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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Delaware & Hudson locomotive 7304, displaying the classic D&H "lightning stripe" livery, lumbers through a wintry mix of sleet and snow on the night of November 30, 2008. The Victorian-era passenger station in Westport, N.Y., was built for the D&H in 1875-1876.

Photo: copyright Gary Knapp



BLET calls for Positive Train Control following Metro-North fatality

STATEMENT BY BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT DENNIS R. PIERCE:

On December 1, 2013, a Metro-North train derailed in the Bronx, N.Y., killing four people and injuring dozens. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen represents more than 51,000 active and retired locomotive engineers and trainmen throughout the United States. While we are the largest union representing locomotive engineers in America, we do not currently represent locomotive engineers at Metro-North. In response to the accident, and in light of the multiple requests for comments from various news outlets, BLET issued the following statement from National President Dennis R. Pierce:

"First and foremost, the BLET extends our deepest sympathies to all accident victims and their loved ones. It is impossible for those who were not affected to understand the grief that now surrounds those who were, but it is paramount that the lessons from this tragedy are used to prevent any such loss in the future. Our thoughts and prayers are also with the professional and highly skilled locomotive engineers and conductors at Metro-North, who have expressed shock and sadness at the events of December 1.

"As to questions concerning the training that is provided to locomotive engineers, in general terms most engineers are seasoned veterans who receive years

of on-the-job training working as rail conductors or in other railroad crafts. They must also complete classroom training and numerous written and field tests prior to earning promotion to engineer. Locomotive engineers are subject to extensive certification requirements pursuant to the provisions of Part 240 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Under Part 240, each railroad must have in place a certification program approved by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). An individual railroad's certification program must meet minimum federal safety requirements for the eligibility, training, testing, certi-

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Members urged to call their member of Congress after BLET lobbies for two-person crew bill

In November, the BLET, working jointly with SMART-Transportation Division (formerly the United Transportation Union), made nearly 150 visits to members of the U.S. House of Representatives in support of H.R. 3040, the Safe Freight Act. The bill would mandate by federal law that two qualified individuals are in the cab of each freight train operating in the United States.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce and Vice

President & National Legislative Representative John Tolman led the team of BLET lobbyists, which also included: Texas State Legislative Board Chairman Terry Briggs; Ohio State Legislative Board Chairman Tim Hanely; District of Columbia State Legislative Board Chairman Herbert Harris; Pennsylvania State Legislative Board Chairman Ken Kertesz; Illinois State Legislative Board Chairman Paul Piekarski; Director of Regu-

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BLET President's Message

Cameras are not the answer **pg. 2**



CSX Santa Train

BLET Member Shawn Robinson helps Santa spread good will **pg. 5**

Adopt-A-Family

Division 34 (Columbus, Ohio) helping families in need for the holidays **pg. 6**


BLET PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY DENNIS R. PIERCE

CAMERAS ARE NOT THE ANSWER

AFTER THE METRO-NORTH FATALITY, POLITICIANS AND THE MEDIA ARE WRONG TO JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS

In the wake of the horrific accident on Metro-North Commuter Railroad, there have been several public calls for the installation of inward facing cameras in the cabs of all locomotives, which have suggested that videotaping locomotive engineers in the workplace will somehow reduce fatigue in the railroad industry. Nothing could be further from the truth, or could lead us further away from preventing another tragic accident. Cameras are essentially an accident investigation tool; they are not an accident prevention tool. Installation of cameras will provide the public nothing more than a false sense of security.

There are many factors that contribute to fatigue in our industry, but one thing is certain; locomotive engineers are true professionals who do their best to report for work fully rested. The fact of the matter is that engineers do not intentionally report to work fatigued by their own choice.

If we are to learn from fatigue related accidents in the railroad industry we must look at the actual causes of fatigue and not assume that training a camera on a fatigued engineer will somehow deter him or her from being tired, an assumption that borders on absurdity as it is not based in medical science. The only things in the cab of a moving locomotive that are



BLET Secretary-Treasurers who completed training courses in Cleveland during the week of December 15 visit the office of National President Pierce (seated) on December 18.

not machines are the locomotive engineers and trainmen assigned to that locomotive, who are human beings.

Engineers already place life and limb at risk when they are compelled to work tired, and filming them provides no deterrent to the risks we already face. To the contrary, these cameras will create yet another source of distraction from the engineer's work tasks. More than a century of research establishes that monitoring workers actually reduces the ability to perform complex tasks, such as operating a train, because of the distractive effect. But there are steps that can be taken that will truly reduce the effect of fatigue on safety in the railroad industry, and safeguard

against those occasions where fatigue overwhelms an engineer while operating a moving locomotive.

No locomotive engineer who attempts to call off from working due to fatigue should be subjected to disciplinary retaliation for so called "poor attendance." The majority of the nation's engineers in freight service, who operate side by side on the same tracks as passenger and commuter engineers, work unscheduled jobs. They are "on call" 24/7, 365 days a year and receive as little as an hour and half notice to report to work a twelve hour shift, in many cases with no reliable advance predictability as to their reporting time and after already being awake for twelve to sixteen hours.

No camera can realistically affect the human fatigue created by such an unpredictable work schedule.

I call today on all railroads that are currently suspending and/or terminating engineers for taking time off due to fatigue, because they cannot with certainty be rested for an unknown on-duty time, to stop this counter intuitive behavior immediately. Pressuring engineers to work tired through threat of the loss of their jobs is contributing to fatigue in the railroad industry and all but ensures that another fatigue related accident will happen.

Equally important is the implementation of Positive Train Control technology and I again call on the railroad industry,

the Federal Railroad Administration and Congress to see that this technology is implemented before another avoidable accident occurs. This technology would prevent a tired engineer from entering any speed restricted area too fast, and would prevent a fatigued engineer from passing a meeting point with a crowded passenger or commuter train. How many lives must be lost, and what cost in human life will this great nation tolerate, before the nations' railroads are required to take the steps available and necessary to truly protect their employees and the public in general from these avoidable accidents?

The true test of any solution is in its ability to prevent an accident. On the one hand, Positive Train Control will prevent these horrific accidents and the toll they take on those affected. On the other hand, should another accident occur due to Congress delaying the now required 2015 implementation of PTC, a camera in the cab would merely capture an image of the avoidable carnage that follows, but only in the unlikely event that the camera and recording apparatus is not destroyed in the accident. The problem that confronts us is obvious, and cameras in the cab are no solution to that problem.

