

JUNE 1979 / \$1.50

ICD08848

Trains

THE MAGAZINE OF RAILROADING

MILWAUKEE ROAD: Two more mountains to cross

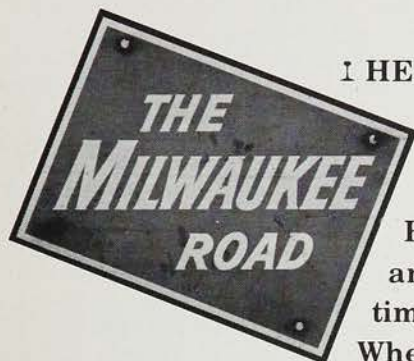




Of ryegrass and evergreen

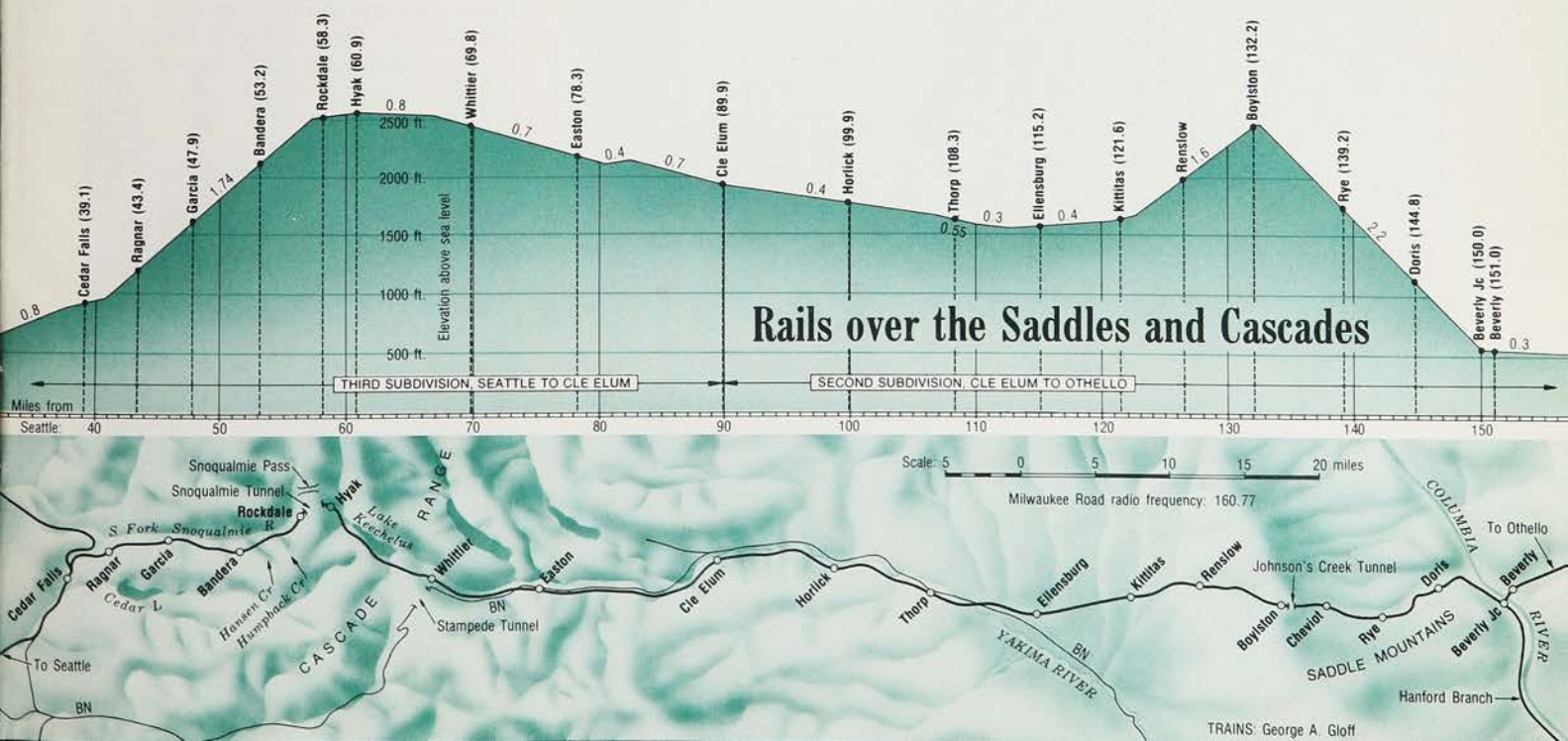
Two more mountains to cross

photo essay / **BLAIR KOOISTRA**



I HEAT and cold, desert and alpine mountains, ryegrass and evergreen—there are extreme contrasts in the 111.9 miles of the Second Subdivision of the Milwaukee Road's Washington Division, between Beverly, Wash., on the east slope of the Saddle Range and Cedar Falls on the west slope of the Cascades. At times it is snow in the Cascades and rain in the Saddles. Whereas the Saddles are beset with rattlesnakes and

scorpions, the thick underbrush of the Cascades is inhabited by deer and elk in mountains where winter lasts eight months and fall lasts four. In the Saddles, Milwaukee tracks sidestep desert hills inaccessible to the public without four-wheel-drive buggies; in the Cascades, the rails claw mountainsides to gain access to that region of seemingly perpetual rain, Puget Sound. Eye-opening miles, these. See here as Extra 23 East (train 202) struggles up 1.74 per cent on the spectacular bridge over Hansen Creek on the west slope of the Cascades. Unfortunately, Milwaukee's trustee has declared his property redundant west of the Twin Cities. Milwaukee Road in the best of settings may be doomed. I offer this portfolio of the railroad in the Cascades and the Saddles (both are mountain ranges, but there the similarity ends) in remembrance. Dig it while you can.



Cascade crossing

