transportation manager of the next rail line, advising that they were seeking to get two gondola cars ready to exchange with the LSRC idler cars. Once again nice to know preparations are still ongoing to make this trip as efficient as possible. John Bender, the Duratek project manager who will receive the shipment in Barnwell, South Carolina, called to see if we were on the way as did our BNFL Inc. staff at Big Rock. It was good to know that these people had the interest.

**The Blue Ridge Stones I (Ron, Bill and Mick)**



**The Blue Ridge Stones II (John, Bill and Tim)**



We travel between 1 and 5 mph along side of the beautiful Otsego Lake south of Gaylord, a lake I've ridden past numerous times on my motorcycle, and I ring home. Everything is good, the kids are at school and we're moving, "Speak to you later" I get the laptop out, the chargers, my DVD's and CD's, it's a long journey you know, cell phone on charge and the first set of pictures downloaded for prosperity.

As we travel spectators are along the road side running parallel to the rail lines continue to take photographs and wave at us, another cup of coffee is poured, thanks Ken. We pass Heart Lake.

The discussion in the rail car moves right into the design and licensing of the container, what are the accident conditions the container can withstand, what are the probabilities, what are the consequences if the container cracks, can it crack, etc. etc. John, Tim Petrosky, Bill, Ken and I chat and advise and all conclude that people would be a lot happier if they listened to what the actual facts were and not the myths generated by those that really should know better, probably they do and it's a good earner. The discussion moves to the alternatives – when are new nuclear plants being built. Our escort van appears frequently, Dave at the wheel, patiently driving within our vicinity. We continue the journey Ken provides another lovely cup of coffee and the discussion moves onto Pebble Bed reactors - it's now 11:45.

We've stopped, 12:20, LSRC are working on the rail ahead, it's a good time to get lunch. The Mammoet men join us for a coffee and a sandwich. I put U2 on in the background; Tim asks "Why if you had band members called Bono and The Edge, would you call yourself plain and simple Larry?" Why indeed?

Its 12:40 we've started rolling again and it is Frederic, approximately 2/3 rd of the way to Grayling, our proposed first overnight stop, yes I did say overnight stop! I'm advised I will be the only person from the project sleeping in the Blue Ridge and that no rail personnel will remain. Oh dear, on my own, in a remote rail siding, "Night of the Living Dead" is mentioned, Tim says "It was nice knowing you", John suggests I write about my perceived experience now just in case the unthinkable happens, "You can always delete it if nothing happens" Thanks guys can't wait to see you tomorrow morning! Of course I was never going to be on my own, Ken was living on the car also, thanks Ken.

We arrive in Grayling at 14:00 and cross three road crossings without incident but lots of interest. The rail yard approaches and it passes – we're going further. Tim gets a call from the Detroit Free Press and then the Las Vegas Sun – hope we'll see the sun soon too. Nothing difficult, just how many wheels has the car got and what happens if the container falls the 30 feet that it is analyzed for? Tim answered all queries following our discussions this morning on such matters.

We arrive at Beaver Creek, the night stop at 15:07, approximately 4 miles south of Grayling on 4 Mile Road. John and Tim leave the train prior to going to the rail yard as this is the closest the van can get. We intend to meet later for dinner.

The guys leave at 15:30 and Ken explains to Bill and I how to lock the doors at either end of the car and what to do if we lock ourselves out – oh dear, lets hope that doesn't happen. Ken continues by telling us that he only got two hours sleep last night – two hours, I thought I had it bad. Apparently on the way to the rail siding last night, the very one we are staying at tonight, had some rail cars with hazardous materials onboard so he could not do any final car preparations he had planned to do until the car was parked. That occurred and he finally got his head down at 05:30. Exactly ½ hour later the LSRC guys arrived, rang the bell and Ken was up again. They hooked up and commenced the journey to Gaylord; Ken grabbed an hour and a half of well deserved sleep! I rang home, got an update on everyone's day and wished Piri, my daughter, luck for her basketball match at Boyne City this evening.

At 21:15 Dave, Ron and Bill return to relieve us so that we could go for dinner. A quick pop into the local Super 8 to see John and pass him a document I needed to get faxed back to Big Rock for the morning and we goes to Patti's Bar, can you believe a bar that we frequent every New Year to celebrate the turn of the year, so as normal Bill H, Ken and I had a famous Patti's Bloody Mary and a big steak each. During the dinner, Steve Raupp rings, the Sargent and Lundy project manager for the design and licensing of the shipping container, asking us if we had started and wishing us well for the next stage of the journey. My daughter Piri calls at 22:45, she won her basketball match, great, that's 9 wins and only 1 loss, I'm proud. And that was Day 1.



**Happy Faces – Preparing to Leave the Gaylord Siding**

## **Day 2 Wednesday, October 15<sup>th</sup> 2003 – Onwards and Downwards (South)**

Start the day at 06:45 to the voices of the ‘hotel’ rested individuals and the comment in the Detroit Press that the shipment was a mobile “X-Ray machine that could not be switched off”. The night was quite pleasant although the air compressor kicking in and out was somewhat disturbing but I’m sure after a week or two the compressor will be a sleeping aid. After washing and taking a vitamin tablet I call my boss to give him an update and ask if the fax John sent on my behalf last night was received. Yes, all is okay.

Ron says he was hoping to get 80 miles today, Wow, this could be good, just need to confirm with the engineer. So once all the checks are completed and sun rise commences we will start – Day 2 in earnest. Ken then appears at 07:10 with the most welcomed cup of coffee I’d seen in a long time.

Tim starts to write his log and questions about how long the train is in total. An easy question you would have thought to answer but no. “The idle cars are 70’ long”, “No they are 82” long” and on it a goes, you know what it is like with ‘boys and toys’. Any way, I then give Tim the background about our negotiations about the ETMX1001 rail car. It was once owned by Transalta at the time we started negotiations and was known then as CAPX1001. Transalta sold it under our noses to Mammoet so we had to start negotiating from scratch. I continue to tell Tim that Mammoet were actually the people who raised the ill fated Russian nuclear submarine the Kursk – a good link and fodder for the Press I thought, 07:55 and we move – this is definitely starting to be a great day!

Tim and I talked about employment and pensions and the fact that we were both potentially going to go through significant employment changes by the end of the year, Tim because of ending his position at Big Rock and myself because of the desire to stay in the States and my secondment ending in March 2004. Big situations and big decisions to be made but the focus, for the moment, is getting the ‘can’ to South Carolina.

08:45 and we’ve sped up, maybe 10 mph instead of 5, it’s an interesting feeling, good to be going faster but that thought in the back of your head that has no basis, maybe this is too fast? What’s it going to feel like when we are 25 mph? But that’s for another day.

The sky is blue with very minimal clouds, a pleasant morning, cold but clear, a complete contrast to yesterday. Hope this is going to be the weather for the rest of the trip, I doubt it but here’s to hope. My return trip on the motorcycle keeps springing into the forefront of my mind, “How cold is it going to be? Will I see snow?” and the answer to both of these questions is unavoidably “Yes” and “Yes”. Was it a good move to bring the bike? Yes I’m sure it is but time will tell.

I’ve got Mike Oldfield playing in the background, ‘Tres Lumas’ is relaxing me greatly. Oldfield is mainly remembered for ‘Tubular Bells’ and the fact it was used for the William Friedkin movie ‘The Exorcist’ in the early seventies. I’ve been a fan of Oldfield since ’74 when I was 13 and heard his second album ‘Hergest Ridge’. I was just taken to another World and continue to be by everything he creates. Even at the age of 42



(Oldfield is only 5 years older than me) thirty two albums and four concerts I have the pleasure of attending, later Oldfield does things to my mind that nothing or no one else ever has and maybe ever will. We arrive at Roscommon at 09:30 to a lot of happy people, just see the picture below. Where's next? Well it's St Helens, not the famous rugby league club but it might as well be.



**The road crew at Roscommon**



**Negotiating a bend at Hudson Creek**

We continue to travel at 10 mph, it feels normal now. “Weber’s’ Law states that’s the smallest increment that a human can physically detect is a 15% difference” offers John. 5 mph to 10 mph is a 100% difference. This explains my feelings earlier, thanks Weber and thanks John.

Bill Hoaglund, who’s driving the van today, forgot to take his wallet off the train so at Geels Road, 68 miles from Bay City. Tim delicately tosses the wallet into Bills cupped hands. It’s a success not a penny lost!

At St Helen an elderly lady shouts to me “Have a great trip” as I survey the wonderful scenery and those always beautiful fall colors. Its things like that that makes this type of work worthwhile. How can you be bored and frustrated when you get people, who probably know very little about the industry apart from the ‘bad press’ that tends to get produced and don’t know you from Adam wish you well. Typical of my experience of the great American people but, nonetheless, alien to a visiting Brit.

Eleven o’clock approaches and we could make West Branch by noon! Lunch is starting to appear in my thoughts.

Noon arrives and we stop at West Branch for lunch, we’ve made it! Two rather nice young ladies wanted to see inside the Blue Ridge because they were told that the Rolling Stones had been onboard and Mick was still on. I was outside taking pictures so I was collected and hustled to the ladies, “Told you we had Mick onboard and that he was British” So I spoke and of course confirmed the British bit. A few photos were taken. We finished our sandwiches, refilled with 150 gallons of fresh water and off we went.