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

66 There are many factors that contribute to fatigue in our industry, but one thing is certain; locomotive engineers are true professionals who do their best to report for work fully rested. The fact of the matter is that engineers do not intentionally report to work fatigued by their own choice. 99

METRO NORTH ACCIDENT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

fication and monitoring of its locomotive engineers. Locomotive engineers are then subject to annual testing to maintain their certification, and must be recertified every three years.

"With respect to fatigue, BLET has been at the forefront of efforts to mitigate fatigue amongst railroad engineers

and conductors. Although most passenger and commuter rail engineers and conductors work scheduled shifts, fatigue still occurs when work cycles are changed. In addition, most locomotive engineers who work for the freight railroads that run side by side with passenger operations must report for duty on an as-needed basis. They are on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. These demanding work schedules can re-

sult in instances of fatigue. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen has worked to ensure the safety of its members and the general public by seeking to resolve the issue of fatigue, either through the collective bargaining process or through the legislative arena.

"BLET has also called for the implementation of Positive Train Control technology for decades. This life-saving tech-

nology provides a safety overlay that assists locomotive engineers as they approach speed restrictions as well as required stops. History has shown that Positive Train Control could have prevented many of the fatalities and injuries suffered across the country by railroad employees and the general public. The BLET will continue in our efforts to see that this technology is implemented as soon as possible." ©

BLET NATIONAL DIVISION ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Official communications between BLET members and the National Division require a hard copy of the correspondence, bearing a signature, being received by the National President to be considered an "official communication." This is to provide that the actual question(s) are addressed, and ensures that when official

interpretations are made they have reference to a specific request and can be used in future correspondence.

The volume of e-mails received makes it impossible for the National President to answer all unofficial communications. Therefore, it is the policy of the BLET that e-mails addressed to the National President will be reviewed and forwarded to

the appropriate officer or staff for a timely response; however, an e-mail message is not considered an official communication.

Moreover, anonymous e-mails and e-mails that do not provide sufficient information concerning the sender to enable National Division staff to confirm the sender's membership status will not receive any reply or acknowledgement. This poli-

cy is intended to allow the National President to be aware of the opinions and suggestions of the membership, while at the same time providing a timely response to the member's unofficial communication, if a response is necessary, without needlessly expending limited BLET resources.

ADOPTED AT CLEVELAND, OHIO ON JULY 22, 2010. ©



GENERAL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY JAMES P. HOFFA

THE SECRECY SURROUNDING TPP MUST END

The Teamsters, other unions and fair trade advocates have for years criticized a proposed Pacific Rim trade deal for its lack of transparency. Now trade officials with the 12 nations negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) are paying the price for not having an open process as they can't seem to come to an agreement on the proposal.

Despite efforts to keep the deal out of public view, leaks have occurred that have led to concern and more questions. People here in the United States and across the globe increasingly believe they have a right to know how the TPP will affect them.

Negotiators know they are in



a race against time. As more details are secretly leaked about how the deal will affect workers and consumers, opposition is rising. Trade officials are suffering for engaging in a closed process.

The latest leaks show the U.S. is pushing forward with policies that further investor privileges and investor-state dispute settlement that expose our laws to foreign tribunals. They also expand

incentives to move more U.S. jobs abroad, hurting hard-working Americans who are already paying the price for previous financial policy disasters. Meanwhile, enforceable labor and environmental standards remain unresolved. And efforts to rein in unfair subsidies for state-owned entities like New Zealand's dairy industry remain undone.

The Teamsters set out key fair trade objectives for the TPP three years ago that we believed the proposed trade deal had to meet to earn our support. They are:

- Protect workers' rights through a strong labor chapter;
- Protect the environment through a strong environmental chapter;
- Protect American inves-

tors in the investment chapter — no "investor-state" dispute resolution;

- Protect food safety and family farmers; and
- Allow for "Buy American" government purchasing rules in the procurement chapter.

Well, we're not there yet. Or shall I say, we don't know if we're there yet. But either way, there needs to be more certainty for policymakers and the public if they are going to go along with such a deal. Americans deserve a bigger say in their future.

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA
TEAMSTERS GENERAL
PRESIDENT

66 Despite efforts to keep the deal out of public view, leaks have occurred that have led to concern and more questions. People here in the United States and across the globe increasingly believe they have a right to know how the TPP will affect them. 99

TWO-PERSON CREW BILL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

latory Affairs Vince Verna; and Director of Bylaws Administration John Fink.

President Pierce thanked all officers and members of both unions who took the time to walk Capitol Hill and get the unions' message to the members of congress. "Although I too met with members of Congress to make our case, it was the National Vice Presidents, State Chairmen, State Directors and Staff members of both unions who did the heavy lifting on the Hill. Efforts like this that show the true depth and strength of our legislative department and I am proud to have been there with them."

The legislation requires that "no freight train or light engine used in connection with the movement of freight may be operated unless it has a crew consisting of at least 2 individuals, one of whom is certified under regulations promulgated by the Federal Railroad Administration as a locomotive engineer pursuant to section 20135, and the other of whom is certified under regulations promulgated by the Federal Railroad Administration as a conductor pursuant to section 20163."

Representatives Michael Michaud (D-ME) and Chellie Pingree (D-ME) introduced the legislation on August 2 in the aftermath of the tragic accident in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, which heightened awareness of the risks of single person operations.

President Pierce asks BLET members to continue contacting their members of Congress at their home offices while they are on recess during the holidays.

TO FIND YOUR MEMBER OF THE U.S. HOUSE, GO TO WWW.HOUSE.GOV AND ENTER YOUR ZIP CODE.

The BLET, along with SMART-TD, has been working to gain co-sponsors for this bill since its introduction. The organizations recently sent a joint letter to all offices of the House of Representatives refuting memos sent to the Hill by the Association of American Railroads (AAR) and the American Shortline & Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) for the purpose of dissuading possible support of the legislation.