FIGHTING a summer rainstorm, late-running train 200 soars high above Hansen Creek on one of four bridges the Milwaukee Road thrust over mountain streams when the transcontinental built into Puget Sound in 1909. The Cascade crossing was one of the railroad's more monumental efforts, told in ledges carved out hundreds of feet above the valley floor and in concrete cribbing poured to provide a roadbed where there had been barely room for donkey trails. Not all of the construction battles were fought against rock. There were winter snowslides and spring mudslides to contend with, particularly in the Humpback Creek area below the summit, where early logging operations had stripped the mountain of cedar and replaced it with light brush, necessitating the protection of snowsheds.

IN 1979, three of the sheds survive on the pass. Two are along Lake Keechulus east of Hyak; the third, at Humpback Creek below Rockdale, is exited by westbound train 201-C on January 3, 1979. The two SD40-2's up front and the pair of SD mid-train slaves are in dynamic braking as they descend the 1.74 per cent from Snoqualmie Summit.

WHEN completed, the Puget Sound Extension offered passengers and shippers the shortest route to Chicago, lesser grades than the competition (1.74 per cent compared with 2.2 of Great Northern and Northern Pacific), and the latest of technological wonders: tricolor signals. Nature photographer Asahel Curtis was hired by the passenger department to commit views of pristine bi-polar motors and orange trains to 8x10-inch glass-plate negatives. Seventy years after the last spike was driven, the Extension is no longer able to ward off the competition. The original Union Switch & Signal tricolor lights rust forlornly on the west side of the pass near Garcia (Garsh-ya), their block occupancy lights of oil-burning heritage as dated as the railroad. The years have not changed the scenery,