**Me at the lunch break and ‘load check’**

**Tim at the lunch break at West Branch**



It is 12:45 and we were really talking deeply. Ron tells us that he had a grandson who unfortunately passed away at 5 weeks due to a rare heredity based deficiency. John then states that he had a third son, who was his first born, who passed away when he was 10, oh my God, due again to an heredity problem. How lucky I am, you just never know. We quickly moved onto another subject. Real food for thought - Bay City is our destination for today. Ken arrives with a fresh carafe of coffee.

13:15 and it starts to bucket it down just as we pass a rail enthusiast who has video and a pretty expensive looking stills camera. Ron states that if you go onto the American Association of Railroads (AAR) web site by entering the car number you'll get all the information about the car. Ken immediately states "Not quite, I didn't finish entering all the information about the Blue Ridge before I left on this trip". That's how 'real time' reference data is these days, phenomenal. The rain stops and we see the enthusiast again.

Tim continues to cuss about the fact that none of us have the rail route because we all have it in our emails and none of us can get on line. Ron hears and says, "I can tell you" "What, you've got in your head?" Tim asks surprisingly, "Yes" states Ron. Tim hurriedly opens up a new document on his laptop and Ron starts to speak forth. Tim is happy.

We discuss the route and identify that we have not sent a courtesy notification letter to the State of Indiana. I quickly get onto the phone and call John Bender, Duratek and request that he send a letter to Indiana urgently. It will be done this afternoon. We don't anticipate getting to Indiana till Saturday, at the earliest, so we meet our self imposed '72 hour' notification window.



**John poses on the ETMX1001 at West Branch**

We progress along at a steady rate and the discussion moves onto vacations, Canadian to US dollars, what Ron got for his Canadian dollar in 1876, sorry Ron, 1985. Golf, oh dear yes, golf. John, Ken and I dip out of this conversation, we're not golfers and go out onto the platform and take in the rejuvenated sun and get some fresh air. It's getting a bit chilly outside so we're back in and yes, yet another cup of coffee, its 14:20.



**We encounter our first real left hander**

At 15:30 the route we are going to take comes up again! Virginia comes into the conversation, "Why are we going into Virginia?" the question is asked. We don't know it was just mentioned, lets wait till we stop and get the clearance paperwork from the locomotive engineer and stop second guessing is the agreed way forward. Crystal balls will be provided on the next trip – believe me. We pass mile marker 22, 4 more miles to go! The three high-rail cars escorting us from the rear must be sensing we're getting close, they're bunching together, almost time to relax.



**The 3 high-railers!**

Four o'clock approaches and were almost there. Nonetheless, Tim continues to receive a number of calls from the media, both press and TV stations, but all is very positive. The discussion moves onto maybe letting the local TV station know where we are first thing in the morning to allow pictures to be taken. The initial call is placed and the offer is made.

We arrive at the rail yard in Pinconning, the self proclaimed cheese capital of Michigan 17 miles north of Bay City, at 15:53. Our rail escort vehicles pull off the tracks and we seek sanctuary. Another portion of the trip completed.



**Tim and the Guys leave us for another night**

As Tim, John and our Mammoet friends leave for the evening at 16:15; Dave takes his turn to stay with Ken and me for another night in the Blue Ridge. We're staged next to a small group of houses just a few yards away from us through some trees. Wonder what interest we might draw, if any, from the inhabitants. We'll see what the night brings.

Ring Pat at 16:30 and gave him an update of today's activities, all seems well at the Rock so nothing to report here. Call Wendy directly after to be advised that Piri missed school today because she was sick, nothing bad I'm glad to hear, and that Mick Jr. had a good day at school and was currently swimming.

Apparently Piri has got a Math project to do and no one at home can figure it out so guess what. Another call later this evening to get the problem dictated to me over the phone. Wonder what my goodnight activity will be this evening – High School algebra, it could be worse. Dave and I carry out an inspection of the rail car and found all to be okay.

We have some visitors, the first a young lad who happened to walk past and saw the Blue Ridge and had never been on a train before, so, as good neighbors we let him have a tour of the car. He was over the moon, a new life experience; he didn't give a hoot about the shipment.

Ten minutes later a guy, lady, and a small girl appeared. As I approached, guess who, it was one of the LSRC guys who escort us. "How are you doing, nice to see you". Their daughter wanted to see the Blue Ridge, yes that's right, the Blue Ridge! Who said shipping nuclear waste was an issue? If you know, I'll take suggestions on a postcard.

Tim arrived at 19:30 with the van so it was get the towels we're off to the motel for a shower. Dave, Ken and I arrived at the motel at 19:45 and we went straight into the shower, not the same shower of course – it's only been 2 days! I came out of Bill's shower and Dave was still in Ron's so I go to the van and get four cans of Guinness, one for Ken, Ron, and Bill and myself of course.

We finished our drinks and went to 'Norms Bar and Grill', recommended by the guys earlier. Great recommendation, three good steaks, a couple of drinks, \$44 – the company is going to be proud of me. The only thing missing was the Guinness but you can't complain.

Back to the rail car for 21:50, relieved Tim and phoned home. Got Piri's math problem ready for tomorrow so will focus on that first thing but it's quite straight forward, something to do with license plates and the arrangement of the letters and the numbers. Not much later I call it quits.



**My palatial boudoirs, note ON suite!**

### **Day 3 Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup> 2003 – The Bay City Roller!**

To any British readers over the age of 25, the title for today will be obvious, knowing that we are traveling through the Michigan city of Bay City. For those Brits under 25 and probably any American readers' one of the biggest pop bands in the early to mid seventies in the UK were the Bay City Rollers from Edinburgh in Scotland (Both my children were born in Edinburgh). They were called a number of names when they first formed but were never satisfied and felt it would be good to be named after an American city. So they put a map of the States up on one of their bedroom walls, blindfolded their lead singer, Les McKeon and told him to stab the map with a pin. You can guess the rest!

The gang arrives at 07:10. The 'Unswitchable Mobile X-Ray Machine' appears in the press once again, looks like this is going to be our 'nom de plume' for the rest of the trip. I can think of worse things. Tim advises that the Detroit News' article yesterday was positive and that 'nuclear experts' had stated that the shipment did not present a hazard.

We are hoping to get to Saginaw today but we have to switch power and idle cars out at Bay City so we anticipate losing up to 2 hours completing this. The benefit though is that we can then travel at 'warp speed' - 25 mph!

John assists me with my morning inspection which is satisfactorily completed at 07:40. There was frost on my bike, my poor bike that normally lives in a nice heated garage! Then I remember some of the weather conditions that I've ridden through.

Tim gets his safety shoes on as he is going to ride in the locomotive to Bay City. It could be my turn for the next stage! Dave leaves the train to take up his van driving duties. Bill comments that he will be driving tomorrow potentially through Toledo, "You better not stop there!" he states, understandable when you see what the negative press, e.g. Toledo Blade, has been saying about the 'Mobile X-Ray' machine. We start our 3<sup>rd</sup> leg of the journey at 08:00. Incredible; this must be 'rail road atomic clock' coming into play.

Mike Lakel CSXT transportation manager at Saginaw calls me. He advises me of his plans for the exchange of the power and idle cars. He states that we will get a welcomed full briefing at his yard to ensure we all know what is going to happen and that we fully understand the safety requirements. He questions the acceptability of changing the direction of travel of the container because he needs to place the Blue Ridge and the caboose at the opposite end of the train. I advised that this was not an issue because the container is designed to travel in either direction. Its 08:30, I'm going to get some breakfast following the completion of my round of 'compulsory' calls.

Discussion at the breakfast table ranges from sugar beet to depleted uranium, how broad can a discussion over the breakfast table get?



**John and Bill enjoy their fresh and healthy breakfast**

As we travel slowly past the southern Michigan plains, our speed has diminished to about 5 mph. Oh it seems so slow now, Weber strikes again! The sun is beating down until you go outside and phew, it's cold. Bill sheds another tear as we pass yet another golf course – so close but yet so far!



**Crossing the Creek at Linwood**



We cross a road near to Linwood and there's a couple in their mid to late sixties who strangely ignore the shipment and take a picture of the LSRC man driving his high-rail standing outside the cab with no hands on the steering wheel. The picture took, they cuddle each other and walk back to their car arm in arm – isn't love a beautiful thing.

The time is 10:00 and we arrive at a rail yard. Stop and crawl is now the order of the day. Numerous onlookers with cameras and the TV station is there again, TV5, this is the third time we have seen them this morning. Dave's at the rail yard and as we pass he announces that one of Bill's magnetic radiation placards is missing. We assume we've had souvenir collectors so Bill gets one of his spares ready for attachment once we stop. As we pass some pretty close looking rail cars parked on an adjacent line I ask Bill how close it looked. "Lets put it this way Mick, if I had put my arm out I would have touched them" "That's okay" I replied, as I could see previous scrape marks on the side of them but none were shiny, all were covered with rust, isn't corrosion a wonderful thing. Tim arrives back in the Blue Ridge. He enjoyed his stint in the locomotive and apparently heard a few interesting rail road stories. Maybe he'll share them with us later. Its 10:15 and we commence another inspection. I'm advised that I'm riding the loco next!