In the joint letter sent by BLET and SMART-TD, the unions noted that "[t]wo-person crews are the norm in both the U.S. and Canada. This bill will prevent a handful of rogue operators from endangering their employees and the communities through which they pass

"The railroad industry has become a safer place to work than ever before, in large part because of the professionals

who run the trains across America. And the folks who run our nation's trains agree that the safest way to operate a train is with at least two certified crew members. Our industry is reducing the number of fender bender accidents, but fatalities continue to be in the teens for on-duty railroad employees. H.R. 3040 -- the Safe Freight Act, is a bipartisan bill that will ensure that trains are operated safely everywhere in America."

To follow up on the lobbying effort, President Pierce asked BLET members, retirees, the BLET Auxiliary, and all concerned family members to contact their members of Congress to continue the effort to increase the number of co-sponsors.

"I urge all BLET members to contact their members of the U.S. House of Representatives and ask them to sign on to this vital piece of legislation," President Pierce said. "As the railroads noted in their letters to Congress, the issue is also going through the regulatory process as a result of Federal Railroad Administration Emergency Order 28, but that process isn't an exact science. A Congressional mandate will be the best way to ensure the safest manner of operations possible, and we believe that means having two qualified people on each freight train in this country."

VISIT THE BLET WEBSITE TO DOWNLOAD A PDF COPY OF THE JOINT BLET-SMART-TD LETTER:
WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PDF/HR-3040-JOINT-FINAL.PDF

BLET SUPPORTS CREATION OF COAL EXPORT FACILITY

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) is supporting the building of a job-creating coal export facility in Washington state.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce made the announcement in a November 15 letter. He said the union is supporting the Millennium Bulk Terminal in Longview, Wash., because it is expected to create many well-paying union jobs.

"The terminal will create more than 1,000 jobs during its construction and more than 100 permanent jobs after its completion, jobs that are sorely needed at this time of continuing high unemployment," President Pierce wrote.

The project is also expected to create new rail jobs, another key reason for the BLET's endorsement. "Eight trains per day will deliver coal to the terminal from the Powder River Basin in Montana and Wyoming, which is among the cleanest coal produced anywhere in the world, creating jobs for our members throughout the western United States," he wrote. "These well-paying, union jobs are the types of jobs our economy needs and the American people want, and the creation of this facility will provide them."

Pierce expressed confidence that the coal will be transported by rail in the safest manner possible.

"The safety record of these rail professionals who will transport this commodity is second to none," President Pierce wrote. "The transportation of coal by freight rail is safe, clean and reliable."

Situated along the Columbia River in Longview, Wash., the facility is expected to begin operations in 2015 and would export coal to emerging markets in Asia and beyond. According to media reports, Millennium officials expect to export about 44 million tons of coal annually from the proposed facility.

The BLET comments were submitted as part of the facility's public review and input process. ©©

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REGISTER AT WWW.BLE-T.ORG TO GET BROTHERHOOD NEWS EMAILED TO YOU

Stay up-to-date with the latest Brotherhood news by going to the BLET website and signing up to receive BLET News Flash alerts via email.

The News Flash alerts are news articles from the BLET National Division website that are sent automatically emailed to you.

TO REGISTER, JUST GO TO WWW.BLE-T.ORG. In the lower right hand corner of the page, you will find an area to

enter your email address to begin receiving the most current news from the BLET National Division.

It is a great way to keep informed on the most recent issues impacting your job, your contract and your Brotherhood.

Open enrollment begins January 1, 2014 for the BLET Short Term Disability Plan

Important changes and enhancements to Plan B coverage

Open Enrollment for 2014 under the BLET's Short Term Disability insurance plan begins on January 1, 2014 and runs through February 28, 2014. If you are a locomotive engineer working on a railroad that participated in the Wage/Rules portion of the National Agreement dated December 16, 2003 (as an example; BNSF, NS and Amtrak did not participate in this Plan so this information does not apply to engineers working on these properties), your coverage under Part A (described below) of the BLET Short Term Disability Plan will automatically continue. If you currently do not participate in Part B coverage (also described below), you may elect coverage during this enrollment period. If you currently participate and wish to opt out of Part B coverage, then you can also do so during this enrollment period.

PART A NON-OCCUPATIONAL DISABILITIES

Effective March 1, 2014, there will be no changes to Part A coverage:

- Your eligibility and \$40 premium is submitted by the railroad on a monthly basis.
- Part A pays \$402 per week for non-occupational disabilities only, up to 52 weeks. Occupational disabilities are not covered.
- Each eligible member is insured for \$50,000 of Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) coverage.
- There is a 14 day waiting period.

PART B OCCUPATIONAL DISABILITIES

Effective March 1, 2014, the cost for Part B coverage will be reduced significantly to \$18 per month. In addition, if you currently participate in Part B coverage or are currently eligible for Part A and enroll for Part B during this enrollment period, Part B will now also cover non-occupational disabilities if you are demoted to train service and become ineligible for Part A coverage after March 1, 2014.

Part B is voluntary. Participation in this additional occupational coverage is not required.



- The weekly benefit for occupational disabilities is \$402 per week, up to 52 weeks
- Each eligible member is insured for an additional \$50,000 of AD&D coverage. When participating in both Part A and Part B it is \$100,000 of AD&D coverage.
- The benefit is not subject to repayment upon receipt of a FELA settlement (no repayment after a personal injury settlement).
- The benefit is not considered taxable income.
- The Part B premium will be paid either via a payroll deduction (like your monthly union dues, although the premium payment is in addition to, not included in, your dues) or via an automatic monthly direct withdrawal authorization arranged with your banking/financial institution.
- There is a 14 day waiting period.

NOTE: UTU members working as engineers are eligible for Part A and may purchase Part B coverage by making an annual payment of \$226 to the BLET Trust Fund. (Complete the form at the link below and return to address noted by February 28, 2014.)

FILING A CLAIM FOR BLET SHORT TERM DISABILITY

- Call 1-800-858-6506 – MetLife Claim Center.
- Tell them you would like to file a claim under BLE-T Short Term Disability.
- Provide information requested, in-

cluding contact information for your attending physician(s).

- A Case Manager will be assigned and you will receive a file number, which you must keep available for future reference.
- Following the call, you will receive an authorization for release of medical information.
- Sign the document and return to MetLife.

IMPORTANT:

Your initial eligibility for Part B remains dependent on your eligibility for Part A. In order to be eligible for Part A, you must have seven (7) starts in a month with one (1) start as an engineer in the month prior to enrolling for coverage.