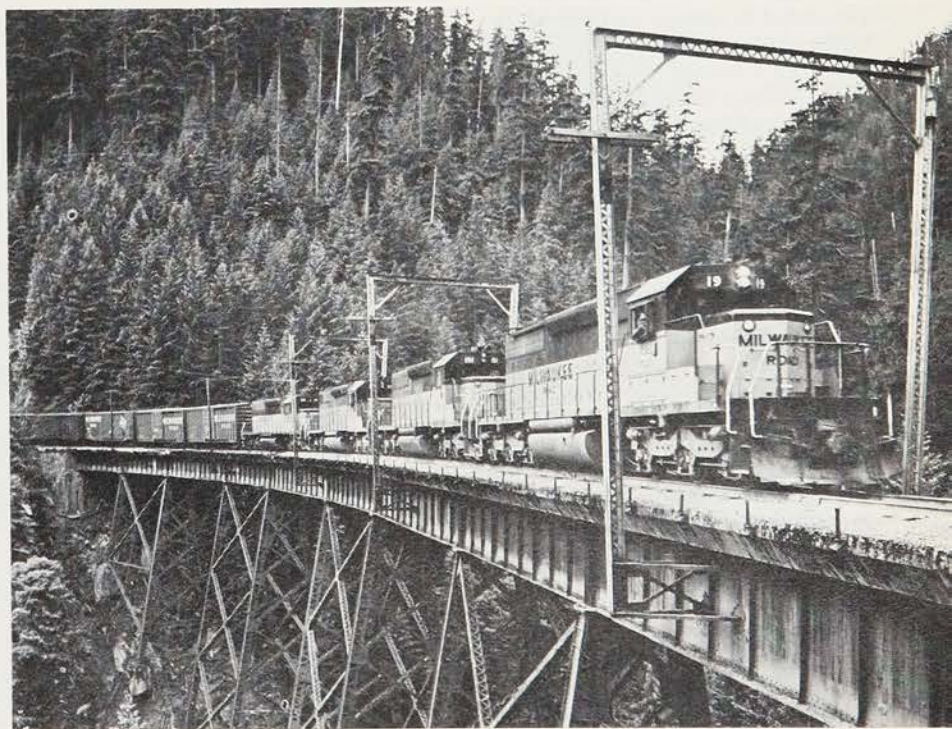
SOARING HIGH over Hansen Creek with train 200 during a rainstorm.



WHINING downgrade in dynamic braking, SD40-2's exit Humpback Creek snowshed with 201-C January 3, 1979.



ONCE upon a time, an innovation.



SD40-2'S standing in for the Olympian on Hall Creek bridge.



GARCIA . . . no more siding.

however, and it still is possible to stand at Hall Creek bridge and watch westbound train 205 cruise over the same structure on which the Olympian posed for Curtis. The bridge no longer is black, though, but etched by rust and peeling paint.

PROGRESS has seen the demise of all passing sidings on the west slope of the mountain between Cedar Falls and Hyak. The last of them, Garcia, was gone by mid-1978, obliging eastbound trains to hold at Cedar Falls for as long as 2 hours waiting for westbounds to pop into town. On August 20, 1978, Extra 22 West, led by four SD40-2's including Bicentennial 156 (since repainted to orange and black), is observed by brakeman Mike Schwab from the front porch of the SD on the front of train 202 at "Cedar." Barely 60 miles out of Tacoma where they went on duty, 202's crew has been on the job nearly 6 hours.

Up the pass at Garcia, track patrolman Jeff Jensen and dog Duke work the log patrol in Milwaukee timberland leased to Weyerhaeuser. Jensen spends his 8-hour shift aboard bumper-sticker-spangled track speeder 8012, keeping an eye out for errant logs from tree-harvesting work which could foul the right of way. Near day's end, Jensen chats with a Weyerhaeuser employee and highballs a passing log truck headed for the mills down the valley in Snoqualmie. Winter snows are only days away. Logging operations will soon cease and Jensen will take on a new assignment at his home in Hyak.

ONE of several workers living in the company houses at Hyak, Jensen spends his winters being on call 24



BRAKEMAN Mike Schwab looks over Extra 22 West from the front porch of



GERMAN SHEPHERD Duke waits for his master Jeff Jensen on 8012.



SD40-2 No. 161 at Cedar Falls as his train, No. 202, waits in the siding.