**Completing my twice sometimes thrice a day inspections – don't tell the unions**

Complete my inspection at 10:30 with no changes, everything looks good. During the process two Federal Rail Administration (FRA) inspectors arrived, Don DeKamp, Railroad Safety Inspector and Kevin Cash, Hazmat Inspector. We discussed the shipment and the papers and took a tour around the train. They looked at the paperwork and associated NRC documentation. All remains in order and we agreed we were looking forward to the meeting with the CSXT staff early in the afternoon. The Central Michigan (CM) train crew arrives, we have a brief and the switching of the cars commences. I call home, emails are coming from the UK concerning my potential career opportunity so the focus is moving from one thing to another but the shipment takes my mind's priority. Wendy is doing a great job generating responses on my behalf.



**The exchange engine with Rick the CM conductor**



**The route. Now it has been identified, thanks Bob Evans**

What can I say, 13:00 and I'm in the engine with Russ, the engineer, Rick, the conductor and Ron. We pull away and what starts at this point is one of the greatest experiences of my life. It took us till 16:30 to arrive at the rail yard in Saginaw, 3 ½ hours to do just 20 miles but what a great 20 miles. Being in that engine and listening to the chatter on the radio between the train and Saginaw Tower, going through crossing after crossing in both Bay City and Saginaw, crossing the bridge over the Saginaw River, going underneath the Zilwaukee Bridge while standing outside the engine, yes outside, were all phenomenal experiences. Rick and Russ shared experiences that they both had on the rail, neither looked older than 35 so they must have worked the rails all of their lives. The stories were great, the hitting of a 1,500 lb moose, and the mess that goes with that. The conductor on one of Ricks' trains that panicked when he thought they were going to hit an oncoming train when they were traveling at 45 mph and the conductor dived off onto the rail, seriously injuring him. The number of stories that are based around what can only be described as complete idiots who dodge signals and cross tracks just as the train goes pass and there's another one coming the other way – it's frightening, you would cringe at the obvious outcomes. Just as we finish one of those stories, guess what, Russ blows his horn and yes, you've guessed it, a car goes through the crossing. A trooper is parked adjacent to the line, lights on, 'your knicked mate!' to quote the infamous British saying. Russ goes on to state that when a train approaches a crossing, as soon as the horn is blown, if you cross the rail you're illegal, whether the barriers and lights are operational or not. The stories go on and on. Another 3 ½ hours would have suited me down to the ground.

I would need to spend far too much time describing everything, so the following pictures will hopefully give you a flavor. But I recommend to any male with a modicum of testosterone left in their body that they take such an opportunity if it presents itself. You'll not regret it.



**Ron (Chessie) at the controls of CM 9712 I rode – 35 years and he still looks like a kid with a new toy**



**Me taking a picture of the TV5 cameraman taking video of me at a Bay City rail crossing**



**We approach the Zilwaukee (I75) bridge**



**We're nearly underneath**



**The Package is underneath it**



**Law Enforcement Officer 'LEO' interest**



**Wish we could and would we do anything but?**



**And here's the evidence officer!**



**Will we make it through there?**



### **Of course we will**

I finish my discussions with the Saginaw train master Mike Lakel at around 17:15 and call the assistant superintendent at Toledo, Andrew Bamford to tell him that Mike has arranged for a crew to arrive at 06:30. The intention is to complete the briefings and attaching power soon after so that we can be away at day break, 07:45 and arrive at Toledo, 120 miles, sometime tomorrow. Andrew advises that sounds good but that we must be at his rail yard no later than 17:00, otherwise we will be unable to leave on Saturday and therefore lose a day. Mike thinks there's a chance we'll make 17:00 but its Friday and that is usually a bad day on the rails, so fingers crossed. Andrew asks "Do we need anything". I suggest only water for the Blue Ridge and forward him my many thanks and that I look forward to meeting him tomorrow – before 17:00!

I shake Mikes' hand as we depart to the Blue Ridge. Bill, Ken and I will stay onboard tonight. We suggest that we stay in this evening and ask Dave if he can bring us a 'carry out' three Porterhouses will do fine. An hour later the food turns up – great.

We talk about a number of things over dinner but the most interesting and surprising was about Thomas the Tank Engine. Yes, you've guessed it; Kens' got his finger in that pie. Apparently he sold some of his cars, he owns over eighty, to the railroads that participate in the program. These lines then bring in a full size Thomas replica that goes around the States taking young kids for a ride. Unbelievable, a set of stories about talking trains, written in the forties, I think, by a Welsh reverend that became a British kids cult program in the late 80's and 90's is in the States and promoted in the new Millennium more than it is in it's birth place. What next, high teas on top of a Saturn 5!

I phone home and all is okay. PJ has got his new computer and has managed to set it up. Mick Jr. has done all his homework and talked to me about the train ride and the cool high-rail cars. Lots of questions and interest can't wait to show him the pictures. Wendy has got acknowledgments from 'our' emails and all things are looking positive. 22:00 approaches and Bill's looking whacked. Ken, as per normal is busy at work, he does call himself a vampire, so he'll probably go on till midnight or so. Let's see what tomorrow brings.

## **Day 4 Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup> 2003 – Motown so what are we doing on a Train?**

Bright and early it's six thirty, yes our CSXT gentlemen arrive. They hook the power up; I complete my checks and its brief time at 07:05. Pete did the brief and advised that once the air test was conducted (which would be directly after the brief) we will be ready to move at day break. Pete advises that we will possibly meet one train only, all sidings have been cleared so that we should maintain close to our maximum speed throughout the trip today. This is music to my ears; 17:00 and Toledo are looking good. Curtis, the CSXT security agent tells us he will road escort us from here to Plymouth then two other agents will take over from there. He advises that all the authorities have been informed and will attend as necessary to assist.

Michigan to Ohio is looking on for today. Mike Lakel appears just to give a final personal brief to Chad our young conductor. Mike asks how I got my motorcycle onto the train. I advise that if I told him he would take it off. He replied if anybody could have gotten it off it would have been the locals. Good test I suppose.

I ask if the message I required to be passed to John last night was successfully delivered. No, oh dear. I grab John and give him the message, hopefully no big shakes. Paperwork is cleared and at 07:35 we pull out of town. "Good roll by" Mike comments on the radio as we pull out of his rail yard. "Have a safe trip." Thanks Mike, you've done us proud.

We're about a mile from the rail yard and we stop. It's a bridge, a bridge built in 1909 and it is 13' 10 1/2" wide, we're 13' 2 1/2", so 4" clearance each side! It is checked and we go, wow 4" looks like nothing but it's enough, we're up to speed again.

Talking about speed, at around 08:30 I get a call from Wendy relaying my overnight emails, some of which are not so good. Tim gets a call from Bill who's driving the van today. We have been seeing them zip between the numerous crossings we have already encountered this morning, the CSXT security car followed closely by the van. Tim repeats one of Bills comments "We were doing 90 mph down a dirt road!!!" Tim suggests that there is a bit of 'false hustle' going on, go to a coffee shop and have breakfast. We're traveling at 25, that's fast but the container looks very stable, as expected.

At 10:00 I get a call from Lucie Huberdeau requesting that radiological and container contents description be forwarded to her urgently because Norfolk Southern (NS) will not allow the shipment to move over the weekend unless they have this information promptly. Why this request is made now and not 2 weeks ago is beyond us. It's Friday and the weekend is at risk. I ask Bill to get hold of the plant and fax the radiological information directly to Lucie and I arrange for the package description to be faxed also. We have no ability on the train to forward any written information so hopefully this will work. I ask Lucie to call once she has received and forwarded the details to NS.



We're at Holly and stopped. A CN train, it's a long train about a hundred 90' long cars, is on the move and we need to let it pass. 10:10 and we've been stopped for 10 minutes now; we think we will move soon. We're greeted by Don and Kevin, the FRA inspectors. We offer them a coffee and all looks good.

10:12 and we're moving, bye Holly; it was a pleasure meeting you. Tim's phone has started its daily reception of media questioning, the topic now is, yes, you've guessed, what is the route? I receive a call from Rob McEwen, our procurement specialist at the site, confirming that the fax has been sent and received by Lucie. How's that for service! Thanks Rob.

At 11:50 I receive a call from Andrew Bamford. He has arranged for us to continue from Toledo through to Fostoria with a crew change at Toledo. This is fantastic news. Tim, as we all are, is over the moon. CSXT and Andrew, thank you so much. This also means NS has cleared us!

Tim gets a call at 11:55 and is advised that we are traveling through the night. What! I get on the phone to Lucie, "We have heard that we are going to travel through the night to Fort Wayne, can we do that? It is, after all, the railroads call?" Lucie is as surprised as us. We conclude the call and agree to call each other once we have completed our individual checks. Fifteen minutes later, I'm happy and Lucie calls to state that if NS will allow to travel through then CSXT has no problem, albeit she is somewhat surprised. We contact Bill in the van and tell him the story. This means three states in one day, Michigan, Ohio and Indiana!