Effective March 1, 2014, if you are enrolled in Part B and are demoted to train service and become ineligible for Part A coverage, you will no longer have to notify the Secretary-Treasurer of your local division. Your Part B coverage will automatically cover you for both occupational and non-occupational disabilities until (1) you again become eligible for Part A, (2) elect to discontinue your payroll deduction for Part B coverage, or (3) are no longer a locomotive engineer working on a railroad that participated in the Wage/Rules portion of the National Agreement dated December 16, 2003.

CHOICES THAT MUST BE MADE BY FEBRUARY 28, 2014

If you currently do NOT participate in Part B and choose to do nothing, you

will continue to be eligible for Part A coverage only. If you are currently enrolled in Part B and wish to remain enrolled, then you are not required to take any action.

If you currently do NOT participate and would like to sign-up for Part B coverage during this open enrollment period, or if you DO currently participate and would like to opt-out of Part B coverage, you must complete and return the attached form (link below), by February 28, 2014, to the Secretary-Treasurer of your local division. Your election will become effective on March 1, 2014.

Members, who OPT-OUT of Part B coverage effective March 1, 2014, will not be eligible to enroll for the coverage until the next annual enrollment period. No exceptions will be made.

DESIGNATION OF BENEFICIARY(IES)

You are able to designate your beneficiary(ies) for the AD&D coverage on-line. If you would prefer to submit a paper beneficiary form, it is available on MetLife's website. A simple registration process is required the first time you access www.metlife.com/mybenefits. Designating your beneficiary(ies) will ensure that your benefit proceeds are paid according to your wishes. If you do not have a designation of beneficiary(ies) on file, proceeds will be paid according to the AD&D plan's facility of payment clause. Beneficiary designation for this coverage will not impact beneficiary designations for any other Life Insurance or AD&D plans that you may have with MetLife.

QUESTIONS

Anyone with questions regarding BLET Short Term Disability should contact Megan Mead, BLE-T Short Term Disability Administrator, at 216-241-2630 (ext. 205) or email at mead@ble-t.org. @@

**COPIES OF THE OPT-IN/OPT-OUT
FORMS ARE BELOW OR ONLINE AT:**
[WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PR/PDF/
2014_STD_OPT_IN_OUT.PDF](http://WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PR/PDF/2014_STD_OPT_IN_OUT.PDF)

[WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PR/PDF/
2014_STD_UTU_OPT_IN.PDF](http://WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PR/PDF/2014_STD_UTU_OPT_IN.PDF)

Photo: courtesy of Chase Gunnoe



BLET ENGINEERS ENROLLMENT 2014 OPT-IN/OPT-OUT FORM

PART B – BLET SHORT TERM DISABILITY INSURANCE PLAN

If you desire to OPT-IN or OPT-OUT of Part B coverage under the BLET Short Term Disability Insurance Plan, you must complete the remainder of this form. Be sure to include your signature and the date, and deliver to your Division Secretary/Treasurer. You may Opt-Out at any time.

"I _____ (Print your name here and sign below),
hereby choose to: (Mark with an "X")

____ OPT-IN ____ OPT-OUT

of the BLET Short Term Disability Insurance Plan, Part B. I understand that if I OPT-OUT, I may only seek enrollment in Part B during a future open enrollment period."

Signature: _____ Date: _____
BLET Div. #: _____ Phone Number: _____

Note: Division Secretary/Treasurer must keep a copy in the division records and forward a copy of the opt-in/opt-out to: Megan Mead, Special Representative BLET STD, 1370 Ontario St-Mezzanine, Cleveland OH 44113

DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 28, 2014



UTU-E ENGINEERS ENROLLMENT 2014 OPT-IN FORM

PART B – BLET SHORT TERM DISABILITY INSURANCE PLAN

If you desire to OPT-IN to Part B coverage for 2014 under the BLET Short Term Disability Insurance Plan, you must be eligible for Part A. If you purchased coverage for 2014, your coverage will end on December 31, 2014. Complete the remainder of this form. Be sure to include your signature and the date. A check made out to the "BLET Trust Fund" for \$226 should be sent by February 28, 2014 to:

Megan Mead, Special Representative
BLET STD
1370 Ontario St - Mezzanine
Cleveland OH 44113

"I _____ (Print your name here and sign below),
hereby choose to OPT-IN to the BLET Short Term Disability Insurance Plan, Part B."

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Address: _____ City/State _____
Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____
Railroad: _____ UTU Local # _____

DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 28, 2014

BLET HELPS SANTA SPREAD HOLIDAY CHEER

Div. 781's Shawn Robinson operated 2013 CSX Santa Claus Special

Spreading good will and holiday cheer, Santa Claus made his annual visit to Appalachia the weekend of November 23, 2013. But he swapped his sleigh and eight tiny reindeer for a ride on a CSX train.

With a little help from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and hundreds of other volunteers, Santa delivered 15 tons of gifts, candy and food at 14 stops along the 110-mile route of the 71st annual CSX Santa Claus Special.

BLET Locomotive Engineer T. Shawn Robinson, Vice President of Division 781 (Erwin, Tenn.), was behind the throttle of the 2013 Santa Train as it wound its way through the rural mountain communities of eastern Kentucky, western Virginia and northeast Tennessee.

Brother Robinson expertly and professionally piloted the Santa Train, keeping everyone safe and on schedule. It was his first time operating the Santa Train, but he is intricately familiar with the route. Brother Robinson works out of Erwin, Tenn. along CSX's Kingsport Subdivision, and he normally runs trains between Erwin and Shelby, Ky. The Santa Train runs south from Shelby to Kingsport, Tenn.

He credits his daughter, six year old Morgan, for inspiring him to bid on the Santa Train job.

"My little girl was pretty excited about it," Brother Robinson said. "She saw a photo of last year's train and got pretty fired up. I thought it might make her day if I ran the train this year."

Robinson continued: "She got a kick out of telling her friends that her daddy was driving Santa Claus around."

The 2013 Santa Claus train was co-sponsored by CSX, the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce, Food City, and Dignity U Wear. Once the train reaches the end of the line in Kingsport, Santa disembarks the train and then serves as Grand Marshall of the Kingsport annual Christmas parade.