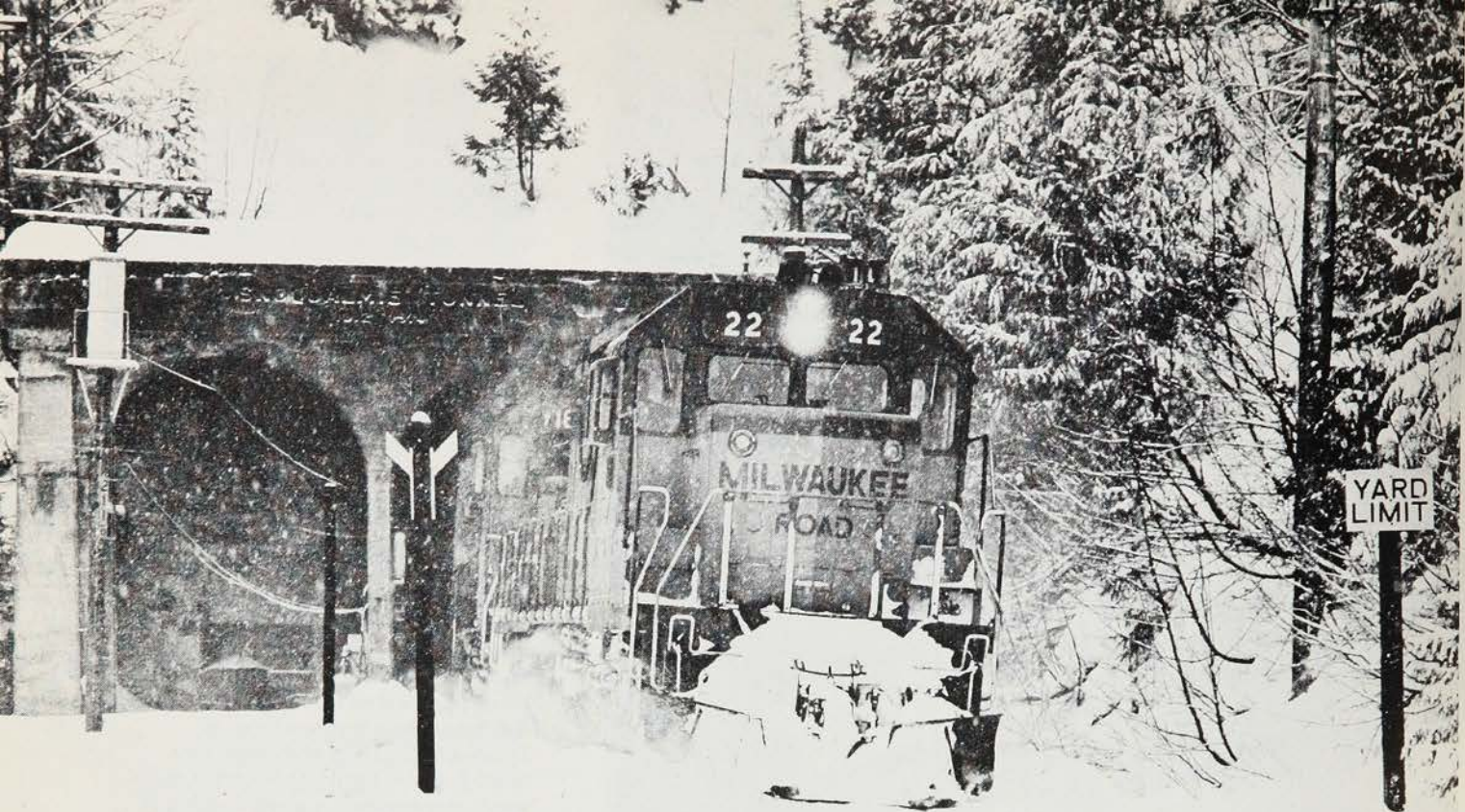
hours a day. When the snows hit, he's out shoveling snow from switches, clearing the main line and passing tracks with a bulldozer, and manually operating the doors at the east portal of the 11,890-foot-long Snoqualmie Tunnel. Constructed during 1912-1914, the tunnel eliminated a temporary line over the pass with grades up to 2.75 per cent, a 3010-foot-altitude summit (today's railroad crests the mountain at 2562 feet), and 1239 degrees of curvature. Gone also was a Keechulus-Laconia helper district. For a while, the station and lodge at Laconia served as a highway restaurant as U.S. 10 pushed down the west slope on the old railroad grade. The tunnel's dual portals at the west entrance at Rockdale tell of Milwaukee's shattered dream to eventually double-track the summit. The second portal was plugged up as the hope of a second tunnel slipped into financial decay. Train No. 201-C-21, operating as Extra 22 West, rolls out of the tunnel into a snowstorm on December 27, 1978. Mid-train, two SD40-2 slaves headed backward grind away, one wearing a pantograph-like icicle breaker in deference to loaded auto racks on the rear of the train. The breakers knock off the easy-to-reach icicles; Jensen gets the rest with a long pole. He also closes the tunnel doors after a train's passage to keep in electrically generated heat. On a winter morning, with the wind lowering the temperature to a 20-below-zero wind-chill factor, he must employ the door pulley system carefully, lest the howling gale collapse the doors inward.