We stop as the computerized defect detector warns about a hot axle. The crew is out to check, axle 29 on the spacer car, false alarm, phew! Andrew calls and tells me the crew will be there awaiting our arrival, brief and away we will go. I get a call from my boss in the UK, Jim Craik, he's in Manchester Airport, and as per normal he is extremely supportive and advises he will try to keep the UK end of things going in supporting my potential career changes. The days are getting better.



**Around a curve in Ohio**

As 12:30 passes we commence the journey, 25 mph before you know it. Calls are starting to come in thick and fast. We enter Ohio at 13:40 and the police presence at rail crossings becomes very evident. We wave and receive friendly waves back at all locations. John Bender calls me and asks where we are because he can't find the car on the CSXT website tracker. I tell him that's great news as CSXT have obviously blocked the car from the rail tracker system due to security. "Of course", John states, "I should have guessed."

We stop at 13:50 to let a train by and move towards the rail yard at 14:27. Stop again at 14:40 for another train and commence, hopefully into the rail yard at 15:10.

16:05 and all kind of rumors are floating around but the fact is that CSXT and NS Hazmat are in discussions with a view to resolving the issues. Lucie tells me she will call as soon as she receives information. I am advised at 16:30 that NS has embargoed the shipment. Andrew and David Smith, train master from the Fostoria yard, arrive on the Blue Ridge and confirm the embargo. After lots of phone calls I get the name of the NS individual who has placed the embargo. I will not mention names but he is a rail road director. After a phone chase I manage to speak to him. He is a very approachable person and very respectful. We discuss all facets of the embargo and receive his sincere apologies but after all the technical items are resolved it boils down to commercial issues between NS and Mammoet, significant commercial issues, i.e. money!. I advise the severity of his decision and that commercial issues can be resolved post shipment but the rail road will not change their position. He advises that he has sent Mammoet, Lucie, an email at 16:45 stating the position and the amount that Mammoet will need to wire the rail road before they will take the shipment. I obtain his home phone number and he repeats his sincere apologies. I call Lucie and pass on the information and advise her of the email.

We're stuck here at least for tonight but probably until Monday at the earliest. I brief Tim so that he can keep his management informed then I commence phoning my management. After repeating the situation numerous times I receive a phone call from Chris Miller, the Chief of Decommissioning for Region III of the NRC, the region we are in the jurisdiction of. I advise him of the situation and because there are no radiological or licensing issues he is happy. We agree that if anything changes over the weekend I will call him but if not, we will talk on Monday.

At approximately 18:30 I receive a phone call from Don Mankhe, a VP of Mammoet. He advises that there are commercial issues and a significant additional payment has been requested. He advises that Mammoet will agree to pay and follow up with legal proceedings post shipment. I ask that he call me later as soon as Mammoet reaches agreement with the rail road so that we may make appropriate arrangements to move out tomorrow. I thank him sincerely for his efforts and forward my sincere thanks for the team he has working for us. He returns his thanks and provides gratitude for the moral support I have given him. I phone my management and advise them of the potential good news. They seem happy.

I call Tim and advise him so that he can call his management and brief them, he is happy too. I call Andrew of CSXT and ask him to prepare for shipping out in the morning but that I will advise him later. He is extremely happy and advises that he will make a team available for 06:30 with a view to moving out at day break.

I start to relax now and continue to watch a DVD with Ken and Dave. It's an Eddie Izzard concert filmed in San Francisco in 2001. It's extremely funny. Izzard is a quality British transvestite comedian who is a real transvestite, i.e. a heterosexual who dresses as a woman. We watch till about 20:10 when we lose power briefly and then it is restored but only partially. Ken checks and we are single phasing, I won't explain what that is here but basically we are on reduced power. Ken kills the power and completes his checks. It's a previously burnt out contactor that is wedged closed with a piece of wood – don't ask, and the wood has dropped out letting the contactor open and losing a phase of the 3 phase supply. Ken does his business and the power is restored at 20:25.

We had 5 or 6 protesters appear earlier, just after we had arrived but they now seem to have gone, cold and dark is a wonderful thing to show how committed you are to a cause - say no more! It's approaching 21:00, no phone calls, but more importantly no food, we're starving, hurry up guys, we need you. Because of the situation we are not leaving the Blue Ridge again tonight. This means that Ken and I will have not left the Blue Ridge for at least 79 hours by the time we get the next possible chance. If we travel through the night tomorrow that will mean 103 hours! This is not good and I do not get paid anything above my normal 40 hour week for this. My management please note this and the above – can I get a bonus? I should be depressed but there is too much going on. Probably a good thing but I'm putting off phoning home because I don't want to miss any important calls. Food arrives at 21:20, fish and chips, and great, guys, very much needed; we eat the lot in less than five minutes. We talk about cars and motorcycles, and then the phone starts to ring!

At 22:00 Don rang and advised that the rail roads requirements were totally unacceptable and that the Mammoet CEO would not allow signature. I called off the provision of staff first thing in the morning but advised that a move tomorrow may still be on.

I called Gary Miller, MHF Logistics, at 22:30. I asked him to provide his communications from 2001 and 2002 between the rail roads to provide evidence that they were aware that this was a radioactive shipment. You see the particular rail road in question denied that they were told this was a radioactive waste shipment. He advised that he should be able to get them out of his archives and email them to Lucie. I rang both Lucie and Don at 23:00 and 23:05, respectively, leaving voice mails summarizing my discussions and agreement with Gary. Made a brief call to Chris Miller of the NRC and provided him with a summary update of the situation.

It's 23:33 and in simple terms, I'm worried. Will try to sleep but doubt I will have much success. A quick smoke and time for bed, oh, managed to get a quick phone call home earlier, just a quick hello, is all okay and I'll speak to you tomorrow - Piri won her match last night, 10 wins and 1 loss, excellent – there is good news sometimes!

**Day 5 Saturday, October 18<sup>th</sup> 2003 – The end of a NIGHTMARE or the start of a  
Vacation in Hell?**

This is the first day of the trip where we get up and nothing is happening. Pat Daly rings me up at around 07:45 for an update. I go through the late night discussions I had with Mammoet and Gary and give him useful telephone numbers should we require outside assistance or influence. I bounce off my idea of just going to Fostoria while negotiations take place and by the time we get there things may be resolved. He says it's my call. I conclude the call and Tim rings. "What's happening, do we need to check out of the hotel" Well I have nothing further to offer but what do you think about going to Fostoria and if we get stuck there we just ask CSXT to provide heightened security. He's happy with that. I conclude the call by stating I will make arrangements with CSXT and call to confirm the arrangement.

I call Andrew at 08:30 and he seems supportive of the suggestion. He will call David, the train master at Fostoria, and make the arrangements. He'll call back later.

While all this is happening I smell some burning in the galley. I investigate and 'oh no!' a hob ring has been left on low and things are piled on top of it. I switch it off and remove all I can apart from a Kool Aid plastic jar that has melted out and Kool Aid has caramelized over the ring and become Hot Unhelpful! What a mess, I get a spatula and start to scrape it off while it is hot. A big bit falls onto my hand and burns like hell. Straight under the cold water tap for ten minutes to minimize the burn and peel the now plastic glaze off my hand. I spend the next 15 minutes cleaning up what I can; Ken will have to do the rest when he awakes because the ring needs to be removed. Can this day get any worse?

Received a call from Andrew at 09:17, it's 'no go' CSXT head office in Jacksonville, Florida and the Division Manager in Detroit both do not want the train in Fostoria overnight, they prefer it to be here at this rail siding where there is more space, remoteness and security. I call those that need to know.

We have six protesters on the road adjacent to the rail yard with placards we cannot read. Photographs are being taken but the police presence is high. I give Tim a call to keep him informed.



**A little bit of action!**

Attempted to call the rail road director responsible for the embargo at 09:45, his line is busy – maybe a good sign. The police turn up and some lively discussion seems to be taking place. The number of protesters is increasing to 9 and its only 10:00!

Left a voice mail, now that his line is not busy, with the director at 10:00 for him to call me back and update me with his interpretation of the situation. The protestors are bringing out more banners and are using spray paint to produce some additional ones – can't wait to see what they say. TV shows up and commences their campaign of interviews with our friends on the other side of the street. Tim and the boys are on their way.

If I don't hear anything by 11:00 I'm going to commence my next round of phone calls to get the politicians involved.



**The arrest, 10:45**



**My new friend**

Pat called at 10:55; I request that they please commence the political approach. The rail road director states that they have heard nothing from Mammoet, that's my trigger.

Tim arrives and advises that the mayor of Walbridge wants a tour, we agree. He will arrive around 11:15 and complete a survey with Kelly, Hazmat Inspector, Public Utilities Commission (PUC) of Ohio.



**Andrew Bamford, our ever helpful superintendent**

Following the arrests our protesters dispersed. Their moment on the TV achieved, lets go home now, objective completed.

Following numerous telecoms between high ranking rail road officials including the presidents for both the rail roads we get the phone call – we're moving south at 14:20. Oh my God, what a sigh of relief, it's like a ton of weight just disappeared off my shoulders. Wish I was back at the plant helping Greg and the gang pull the reactor out of its cavity, that was stressful but nothing compared to this. Maybe I'll get some sleep tonight and hopefully we will be still moving, i.e. traveling through the night.