The Santa Train is one of Appalachia's most anticipated holiday traditions, and Brother Robinson knows first-hand its importance to the region. He was born and raised in eastern Kentucky.

"For some kids this will be the only Christmas they get," he said. "I hope CSX keeps doing it every year."



Brother T. Shawn Robinson, Vice President of Division 781, proudly worked as locomotive engineer on the 2013 Santa Claus Special. He kept everyone safe and on-time throughout the day.

Brother Robinson said enjoyed being a part of the Santa Train tradition.

"I thought it would be fun and I had a blast," he said. "I enjoyed seeing all the crowds and all the kids."

Brother Robinson is not the only BLET member who worked as one of Santa's elves. David P. Fitzgerald Jr., Secretary-Treasurer of Division 781, and Tim Love, Division 781 Safety Committee Chairman, lead a team of volunteers who comprised the Santa Train's Safety Team. Members of the Safety Team arrived in advance of the train and provided protection at each of the 14 stops along the route. They used yellow caution tape to keep crowds at a safe distance from the train as it stopped at each location. They coordinated with members of the operating crew on board the train, giving the engineer confidence and peace of mind as he operated the locomotive in such close proximity to so many pedestrians.

Including the departure city of Shelby, Ky., the train stopped at: Marrowbone, Ky.; Elkhorn, Ky.; Toms Bottom, Va.; Haysi, Va.; Clinchco, Va.; Freemont, Va.; Dante, Va.; St. Paul, Va.; Dungannon, Va.; Fort Blackmore, Va.; Kermit, Va.; Waycross, Tenn.; and Kingsport, Tenn. ©©



The Santa Claus Special made 14 stops along its 110-mile route, donating 15 tons of gifts along the way. Singer Kree Harrison, runner-up during Season 12 of "American Idol," was the special musical guest as the train made its 71st annual run.

2013 HOLIDAY GREETING FROM THE BLET AUXILIARY

BY ANITA J. CARUSO
NATIONAL PRESIDENT, BLET AUXILIARY



On behalf of the BLET Auxiliary National Officers and our members, I would like to wish you and your family a truly special holiday season! As the last of the autumn leaves have been swept into the atmosphere, we anxiously await the last of the four seasons to begin.

This time of the year always gives me pause for reflection on events that have taken place during the year. There are so many things to be thankful for, family being at the top of the list, but I would like to touch on a couple of things that touched my heart this year.

I am appreciative that the BLET hon-

ored the Auxiliary by inviting us to be a part of their historic 150th Anniversary celebration in early May in Detroit, Michigan. It was a pleasure to attend this day in history with the BLET National Officers, brothers, sisters and guests who attended this once in a lifetime event as we celebrated the rich history of this great union.

I feel a great deal of pride in the rich history of the BLET Auxiliary as we celebrated our 126th Anniversary on October 16, 2013. I am proud to follow in the footsteps of our first President Letitia B. Murdoch, who was President from 1887 to 1919. She was a widow when she organized our

first Auxiliary in Chicago, Illinois. She was remarkable role model and a true inspiration to all future auxiliary members because of her foresight and tenacity.

Happy Holidays to all BLET National Officers, members, and supporters of the BLET Auxiliary. I give thanks to our troops who bravely serve our nation thus allowing us to enjoy the blessings of the season. I wish to thank all auxiliary members for continuing to believe in the mission of the BLET Auxiliary, continuing to remain steadfast in your membership and continuing to make my term as your National President a most treasured part of my life. ©©

Division 34 seeks support for families in need this holiday season

For the ninth year in a row, the members of BLET Division 34 (Columbus, Ohio) are generously sharing their good fortune and helping those in need through their annual Adopt-A-Family program.

"It seems like time has gone by so fast, but by the end of the year, we will have 80 children as part of our family in only 9 years," wrote Jeffrey L. Murray, Legislative Representative of Division 34. "We couldn't have imagined nine years ago that we would have come this far. This year is no different as God has seen fit to bring three deserving families to us for help."

The three families that Division 34 will adopt this year have a combined total of 9 total children.

THE KIMES FAMILY

Steve and Ryan Kimes have four children. Brother Murray reports that the last few years have been tremendously difficult for them as Steve has had significant knee problems, including three surgeries (two reconstructions). He works in construction/maintenance, and during all three knee surgeries, he was on probation with a new employer and each time they were unable to hold his position for him. His wife Ryan works as an administrator at a doctor's office, which isn't quite enough to support a family of six. Brother Murray reports that Steve's rehabilitation is going well, but he is at least six months away from being able to return to work. Their children are: Tristan, 16; Deakin, 13, Ally, 11; and Nia, 9.

THE JOUADI FAMILY

The past six months have been a rough go for Youssef and Sara Jouadi and their two children. In 2009, Youssef was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. He has a culinary background and has worked as a chef at the same company for the last 15 years. However, they were purchased by a larger company that was unwilling to retain him. His health condition now requires that he walk with a cane, which presents obstacles in finding employment in his field. Earlier this year, a fire broke out in their home's garage. Sara was at home with the children and they were able to escape unharmed, but the fire spread and their home was a near total loss. All of their belongings inside the home were destroyed. Brother Murray reports that the Jouadi family is one that focuses on needs and not wants. "In true Division 34 fashion we feel the need to



Adopt-A-Family: Each year, the members of BLET Division 34 (Columbus, Ohio) adopt a family (or families) in need for the holidays. These families would otherwise be unable to provide Christmas gifts for their children without the generosity of the good Brothers and Sisters of Division 34. The Division adopted three families with 9 total children this year, and 80 children overall since they began the Adopt-A-Family program nine years ago.

take care of these kids at Christmas and let them know everything is going to be OK," Murray said. The Jouadi children are: Zitounia, 8; and Kenny, 5.

THE MATHENEY FAMILY

Division 34's third adopted family is one with young children dealing with an incredibly difficult situation. The Matheney children were just recently removed from their home and are in the care of their grandmother and great grandmother. The grandmother barely makes minimum wage and their 73-year-old great grandmother is on a fixed income, but she cleans houses part time to help make ends meet. The transition of custody, along with the delay in receiving benefits for the children has put a financial strain on the grandmother and great grandmother. Brother Murray indicates they would not be able to provide Christmas gifts for the grandchildren without outside assistance. The Matheney children are: Johnny, 10; Brandi, 8; and Chevy, six months old.