JEFF JENSEN highballs a Weyerhaeuser log rig at Garcia.



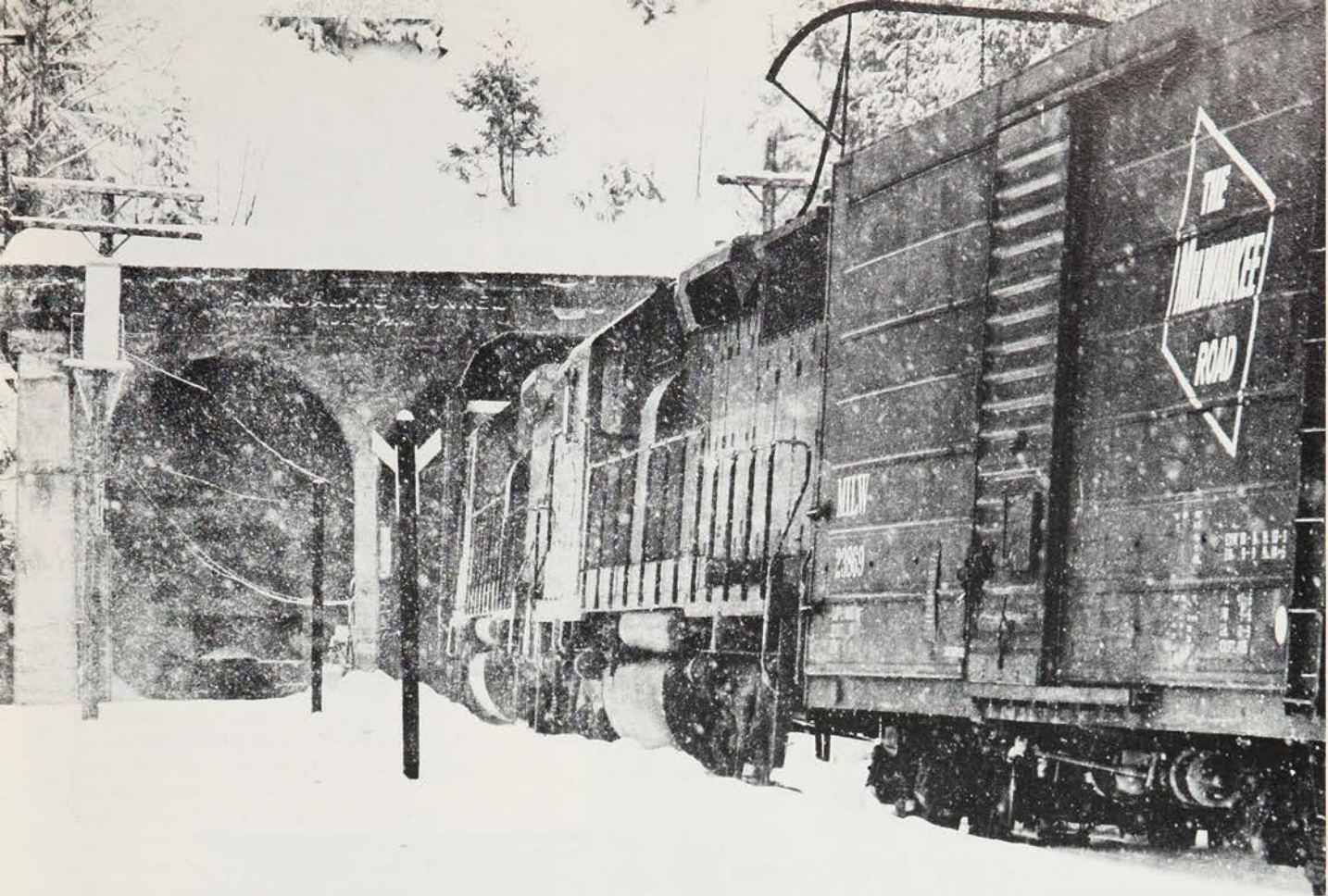
JEFF closes the tunnel doors.



RAMBLING out of Snoqualmie Pass Tunnel on December 27, 1978, with SD40-2 No. 22 up front



PANTOGRAPH-LIKE deflector atop lead slave SD40-2 knocks off icicles in advance of trilevel cars.