Andrew confirms all the clearances are approved at 13:27, the rail crew are set to arrive at 15:00 so a little more of a delay but that's cool. Tom Drake, VP of Corporate Communications for CSXT, paid us a visit. Showed him some of the pictures of his team arresting the protesters, quite amusing but, as he states, very irresponsible! Hopefully Tim will be back from the hotel to meet Tom before he leaves.



**The Mayor of Walbridge, Dan Wilczynski**



**Law Enforcement et al**

Andrew advises that our rider will be Derek Gibson. H also advises that he has a challenge with one of his colleagues about what time we will leave the yard. Andrew has the earliest time and the biggest challenge. Let's see what happens. The next train master at Fostoria is Mr. Gooden. I will call him once we are on the move but I am advised that if NS doesn't switch power we are good to go all the way to Barnwell with the CSXT power currently hooked up as it is fully fueled. This would be good as it will reduce downtime at Fostoria. Denny is the train master at Fort Wayne and he is aware we are cleared all the way; again, I will call him when we get on the move.



**Tim talks to Channel 11**

Derek and the rest of the crew arrive at 15:23. We make our introductions and preparations to move commence at 15:30. We say our farewells to Andrew and we get the offer of him buying the first drink if we are ever in town. I'll take him up on that. The de-rails are removed and we move at 15:41. Our journey, at last continues. JP joins us; he is the conductor for the trip to Fostoria.

I spend the whole portion of this trip with Ken on deck chairs sitting on the platform until we get to Fostoria at 17:49, two glorious hours in the sun talking about all things to do with trains I'd never heard of before. I am starting to understand why there are rail nuts. It really is a different world, full of surprises. During this portion of the trip I call our best friends in Scotland, Dave and Jeni. We talk about the trip, as they didn't realize I was actually on the rail. They think I'm mad because I've got the bike and intend to ride back from South Carolina, but they know me well and are not surprised. Before we have a chance to say our goodbyes I lose the signal.

At 18:10 Tim gets a call from the FRA, they are very very upset with the rail road with regard to holding Mammoet for ransom. It will be interesting to see what comes out of this but I've got Gary still pulling out his records to support Mammoet and CSXT. At 18:30 we pull into the siding and await the new NS crew. I check my phone but still no signal.

Ken takes the opportunity to clean the glazing on the Blue Ridge and the rear view mirrors; yes, this thing has mirrors on either side of the car adjacent to each of the desks so that when you're traveling you can see where you have just been, or in our case, where we are going. It's pretty good because I can see the 'device', sorry, container, when I'm working, without moving an inch. At this time I need to tell the story of where the term 'device' comes from. Well, it's back to Saginaw, remember our friend Mike Lakel the trainmaster, of course you do. Just after we arrived, Ken asked Mike if he could top the Blue Ridge car with much needed water at the yard. Mike's response to Ken was "We don't have the couplings or connections let alone the length of hose to provide you with the water, nevertheless, with that 'device' you have I wouldn't want to chance it" so there you have it, the origin of yet another pseudonym for the container.



At 18:59 we start our trip to Fort Wayne following another successful FRA inspection. I am hearing that we are cleared all the way to Atlanta, yes Atlanta, with only stops for crew changes - let's wait and see. Dave continues to drive the van and Tim joins him to provide company and also give Dave a break should he need one.

My cell phone signal returns at 19:45 and a message alert sounds. I check the message and it's Lucie from Mammoet asking, and hoping, that all is okay. I return her call and advise that things are going well; she is obviously pleased and wishes us a continued safe trip. I thank Lucie for all her help and tell her I will call her tomorrow.

We arrive at Fort Wayne at 22:50 and Ken changes out a filter. Bill and I complete the checks of the container and find no variance. The NS changes the crew and we start the trip again at 23:10; Cincinnati looks good for around 09:00 Sunday morning. I ring Rob McEwen at Big Rock to ensure he gives Duratek the required 14 day notice first thing Monday morning as we will probably be at Barnwell well in advance of the end of the notice date. Dave and Tim are finding a hotel for the night and will meet up with us in Cincinnati in the morning. Bill and John call it quits and retire not long after midnight, I make it to about 01:30 just before Ken retires and Ron nods in his seat. I stop the movie I have playing in the background, Saving Grace, a great movie if you get the chance and retire myself.



**The CSXT Power Unit at Toledo Rail Yard**

## Day 6 Sunday, October 19<sup>th</sup> – Swinging to Cincinnati

I need to explain the title for today's entry before the record commences. The ETMX1001, a special flat bed depression car has the ability to elevate its bed 12" and move sideways 14" to avoid low and narrow 'snatch' points on the rail road. Today is the first day we expect to need to use this capability, i.e. 'swing' hence the title. In fact we will have to 'swing' three times today due to three restricted width bridges. The most interesting of which will be the first because we will do it during darkness!

Tim rings 07:20 and requests our order for provisions and our ETA for Cincinnati. I advise none of us knows where we are but as soon as we know we will ring with ETA and provision needs. Literally as soon as I conclude the call we see a water tower, New Miami. Bill looks on the map and we are approaching the environs of Cincinnati. A quick check on our needs and I call Tim. We're about 45 minutes from the yard and need some full cream milk, polystyrene cups and sliced meat. Bye.

I ask the question where the first swing was at, what no swings, just five very narrow bridges! Didn't miss anything then just one very close bridge, I'm told if we were 13' 6" as cleared instead of the 13' 2", we would have had a slight 'rub'. John said that holding his arm out rubbed all his fingers to the first knuckles; he could not see any light between the cradle and the bridge edge when Bill Heron was holding a flashlight from the other side. That must have been close. We're in the suburbs of Cincinnati and its 07:55. I debate in my mind if I should call my friend Tim Beckman's' neighbors to see if they can deliver my rail road CDROM at the rail yard. I decide to call at 08:30.



**Bill as we pass a bridge near Cincinnati**

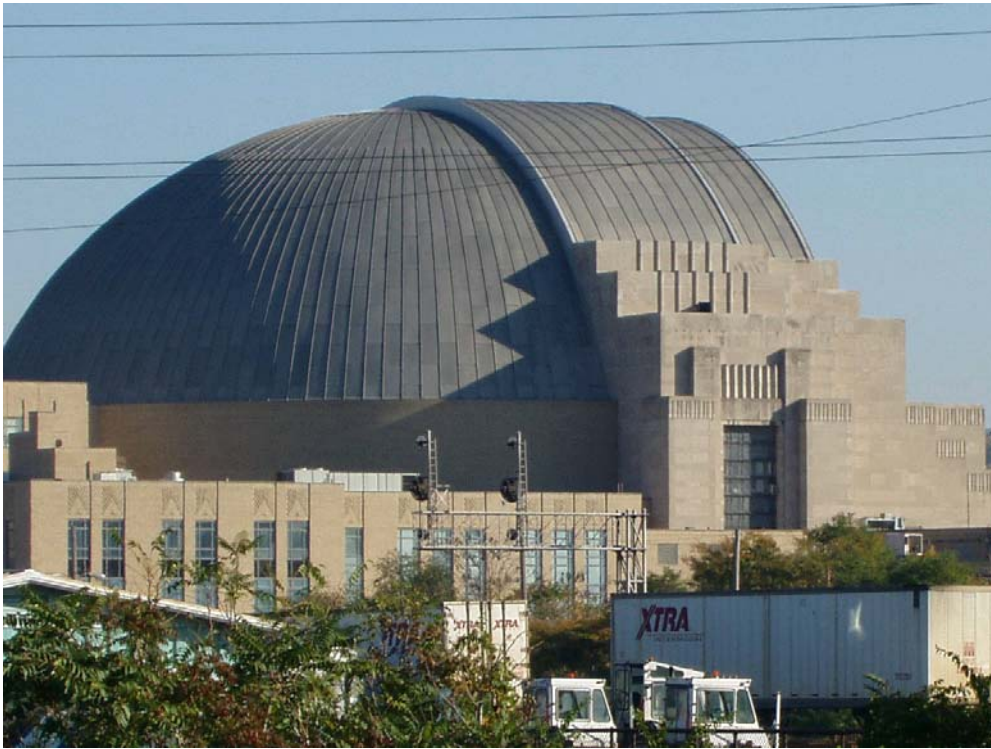
Ron comes out of the shower and states that it was awesome and he feels like a million dollars “All green and wrinkled” never heard that one before! We arrive at the rail yard at 09:18, crew changes and we’re moving again at 09:43, left a voice mail with Pat.

Stop again at 09:50, Tim and Dave offer to continue to Danville with the van and pick up provisions and hopefully my CDROM. It’s now 09:55 and we’re almost ready to go again. They leave the train after telling us that it is ‘Tall Stacks’ weekend in Cincinnati and their room, advertised at \$35 was actually \$65 because of the celebrations, talk about timing.

We cross the bridge 10:00, what an amazing sight, I’ll let the following pictures explain. As we leave the bridge, John shouts out at the top of his voice “Goodbye Ohio, we are taking the device out of Ohio, roll on Tennessee”. A big barge travels underneath and the accompanying boats crew gives us a great big wave, the start of another great day. I just attempt to download my latest photos and wow, we’re over a bridge with definitely more than a 30’ drop but with certainly a yielding surface at the bottom. We agree the device would survive that one. It’s bridge after bridge after bridge, all beautiful, we’re getting spoiled, and I’m told there is a lot more to come. The sun is shining, the leaves are turning and Ken breaks out the seats again for another day of being spoilt on the rail road. Flying, who wants to do that, not me! John and Ken are dancing around in front of me while I type, they don’t want to miss a thing. I don’t want to either but if I take time out now then I’m sure I will get my rewards later.