A HELPING HAND

After helping so many children over the past seven years, Brother Murray and the members of Division 34 are soliciting donations to help the three families and nine children in 2013.

"None of this would be possible without the support we have received from outside individuals and organizations," Murray said. "Any assistance you or your organization can provide would be a tremendous help in continuing this great program. I want to make clear that every penny received is given to these families."

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce thanked Brother Murray and



the members of Division 34 for their continued generosity and benevolence. President Pierce noted that the National Division is presenting a check for \$500 to the Adopt-A-Family program, as it has been done for the past several years.

"This is a worthwhile cause and I am proud to again support Division 34," President Pierce said. "It is especially heartwarming to see the generosity of railroaders during this time of year. We have been

blessed and I believe it is incumbent upon us to lend a helping hand to those in need."

If you wish to help, contact Brother Jeff Murray by email, Murrays3@hotmail.com, or you can make a donation to:

BLET DIVISION 34

115 GROVE RUN RD.

COMMERCIAL POINT, OHIO 43116

Please make checks payable to Division 34 and put "Adopt-A-Family" in the memo line. @@

RAIL WORKER HEALTH CARE COVERAGE EXTENDED TO LEGALLY MARRIED SAME-SEX SPOUSES

Effective January 1, 2014, The Railroad Employees National Health and Welfare Plan (GA-23000), The Railroad Employees National Dental Plan (GP-12000), The Railroad Employees National Vision Plan, and the Railroad Employees National Early Retirement Major Medical Benefit Plan (GA-46000) will provide dependent coverage for legally married same-sex spouses of eligible employees.

Although the benefit is not required by law or under current collective bargaining agreements, Rail

Labor and Rail Management reached an agreement to extend dependent coverage to eligible employee's legally married same sex spouse. The agreement reached is in light of recent changes allowing same-sex couples to access the same federal tax benefits provided to other married couples.

Employees will receive additional details concerning this coverage in the coming weeks. The National Health and Welfare Plans cover approximately 400,000 lives at an annual cost of approximately \$2 billion. @@



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Railroad Retirement and Unemployment Insurance taxes in 2014

The amounts of compensation subject to railroad retirement tier I and tier II payroll taxes will increase in 2014, while the tier I and tier II tax rates will remain the same on both railroad employers and employees. Also, railroad unemployment insurance contribution rates paid by employers will not include a surcharge in 2014.

TIER I AND MEDICARE TAX

The railroad retirement tier I payroll tax rate on covered rail employers and employees for the year 2014 remains at 7.65 percent. The railroad retirement tier I tax rate is the same as the social security tax, and for withholding and reporting purposes is divided into 6.20 percent for retirement and 1.45 percent for Medicare hospital insurance. The maximum amount of an employee's earnings subject to the 6.20 percent rate increases from \$113,700 to \$117,000 in 2014, but there is no maximum on earnings subject to the 1.45 percent Medicare rate.

An additional Medicare payroll tax of 0.9 percent applies to an individual's in-

come exceeding \$200,000, or \$250,000 for a married couple filing a joint tax return. While employers will begin withholding the additional Medicare tax as soon as an individual's wages exceed the \$200,000 threshold, the final amount owed or refunded will be calculated as part of the individual's Federal income tax return.

TIER II TAX

The railroad retirement tier II tax rate on employees will remain 4.4 percent in 2014, and the employers' rate will stay at 12.6 percent. The maximum amount of earnings subject to railroad retirement tier II taxes will increase from \$84,300 to \$87,000 in 2014. Since 2004, tier II tax rates

are based on an average account benefits ratio reflecting railroad retirement fund levels. Depending on this ratio, the tier II tax rate for employees can be between 0 percent and 4.9 percent, while the tier II rate for employers can range between 8.2 percent and 22.1 percent.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS

Employers, but not employees, pay railroad unemployment insurance contributions, which are experience-rated by employer. The Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act also provides for a surcharge in the event the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account balance falls below an indexed threshold amount. The

accrual balance of the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account was \$204.2 million on June 30, 2013. Since the balance exceeded the indexed threshold of \$144.8 million, no surcharge applies to the basic contribution rates for 2014. There was also no surcharge in 2013, although a surcharge of 1.5 percent applied in 2012.

As a result, the unemployment insurance contribution rates on railroad employers in 2014 will range from the minimum basic rate of 0.65 percent to the maximum of 12 percent on monthly compensation up to \$1,440, an increase from \$1,405 in 2013.

In 2014, the minimum rate of 0.65 percent will apply to 79 percent of covered employers, with 9 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent.

During the year, new employers will pay an unemployment insurance contribution rate of 4.53 percent, which represents the average rate paid by all employers in the period 2010-2012. ©©

2014

Calendar & Events

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

BLET REGIONAL MEETINGS

June 15-19, 2014

87th Annual Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA)
SAVANNAH, GA.

Arrangements Chairman D.C. Dickey, Local Chairman of Division 646, welcomes all BLET members to beautiful Savannah, Ga., for the 2014 SMA. At the Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa. More details to come!

June 29-July 3, 2014

74th Annual International Western Convention (IWC)
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

Arrangements Chairman David K. Brown, Chairman of the Minnesota State Legislative Board and Legislative Rep. of Division 517, will host the 2014 IWC at the Hilton Minneapolis. More details to come!