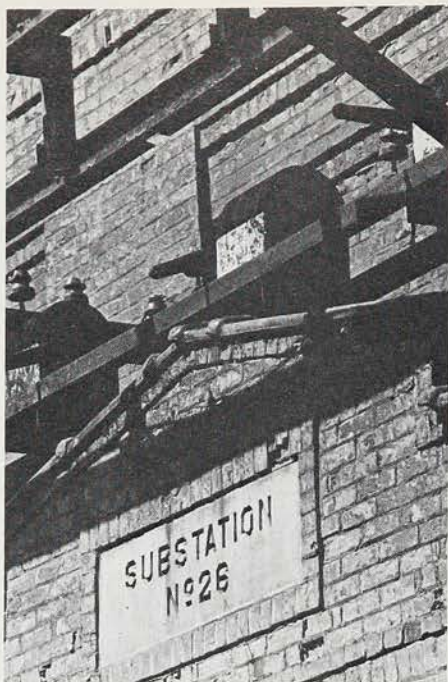
SLAVES in the middle lean on welded, Hiawatha-series, West Milwaukee Shops-built box car 23869.



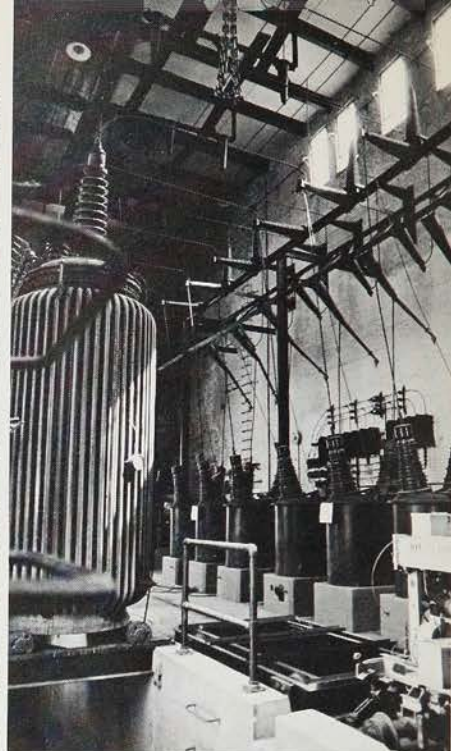
LONG-WAY-FROM-HOME Rock Island box car and homemade, welded cabooses bring up rear of train.



SUBSTATION FACADE, May 1978.



CONNECTIONS are severed.



INSIDE . . . transformers.

Substation 26

THE sun-etched facade of Substation No. 26 and the sinister-looking apparatus inside represent the Cedar

Falls of yesterday—the Cedar Falls of the days when box-cabs on the point would grind to a halt to take on a slug of sister GE's mid-train for help to the summit. The Cedar Falls of today needs neither substation nor helpers. Today the only trains which stop in this remote company town at the foot of the Cascade grade do so to reduce tonnage or to go into the hole for opposing freights—as train 202 headed by SD40-2 161 is doing on a Saturday in August 1978. Had this been a weekday, orders would have been on the hoopstand, but weekday-only operators have been the rule here since 1976. Second-trick operator Jerry Bretschneider grew up in Cedar Falls; his father is a signal maintainer out of "Cedar." Jerry recalls summers at Hyak, trips east on the Olympian Hiawatha, summer forest work along the main line when it was electrified, and heavy winters. He knows the benefits of working in a place far removed from civilization. He's seen more than his share of the wildlife one would expect to find on the edge of the Seattle watershed. Elk and deer are regular visitors to the small yard. Cedar Falls's glory days are over, though. The beanery and the 75-cents-a-night rooms at the Milwaukee hotel tight against the Snoqualmie branch are gone. The substation will not last the winter.



OPERATOR Jerry Bretschneider ponders future.