**Preparing to Cross the Ohio**



**Cincinnati Union Station ca. 1930**



**We're on the Bridge**

Ken returns from the dining room to advise we are running out of cereal, a quick call to Tim and it's on the list. Much of the same please then in unison Ken and John shout 'Cheerios' so Cheerios it is, this is worse than being with my kids.



### **Rickety bridges in Kentucky**

We pass underneath some pretty rough looking bridges in Kentucky, they must look better from above. The pictures I take are of the more sturdier ones as a lot of them are made out of wood supports with iron cross beams that all seem to need a layer of protective coatings to say the least. We arrive in the middle of Lexington at 13:50. Maybe I'm wrong but I've not received one call from officialdom today, just friends. Have they got too much to do on a Sunday or are they all so happy that we are making so much progress that they're leaving us to it? Your guess is as good as mine. We'll see what tomorrow brings. Oh, and I do have a strong signal on my cell phone. Uncanny, Pat rings me immediately I finish typing the preceding sentence – is he watching me? We have seen no media interest whatsoever and only what I would call 'chance' spectators when we go through road crossings.

We stop at Danville at 15:20 and change crews out, complete my inspections and all is okay. Bill swaps with Dave to drive and Tim agrees to stay on the van. We load with provisions and we go at 15:36.



**200' above the Kentucky River**

We're told Chattanooga is our target, after consulting the map we think we will get there for midnight with a change of crew at Oakdale in Tennessee. Well we didn't do the three states on Day 4 but Day 6 is looking good, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee.

We really are in Kentucky country now, the rails winding through the wooded hills with once, every so often, clearings with some houses placed as though there was no plan but it seemed like a nice location. Strange to me, coming from the UK, because we just don't have the space, but here, I suppose, there is, but how long for and when will it start impacting the countryside, if it already hasn't? More and more of these places seem to be collectors of fine old cars, if you know what I mean!

We pass a little town called 'Science Hill' I see a sobering sight, a beautifully kept cemetery right along side the rail road. Facing the rail is an immaculate granite stone with the words 'My Children', beneath a list of five names!

It is 18:00 and we pass our conductors' home town of Tateville about 25 miles north of the Tennessee state line, we'll be in Tennessee by 19:00. As the sun starts to set we arrive 3 minutes ahead of schedule at 18:57. We all decide to eat and chat about things and nothings. I decide to have a microwave cheeseburger which tastes like the most beautiful thing I've eaten in months. Well, when you remember it's been 3 days since I've had a hot meal, anything would taste good. We stop at 21:00 and change crews again for the stint to Chattanooga. Greg is our new conductor. After we commence the journey we discuss the game plan and expect that we will be in Chattanooga at around 00:30 Monday morning and into Atlanta around 07:00. I call Tim and advise the schedule and that we have enough provisions to keep well until we reach Columbia, South Carolina. Tim and Bill are in Chattanooga and suggest that they travel to Columbia at their leisure. Tim says he will talk to Bill and call me back. Tim calls and, exactly as my expectation, Tim wants to rejoin the train at some stage. We agree that I will call him when we get close to Atlanta and arrange a location to pick him up. Its 21:10 and I check my voice mails, 9 of them, phew. I start to call Pat and he rings me, he is very happy about things and is currently in Richland, Washington state.



**The Cumberland River, KY**

I get a bit of a broken up call from my folks in Britain. I'm a bit concerned and of course it is 02:00 in the morning there so I can't call until later. I ask Wendy when I call her to check in the morning because of my constant signal loss. Well will see what's happening tomorrow.

We travel along at our prerequisite maximum of 25 mph and travel through the last two of the four tunnels we will encounter on this journey. Ken tells Greg the history of the Blue Ridge car and of course the period when the Rolling Stones were onboard back in 1989. Greg is very interested in this so we look at the photographs and the Blue Ridge Stones I and II shown earlier in this saga. Ken tells us about that great time when he was asked by one of the Stones publicity guys if he had a conductor's uniform a couple of days before the NYC press conference for the Steel Wheels tour. Ken of course had one and so he was invited to go on stage and, as an introduction for the Stones, Ken dressed in his uniform shouts "All aboard" and of course the Stones appear and that is that. Cool. Ken then tells us about the time when he was talking to his buddy not long after the Stones were on the Blue Ridge and his buddy says "Wow, not many people can say they've partied with the Stones", Ken immediately responded with "No, not many people can say that they've partied with me" Excellent retort Ken, one of the classics.

John decides to call it quits at 22:30 in the parlor, I tell him not to be so stupid and to use the bunk above me in my room, State Room 1, the same room Mick Jagger used by the way. We make up the bunk and he is appreciative. I decide not to retire yet so play a little computer blackjack and have a chat with my British colleague and friend at West Valley, Buffalo, Tim Milner. Nothing really new except that he will find out a little more about the issues and details associated with his pension when he transferred from BNFL plc to BNFL Inc some years ago. I'll await his email and call later this week. This information will hopefully help me with some major career decisions I need to make while on this journey.



**Our friendly NS Crew**

## **Day 7 Monday, October 20<sup>th</sup> – The Chattanooga Choo Choo**

We roll into the 7<sup>th</sup> day and my 76<sup>th</sup> hour without leaving the Blue Ridge, with the exception of inspecting the ‘device’, all is well and we await our arrival at Chattanooga and another crew change out. We cross the Tennessee River at 00:30 with only about 4” to 6” clearance both sides and we stop about a ½ mile later. The crew leaves but no one else appears, its 00:50, and they’ll be here soon. We are right, at 00:52 William, our new conductor arrives and we’re rolling at 00:54. Ken determines that we will go through Charlotte after Atlanta and that the next change out there will be Atlanta approximately 7 ½ hours away.

If today pans out the way we think we will do four states, Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina with the day probably ending with our departure from Charlotte back towards South Carolina. Yes I know it sounds daft but we go into South Carolina, leave it then go back again some 12 hours or so later. This is due to the clearance that has been granted and there isn’t much we can do about it, thank goodness we have clearance to travel through the night.

After hitting the sack at 01:20 I get a rude awakening at 07:00 from Rob at Big Rock. He’s got my email requesting that Duratek are given notice. We discuss what I want in some detail and set the ball rolling. Rob asks about the situation over the past weekend. I offer to tell him when I get back because it’s a long story that I have told numerous times and do not wish to go through it all again, especially first thing on a Monday morning! Now that I have spoken to Rob I call Duratek and leave them a voice mail requesting that they mobilize their off loading contractor urgently as we could be in Barnwell as early as Wednesday this week.

I discuss with Ron what the plans are today. We are stopped and have been since just before 07:00. The change out crew is arranged for 08:30 and we are about 20 miles north of Atlanta. We anticipate getting to Charlotte before 21:00 today so I call Tim. He and Bill are in Chattanooga and we agree that the best plan for them is to head east to Charlotte and we will intercept either before or at Charlotte and get Tim back on board.

We start moving again at 07:19 and Ron, Bill and I talk about the train configuration necessary for off loading at Barnwell, i.e. the ‘device’ needs to be the first car that enters the Duratek Consolidation and Services Facility (DCSF). Mammoet agree to discuss this with the rail road guys once we’re at Charlotte and Columbia to work out when and where the configuration change will occur.

After crawling along and intermittently stopping we increase our speed to around 25 mph at 08:24, the crew must have arrived and await us. The sun rises quickly and there’s not a cloud in the gorgeous blue sky, we’ve been blessed with the weather on this trip, I hope I’ve not spoken to soon. Call Tim and advise him of a beautiful route to take to get from Chattanooga to Charlotte using 64 East from Cleveland, Tennessee through to Hendersonville in North Carolina and then onto I74 East to Gastonia then onto Charlotte.



Tim seems pleased to get this guidance as they were trying to work out the best route but the one offered has pretty scenery and they won't be disappointed.

Charles, our new conductor arrives, he will be with us till Greenville, South Carolina, its 08:50 and we're off again. Ron calls me he's got Ted Wilken on the phone, we have a chat. It is nice speaking to him again. Ted was the original Mammoet manager I dealt with until about two months ago when he left to pursue other professional interests. Ted set all of this up for us and I was disappointed that he left but it's nice to keep in touch.

Charles offers to tell me all about this portion on the trip; I'll take him up on that. We move through the southern side of Atlanta, it seems a very clean and prosperous city. We stop to top up with water at 09:40 and the trainmaster asks for a pot of fresh coffee and steak and eggs – great to have humor. I complete my checks and Dave does his radiological survey, maximum reading is around ½% of the allowable shipping dose at contact. John Bender calls me and advises that he is doing everything in his power to allow us to off load this week at Barnwell, the Goldhofer heavy hauler maybe the issue.



**Atlanta Skyline**

At 10:17 the water tank on the Blue Ridge is topped to the gunnels and the rationing has come to a close – that shower is going to get hammered today!