August 4-8, 2014

76th Annual Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA)
CLEVELAND, OHIO

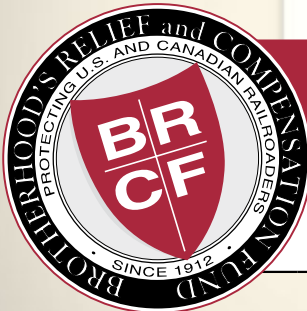
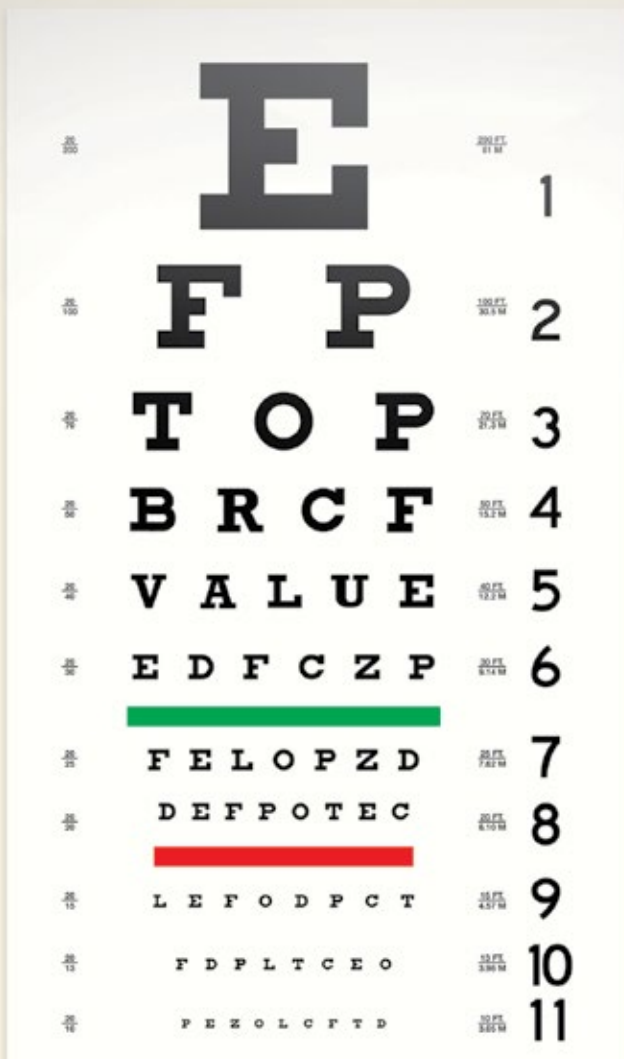
Arrangements Chairman Patrick Redmond, Local Chairman of Division 607, and Co-Chair James R. Blum, Legislative Rep. of Division 526, welcome all BLET members to Cleveland for the 2014 EUMA. Guests will stay at the newly-renovated Westin Downtown Cleveland, within easy walking distance of BLET National Division headquarters. More details to come!

September 7-11, 2014

79th Annual Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM)
ST. LOUIS, MO.

Arrangements Chairman Dave W. Grimes, Local Chairman of Division 42, will host the 2014 SWCM at the Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark Hotel. For more information, visit the SWCM website: bletsbcm.org.

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Photo of the Month: November/December 2013

1906: With their locomotive buried in snow, Brother F.L. Cowan (left), Division 713, and his fireman (unidentified), are forced to stop near Helper, Utah. Photo: BLET Archives **This is the eighth in a series of photos from the BLET archives that will be published this year in recognition of the Organization's 150th anniversary.**



Are you a photographer? The National Division's Public Relations Department, which produces the Newsletter each month, has received numerous inquiries lately from BLET members volunteering to contribute their

images to the "Photo of the Month" section of the Newsletter. If you'd like to submit a photo for consideration, you may call Editor John Bentley at (216) 241-2630, ext. 248, or you can email: Bentley@ble-t.org.

Please note only high resolution images can be used. Members are also encouraged to review their employer's policies regarding the use of cameras and other electronic devices while on duty.

Advisory Board September 2013 Activity

In accordance with the BLET Bylaws, summaries of BLET Advisory Board members' activities are published monthly:

NATIONAL PRESIDENT DENNIS R. PIERCE: National Division Office, Cleveland; General supervision of BLET activities; General office duties; Correspondence and telephone communications; Supervision of Office Administration; General Supervision of Special Representatives; President, Teamsters Rail Conference; Policy Committee, Teamsters Rail Conference; Oregon State Legislative Board mtg., Portland, Ore.; IBT General Executive Board mtg., Monterey, Calif.; National Mediation Board mtg., Chicago; National Association of Railroad Referees Annual Meeting, Chicago; BLET Legislative Representative Workshop, Washington, D.C.; NS-Northern Lines/W&LE GCA quadrennial session, Cleveland.

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT E.L. (LEE) PRUITT: National Duties include but not limited to: Director, Passenger Dept.; Shortline Organizing Dept.; Trainmen's Dept.; National Publications Committee; National Legislative Board; Teamsters Rail Conference Policy Committee; PRAC; and National Negotiations; Labor Day holiday; NYD negotiations, Houston; Inward facing cameras mtg., Kansas City; Vacation; Legislative Rep. Workshop, Washington, D.C.

NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER WILLIAM C. WALPERT: General supervision of accounting dept., records dept., online services dept., tax compliance dept.; Education & Training Dept.; Internal Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept.; Safety Task Force; Meetings with vendors and financial institutions; Publications Committee; Teamsters Rail Conference Policy Committee; Trustee, National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust (NRRIT); Labor Day holiday; Midwest Rail Craft Scholarship fund; BLET Legislative Representative Workshop, Washington, D.C.; NS-Northern Lines/W&LE GCA quadrennial session, Cleveland.

VICE PRESIDENT & NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P. TOLMAN: Assigned to BLET Washington, DC office; General office duties, telephone and correspondence communications; Coordinate content of NLO website; Weekly PAC committee and legislative mtgs. Attended IBT Political Coordinators Monthly mtg.; Oregon State Legislative Board triennial mtg., Portland, Ore.; Mtg. w/ several House of Representatives and Senators on the Safe Freight Act legislation, PTC, FMLA, PRIIA, RSIA and Sequestration, Washington, D.C.; Mtgs. w/ various railroads, governmental affairs; Labor Day MA breakfast, Boston; BLET Legislative Representative Workshop, Washington, D.C.; Legislative and political event for the Dean of MA, Congressman Neal, MA; NS-Northern Lines/W&LE GCA quadrennial session, Cleveland; Various receptions and other mtgs. with members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate.

VICE PRESIDENT MARCUS J. RUEF: Vice Chairman, full NRAB; Labor Member, 1st Division; Labor Member, National Mediation Board Arbitration Advisory Forum; Director of Arbitration Dept; Assigned to Illinois Central; Wisconsin Central; Elgin, Joliet & Eastern; Indiana Harbor Belt; and Belt Railway of Chicago; Labor Day holiday; Study dockets for referee hearings, NRAB; Assist GC Cundari w/ rules issues, IHB, Chicago; NRAB hearings, Referee Darby; Assist GC Reynolds w/ discipline cases, WC, Chicago; Division 10 special mtg., IC tentative agreement, IC, Chicago; NRAB Labor Members' forum, ROAR mtgs., Annual Section 3 Committee mtgs., NRAB annual mtgs., Chicago; Address NMB mediator training class, NRAB, Washington, D.C.; Special mtgs. w/ GC Craddock, IC tentative agreement, Dubuque, IA, Ft. Dodge, IA, Waterloo, IA, Champaign, Ill.