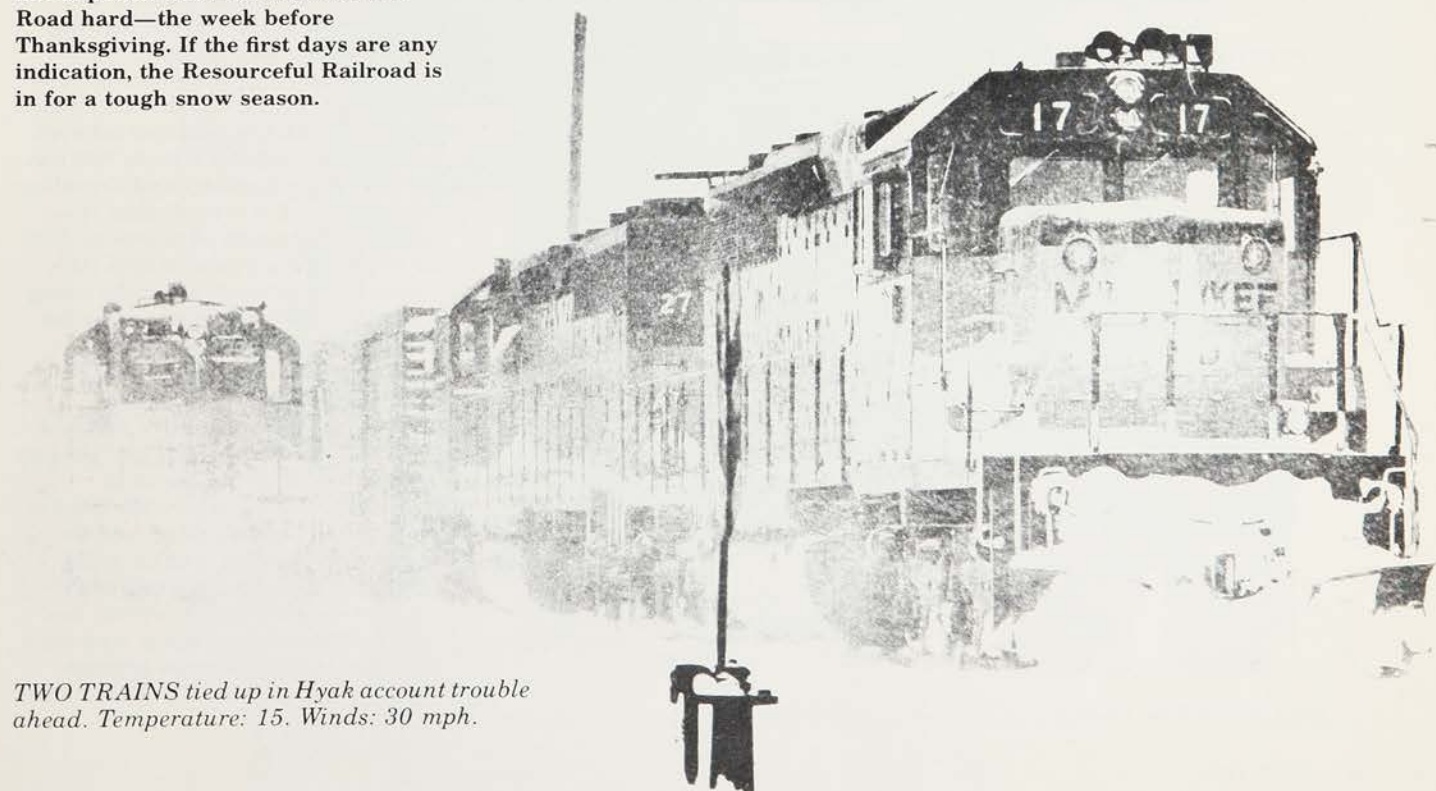
TRAIN 202, alias Extra 161 East, gets in the clear at Cedar Falls.

Winter hits Snoqualmie

CONTINUITY of transcontinental service during the winter on Snoqualmie pass is dependent upon how well snowplow-equipped locomotives plow, rotaries throw snow, and snowsheds protect the track. Throbbing through the Cascades, at 4:25 p.m. on August 31, 1978, Extra 17 West splices a pair of the sheds along the shore of Lake Keechulus, 3 miles (on foot) from Hyak. Winter hits with full force on November 18, when a low-pressure front unleashes powder snow driven by 30 mph winds at 15 degrees. As if the snow and wind are not enough, Sunday morning, November 19, brings news of a line closure. A spool of cable breaks loose from a flat car in Humpback Creek snowshed, taking out timber supports and bringing the roof down on the train. Stopped dead atop the pass at Hyak that morning, Extra 17 West (train 201) and Extra 298 West (a "dead freight") stand idle in snow drifting to four feet. Hours later, when the full extent of the damage is known, Extra 17 West will be backed downhill to Easton and detoured on Burlington Northern over Stampede Pass. Fifteen miles east, SD40-2 No. 24 leads a work extra into Easton after cleaning up a wreck which occurred at Whittier the week before. Winter's initial punch has hit the Milwaukee Road hard—the week before Thanksgiving. If the first days are any indication, the Resourceful Railroad is in for a tough snow season.