**Views from the south side of Atlanta**



The trainmaster comes onboard prior to departure and asks if we have paperwork to allow a rider in the head end, i.e. the power unit. I tell him no as we obtain permission through each rail crew. He advises that we need to exchange out our guy with the conductor. I can't complain about following the rules can I, bye Charles. He agrees to leave the radio with us to talk with the head end if we need to, call sign 372, on channel 1.

Ron starts to talk about booking flights and how and who he will travel with. I suggest he is cautious about booking things quite yet as there are still a number of opportunities for the dreaded delays to occur.

I got a shower at 12:00. It really feels good, almost better than a good nights sleep. Nothing really happens apart from progress (in the right direction I'm glad to say). Wendy calls and reports that all is generally okay in the UK. I have also got an email from Tom Daspit, the guy who has the rail car website; I pass Wendy the details as some of his colleagues would like to get some photos. He seems to know his stuff because he is asking when we are changing from NS to CSXT. We pass a freight train and I'm advised that we must be special, especially when we pass these double high units, which we have passed lots of. Ron continues to attempt to book his journey back and we're around 50 miles from South Carolina, its 12:25.



**Ken and John in GA**

As we travel along I grab a seat and sit on the deck taking in the sun, this is just like summer to me, and I'll need some sun tan lotion at this rate. We pass a very small village called Yonah; Ken commences to tell us the story about the civil war. Simply it was about a group of Yankees came into Georgia and stole a train with a view to going back to Chattanooga and destroying as many of the bridges and rail as possible to stop the confederates getting their supplies. Immediately on finding out that his train had been stolen the conductor commenced chasing his train on foot, yes foot, he then happened across a small yard locomotive, a 'switcher' and increased his rate of chase. The Yankees knew they were being pursued so did not have as many opportunities to do the damage they had planned. Eventually the conductor, after picking up some reinforcements caught up with his train and most of the Yankees were hanged. Anyway the point of the story was that the small 'switcher' was called Yonah and that this village in Georgia was named after it. We cross into South Carolina at 14:05 over the Savannah River.



**Crossing into SC over the Savannah**

Tim calls at 14:25; we are about 35 miles from Greenville, South Carolina, our recently announced next crew change. Tim and Bill are at Hendersonville, North Carolina also about 35 miles away, the race is on. Tim is desperate to rejoin the train!

Greg Garlock, my buddy and the Operations Superintendent for the project at Big Rock calls. We talk about the shipment and then he updates me on the continued progress at the plant. Things are sounding good. He has heard some interesting aspects about my potential future career so we agree that we will get together on my return and discuss. Things continue to get more and more interesting.

I get the call I've really been waiting for and that's confirmation that my motorcycle will be removed from the rail car on Thursday, the not so good news is that the 'device' will not be removed at the DCSF until October 27<sup>th</sup> with the rail car being released October 29<sup>th</sup>. I am going to discuss this with Mammoet once at Greenville and I have asked Rob to relay this information to Lucie at Mammoet head office.



**Entering Greenville SC**

We arrive at Greenville and brief our Mammoet friends with the Duratek dates. Everyone seems happy with the arrangements. We leave at 16:43 for the next stage which will take approximately 5 hours to Charlotte and then a further 5 hours to Columbia. I have arranged to call John Bender, who lives in Columbia, with a view to see us when we arrive there tomorrow morning. Kevin Milliken, another friend and a key player in this project who left for a job at Millstone plant a couple of weeks ago, also lives in South Carolina, is also hoping to see us at Columbia too.

I take the opportunity to have a nap, waking up at 18:25, we're not moving! I see Bill; he thinks we've been stationary for upwards of 35 minutes. It's a small rail yard at Spartanburg. We start crawling past a lumber train fully loaded and stop five minutes later. We all stick our heads out of the window and we start to move, we have that type of psychological influence you know.



**Bill arrives at Greenville**

I ask Tim if it's his MENSAs magazine on the desk, "No" he states while laughing "it's Ken's". Tim asks Ken what the requirement is to be a MENSAs member. "Top 2% of the population, with an IQ of greater than 148, is the prerequisite" Ken states. Tim is blown away by this and says he is going to put it into his story. He fires his computer up and commences his recollection of the van drive today through the Smokey's. Both he and Bill are talking about planning for vacations through there, it was so beautiful.

Tim Beckman rings me from Seattle and says he will arrange for my railway CDROM; (remember the planned but failed pick up in Cincinnati yesterday?), to be at my house when I arrive back, hopefully this coming weekend. Thank you Timmy, you're a pal.

The evening turns into night. It is 23:30 and a NS power unit rolls along side. Ken is proof reading my scribbles and Bill announces that we are going to change direction again and maybe hear, at Charlotte, change power units? We anticipate some delay. The NS power unit starts to move followed by an idler. Just as I comment we are getting another idler my bike goes past, "what the hell", then the device goes past, whoa! I relax - they're swapping out now; I draw a sigh of relief. Bill announces he has made a fresh pot of coffee, which is a good thing to keep our NS friends happy and move things forward.

The crew changes and we pull out of Charlotte at 23:18. Tim is in bed and he's missed all the fun, but we will bring him up to speed in the morning. See you, Charlotte, it was nice knowing you and quite sad to leave. Ironically my first and only visit to Barnwell, the destination of the 'device' was back in February 2000, before I actually commenced working on this project. I attended a meeting with Duratek, the owners of Barnwell, and following the meeting, drove to Charlotte to fly back to Britain. How would I have known that three years and eight months later I would be in Charlotte with the thing we were actually talking about back in 2000? Very scary! I suppose the main aspect to draw from this is that my mission to come to the States in the first place has been, or soon will be, successfully completed. My mind is now starting to focus on the ride home. I can't wait but I have some sad feelings occurring with the soon to occur loss of my traveling friends.



**I know it's a cliché but 'It's good to be me'**

## **Day 8 Tuesday October 21<sup>st</sup> – Nothing Could Be Finer Than.....**

I think the title for today's entry sums it all up, what more can I say. I'm a little disappointed that there is not much more time to continue writing this journal but, when one looks at the primary objective of this exercise, this is as good as it gets, note my comments in the preface!

Ken completes his review of my first thirty one pages of my journal and his comments are most welcomed. As he goes towards slumber he reminds me of the comic act we have on board, Bill Heron and Ray Wonnek, Abbot and Costello. Dead right, it's uncanny. Bill, the round smiling faced guy, talks with a mix of Canadian and an Irish accent. Ken recalls one of Bills' sayings on this trip which was Bills' description of how much fun he was having and the fact that it compared to the time that his little brother was eaten by pigs! Ray on the other hand, looks like a bull dog that has just licked piss off a stinging nettle, a great straight guy with a very dry sense of humor. Both are great guys as is Ron who will be leaving us tomorrow – our Mammoet friends. It is 02:50 and I'm going to bed.

At 06:00 Ken advises we are in Columbia. I decide to continue sleeping. At 06:15 Ron charges in, after knocking of course, we must sign waiver paperwork for CSXT. We all do and witness each others signature. I call John Bender and advise that we will be at Dumbarton, Barnwell sometime early afternoon. I advise I will keep him informed. My life has now revolved around the Blue Ridge car for 105 hours. Don't think I'm complaining but I think a bed that isn't moving quite so much may be something which is very attractive and hopefully I'll be in one soon.

Things must be beating in the distant north, Tim starts to get calls and I hear him talking about arriving today, head ends, protesters in Toledo, power changed there, cabooses swapped here, idlers moving around, etc. Yes, you've guessed it. We've only been on the rail road for eight days and we're speaking the lingo! This reminds me of Ken last night talking about the American and British variances to the naming of the rail road, sorry Ken, railroad and parts such as the 'cab ride' which is properly called a 'footplate.'

The CSXT trainmaster, Denny Gibbon, briefs us at 07:30 and explains why we are being connected to another power unit. Basically this is to minimize the swapping of units when we get to Fairfax so that we just need to reverse towards Augusta which is the route we must take to get to Dumbarton. We may change crew again at Fairfax but that won't be a big deal, Denny's objective is to get us to Barnwell today. We are advised that the terminal manager is on the head end of the train so I assume 'good behavior' is the order of the day, as if we wouldn't. At 07:47 Dave rings me and asks where we are going. I explain and suggest to him that they take as many photos opportunities as they can, it's our last chance. We start to move. The movement doesn't last long, 07:54 and we're stopped again totally blocking a rail crossing. I take the opportunity to get my fourth cup of coffee this morning courtesy of Bill.

We commence the journey again at 07:57. There is now a build up of vehicles at the crossing we have been blocking for the last 3 minutes. This must have seemed a long time to these poor people who are probably now late for work thanks to us – sorry.



**On the way to Barnwell, South Carolina**





I call John Bender and ask if he has received the slings yet from Barnhart for off loading the 'device'. He advises not yet but that they are scheduled to arrive today. His plan is to leave Columbia just before lunch and meet us at Barnwell. We discuss the train formation to enter the DCSF and agree that the order of cars in the direction of entry to the DCSF should be the ETMX1001, loaded with the device, the Blue Ridge followed by the Gondolas and the caboose then the power. I will relay this onto our Mammoet friends when we arrive at Fairfax. John innocently asks me if I've booked a local hotel or one in Columbia for the night. I tell him he must be joking and that I'm staying on the Blue Ridge. We pass through Swansea, named after the good old southern Welsh city.