VICE PRESIDENT MIKE TWOMBLY: Assigned to all Union Pacific GCAs (Eastern District, Northern Region (former C&NW), Western Lines (Pacific Harbor Lines), Western Region (Portland & Western), Central Region, Southern Region; On duty at home office; Union Pacific-South-

ern Region New York Dock Section 4 negotiations, Fort Worth, Texas; Utah Railway, switching dispute, Salt Lake City, Utah.

VICE PRESIDENT GIL GORE: Assigned to all CSX; Grand Trunk Western; Union Pacific-Southern Region GCA special assignment; Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) issues, CSXT; General office duties, paperwork, correspondence, emails, telephone calls, etc.; Mtg. w/ GC Tony Smith, re: Dropped turns, Jacksonville, Fla.; Advisory Board mtg., Cleveland; Public Law Board w/ GC Matt Thornton, CSX, Cleveland; MARC negotiations, conference call, CSX; Advisory Board conference call.

VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. PRIESTER: Assigned to all BNSF (former ATSF, former C&S, CRI&P, FWD, former STL-SF, BNSF/MRL), Panhandle Northern, Missouri & North Arkansas, Montana Rail Link, Austin Western RR, Great Western; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; Oregon State Legislative Board triennial session, Seattle, Wash.; Mtg. w/ BNSF Labor Relations w/ GC Wilson, Billings, Mont.; National Association of Railroad Referees mtg., Chicago; Division 739 meeting, w/ GC Holdcraft, Bakersfield, Calif.; BNSF Safety Coordinators mtg. w/ General Chairmen Wilson, Brown, Holdcraft and Thurman, Fort Worth, Texas.

VICE PRESIDENT COLE W. DAVIS: Assigned to: Kansas City Southern (MidSouth Rail, South-Rail, Gateway Western, Illinois & Midland), Texas Mexican Rwy.; CP Rail System/US (Indiana Southern, Iowa, Chicago & Eastern, Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern); Springfield Terminal (St. Lawrence & Atlantic, Montreal, Maine & Atlantic, Delaware & Hudson), Cedar River, Louisville & Indiana, Huron & Eastern; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; KCS issues, assisting GC Parker; Tex Mex issues, assisting GC Rodriguez; Huron & Eastern issues, assisting GC Barriger; CP Rail and DM&E issues, assisting GC Semenak; Louisville & Indiana RR issues, assisting GC Hatrill; Mid South, assisting GC Craddock; Democratic National Committee, Baltimore; Huron & Eastern issues, assisting GC Barriger; Springfield Terminal, MMA and D&H issues, assisting GC Moore; Tex Mex issues, assisting GC Rodriguez; IWC regional mtg., San Francisco; NS Northern Lines and W&LE issues, assisting GC Linsey; EUMA regional mtg., Baltimore.

VICE PRESIDENT STEPHEN J. BRUNO: Assigned to various Rail Safety Advisory Committees (RSAC); Regulatory duties as assigned by the President; Amtrak; Long Island Rail Road; New York & Atlantic; Metro North; New Jersey Transit; PATH; SEPTA; Metra; Union Railroad; Birmingham Southern; Telephone calls, correspondence, email, general office duties, etc.; Vacation; Metro-North mtgs.; RSAC FMP, RSAC FMP labor caucus, Washington, D.C.; Mtg. w/ staff of Congressman Schwartz and Brady, re: NMB PEG, Washington, D.C.; Metra, CP, CN contract negotiations internal discussions; Metra contract discussions, Chicago; NARR conference, Chicago.

VICE PRESIDENT R.C. (RICK) GIBBONS: Assigned to: All Norfolk Southern General Committees; Wheeling & Lake Erie; Chicago, Fort Wayne & Eastern; New York, Susquehanna & Western; New England Central; Connecticut Southern; Western New York & Pennsylvania; Indiana & Ohio; Ohio Central; RSAC/RSIA Fatigue Management Group; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications; WLE mediation, assist GC Linsey, St. Louis, Mo.; RSAC-RSIA Fatigue Management Group mtgs., Washington, D.C.; SBA 1063, Chicago; NARR mtgs., Chicago; W&LE mediation, Chicago; NS-Northern Lines GCA quadrennial session, Cleveland.

JOHN EDGAR THOMSON FOUNDATION PROVIDES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO DAUGHTERS OF DECEASED RAILROADERS

The John Edgar Thomson Foundation, a nationally recognized non-profit organization, provides limited financial assistance to daughters of deceased railroad employees.

The Foundation was established in 1882 and endowed by the will of John Edgar Thomson, who was the third president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Although childless, he left a large endowment for orphaned daughters of railroad employees to help maintain their good health and to provide for their higher education. Since its creation, the Thomson Foundation has assisted

countless families in their transition back to a normal life.

In order to be considered for a grant, the deceased parent (regardless of gender) must have been actively employed by a railroad in the United States at the time of death, although the cause does not need to be work-related. The parent, while on the active rolls of the railroad, may have been receiving disability or sick leave benefits at the time of death.

Additionally, the daughter must be living with her remaining parent or guardian full time, unless attending college, to qualify for an award. To remain eligible, the Foundation

specifically requires that both the daughter and her parent/guardian must remain unmarried in order to receive aid. The family's financial status is also considered in the selection process.

The grant is available to daughters of the deceased throughout their infancy until the age of 18. It can be continued, however, until the recipient reaches 24 years of age provided that she is in pursuit of higher education. Whatever grant is awarded usually serves to benefit all members of the family. The Foundation also offers special health care benefits.

All applications are subjected

to the approval of the Thomson Foundation's Board of Trustees. The funding for the work of the Foundation is completely independent of any railroad, and it neither solicits nor receives funds from the public.

For further information, please contact Director Sheila Cohen, at:

THE JOHN EDGAR THOMSON FOUNDATION

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