I agree to call John again at 10:30 to give him an update on progress. John says that he will call the Augusta rail master later to get his take on our ETA at Dumbarton. Tim doesn't believe that Dumbarton is probably named by people that many generations ago immigrated from Dumbarton, just north of Glasgow, in Scotland. When I get home I'll research my understanding and confirm the facts.

We travel through the South Carolina countryside; it's like a mini tour of Scandinavia, small towns called Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Govan and Olar. Fairfax is quickly approaching, as is 10:30, I need to call John. We start to pass cotton fields and John tells me he will be leaving Columbia soon and has arranged for a site visit for us this afternoon. That will be good to see how accurate my mind's eye is from early 2000.

Before losing my cell phone signal, yet again, I must change service soon, it's pathetic; I manage to speak to Wendy. Piri has an away basketball match this evening and Mick Jr. who is 13, wants to coerce me into letting him go to a 311 concert with some pals but with no actual parents in the hall. The problem is that back in June I took him and two of his friends to a 311 concert in Grand Rapids, Michigan, I went to the concert too. Well it was quite an experience with all the 'crowd surfing', etc. and after 4 ½ hours I had had quite enough. So now he wants to go again, he has the tickets but the parent who is taking them will not go into the concert but drop them off and pick them up after. Wendy and I will have to think about this one, carefully.

We approach Fairfax and our two buddies in arms, John and Dave, appear at a level crossing taking pictures and waving looking none the worse for wear (not surprising, they spent last night in a Sheraton!). I'm too slow and the moment has passed for me to take a picture of them but I'm sure another opportunity will present itself before the day is out. Anyway I'm not speaking to them, a Sheraton I'm sure. Hope the Jacuzzi wasn't too hot guys, anymore towels sir?

Fairfax, it's 10:56 and the sun is shining in the sky. We're changing the crew and losing a power unit ready for the 36 mile final leg, are we really there? It's hard to take in, 8 days and it is nearly over.



**My traveling workstation – people would kill for a desk job like this**



**Tim at Fairfax, South Carolina**

We are set up ready to leave at 11:35 but we have a power problem. They restart the engine but we have missed our block to another train, i.e. the block of signals assigned to us to us to allow our progress has now changed against us for an opposing train. We are told a half hour delay so it gives us sometime to reflect and make those calls now we have the time and the signal of course. It is 12:20 by the time we get rolling and I'm glad, it has got to be in the 80's and I am hot. As we travel through Fairfax we get lots of waves and smiles, we cross the rail crossing and we are on our way paralleling the road out of Fairfax, very strange especially when you reflect on the comments and the protestors up North. Here we are running alongside a highway, passing the elementary, middle and high schools directly en route and no one really cares. Are they just happy because the weather is so nice, are they just aware of the lack of danger with such a shipment because they are used to it or is it a mixture of both? Whatever it is it is refreshing to see these people accept today as just another day in Fairfax, South Carolina.

John and Dave take the numerous opportunities that present themselves now to take photographs as we travel over the road crossings on our path towards Dumbarton. I find out that the Barnwell site is at the end of what is known as the Dumbarton spur. Dumbarton no longer exists as a town but there are still derelict properties and a cemetery there. Apparently back in the 1950's the DOE unpopulated a lot of towns in the area to form the Savannah River Test Site, quite spooky when you think about, especially when you realize that there once was a time when the Government could do such an unthinkable thing as throwing you out of your own home and town.

We get to approximately four miles from the spur and we change conductor and engineer as the current men are not qualified to travel the rest of the line. We arrive at the spur and stop to discuss the order of the cars for entry into the DCSF. We commence our journey again on this clay type elevated track that is specifically used for Barnwell traffic only, generally no more than 12 times a year. After a significant time we arrive at a siding where we will reorder the train, it is now 15:30 and this has taken much longer than anyone had guessed.

The train is split and ETMX1001 loaded with the 'device' Tim, Ken, Bill, Ray, two CSXT guys and I commence the final train journey to the DCSF. It is two miles and around some bending track. Ten minutes later we round the last corner and there are the gates with a welcoming committee, approximately ten people including John Bender, Kevin Milliken, Kev's father, John and Dave, this is great. The cameras are going at ten to the dozen as we crawl into the siding. We all climb off and hands are shook. A small group photo is taken because some of the guys are still with the balance of the train two miles down the track.

We go to get our dosimetry to keep inside the rules and regulations of the DCSF and we move to the next important job of the day, yes, the unloading of my motorcycle. Within five minutes it is safely off and by 17:30 it is loaded with all my gear following the arrival of the Caboose and Blue Ridge into the DCSF half an hour earlier.

The van is loaded and we commence our journey to Columbia, about 70 miles away where we will hopefully find a room and all meet up for dinner at around 20:00. I follow the van into Barnwell where Bill is dropped off at the Days Inn as he will stay with the ETMX1001 until the 'device' is off loaded next week. We say our goodbyes and it's on to Columbia. We arrive at the Sheraton about 19:45, check in and meet at the bar at 20:10. "20:10" I exclaim, I am filthy from taking the bike off the train and loading all of my luggage on but 20:10 it is. I literally dive in the shower, call home and clean my teeth at the same time. I quickly get dressed and down to the bar at five past, cool I've beaten all of them. I order a beer and call Greg to see how things have been on the site today. Things are going good then Ken walks through the foyer and I'm thinking he's coming down to join me for a drink while we wait for the others. Wrong, he has come to get me because they are all in the van waiting for me. I quickly say bye to Greg, finish and pay for my beer and it's off to the van.

Five minutes later were in the Wings and Ale establishment. As we walk in we are greeted by Kev, his wife and John Bender. "Where have you lot been? We've been here a half hour" Don't ask just get the beer. Steve Raupp rings me while we locate ourselves and he is full of congratulations to the whole team for the completion of a successful mission. I relay all my thanks to him and his team at Sargent and Lundy in Chicago for all their excellent work over the last four years allowing this all to conclude with this significant achievement. Tim wants a word so I pass the phone over and the beer arrives.

We all introduce each and everyone to everyone else and the night started in the way it was to go till the end. A great night that unfortunately has no place in this story except that I might say that I, and others, took great pleasure in drinking the Black and Tans I made throughout the evening, the cigars that Tim brought to celebrate and the triple figure wings Kev ordered to keep us full, oh and of course John Bender who paid for it all.



**A gas tanker in unison with the 'device' what is wrong with this picture, nothing!**



**John and Dave take pictures**



**Dave takes a break from driving**



**Ray, Bill, me, Tim, Dave, Ken and John**



**The FZ on Terra Firma after 8 days!**



**The FZ Loaded somewhere in SC**

## In Conclusion

The obvious question I'm sure I and all the others will be asked, "Would you do it again?" I answer, and I think for all of my friends too, yes, a most definite yes. What an experience, time doesn't seem to matter yet it does matter, the days roll into nights and the nights into day.

The characters I've meet on this trip. The professional journalist, Tim, who correctly needs to know all that is happening asking time after time similar questions so that he has got it right when the TV and press ask, so correct that he doesn't have to think about it. A great asset to have on such a potentially sensitive trip and a funny guy at the bar, thanks for the cigars Tim.

You've then got Ken the rail road and rail car owner extraordinaire who has an IQ level that enables him to be a member of MENSA, hardly ever sleeps through the night yet has time to tell us great rail stories in addition to educating us all on items ranging from rail road etiquette to the Rolling Stones - thanks also Ken for proof reading this. While were concluding the trip Ken advised the three types of rail road fanatic you get as known by the rail road people themselves. Firstly you have the 'Foamers', the type that foam at the mouth when they see a train, then you have the 'Glazers' whose eyes glaze over just when you talk about a train and then finally you have the 'FLMS' (pronounced Flims) 'Fan Living with MotherS, i.e. have no financial need to get a job hence spend every hour that is given to them watching the rails.

Then they're our three Mammoet friends, Abbot, Costello and Chessie, sorry, Ray, Bill with Ron, with about 100 years of rail service between them what can you say, everyone should be blessed with spending at least one day with guys like this, you'll never regret it. Even on the very last day Bill shouted across to me that their next trip was now delayed until November 7<sup>th</sup> so he had to go and start a Little League Baseball team ay home because he needs to find something to fill the spare time he has just acquired!

John, the licensing guru of the organization who takes things so seriously then at the drop of a hat becomes the life and soul of the party, great John, keep it up, here's to the next one.

Dave who did most of the van driving without a complaint, in fact at one stage I thought someone was going to need to wrestle the keys out of his hands. Thanks also for getting the provisions for us throughout the trip – a home from home. He is also driving the van back to Michigan with Tim; hope he lets Tim have a shot.

And finally but not least Bill Hoaglund, my buddy Bill whom, when he was staying on the train overnight always he had something to cheer the evening. Who else can say that they missed the train because they were in the middle of a cribbage tournament? We'll Bill can tell you, ask him if you get the chance. Thanks for proof reading too.

So that was that for the device delivered safely and not much more to do apart than looking for another job, at least I've got that 1200 mile ride home to look forward to.