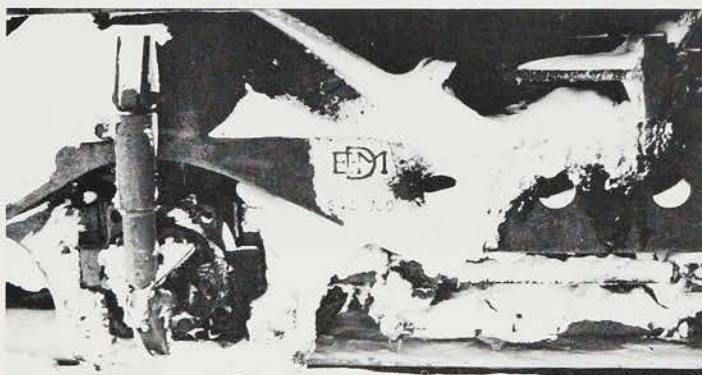
ROCKING out of one snowshed and into another . . .



TWO TRAINS tied up in Hyak account trouble ahead. Temperature: 15. Winds: 30 mph.



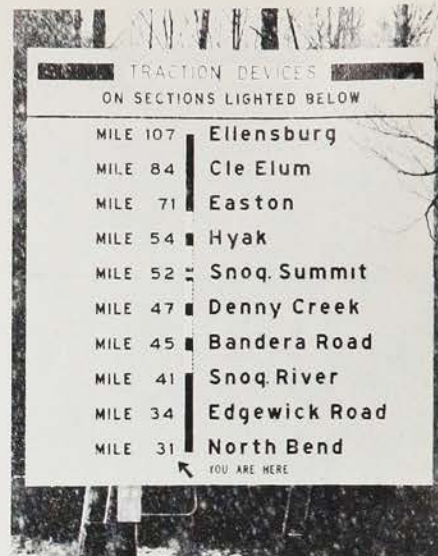
ON the east slope of the Cascades . . . work extra behind No. 24.



POWDERED SNOW driven by 30-mph wind coats truck of SD40-2.



ROADMASTER Geelhart (with radio), Traveling Engineer Cochran.



IN REALITY, Interstate 90 is closed to Cle Elum account avalanche threat.

BY JANUARY, heavy snows have made plow trains nearly a daily occurrence, but the old catenary-support poles lining the right of way limit the width of the cut the machines entrained in these plow extras can make. At 5 a.m. on February 7, 1979, rotary 900207 departs Tide Flats Yard, Tacoma, for two days of fighting snow—the first time in over three years that the Alco-built, steam-turned-electric-turned-diesel unit has ventured over Snoqualmie Pass. The evening before, Chinook winds deposited nearly 15 inches of wet, heavy snow on Hyak—snow so moist that it assumed a blue tinge—and Cedar Falls Roadmaster Cecil Geelhart shut down the pass because of avalanche danger. By daybreak of the 7th, the highway road-condition sign on Interstate 90 approaching the pass alerts motorists to the need for traction devices—but in reality the highway is closed between North Bend and Cle Elum. At 9:30 a.m. at Cedar Falls, Geelhart and Traveling Engineer Bob Cochran discuss snow strategy. Four hours of churning later, the rotary extra, powered by a GP9, pushes a pile of snow down the siding at Easton. After wyeing there for the return trip to Cedar, the rotary removes the 10-foot mound with little more than a whoosh. Plowing is finished by 2 p.m. The extra makes a quick trip back to Cedar Falls, passing through the cut at the portal of Snoqualmie tunnel, where the snow is 4 feet deep. A night's sleep, and the crew will be back at it again in the morning. The rotary, the railroad's ultimate weapon against winter, has been summoned once again. And once again the rotary has come through. Winter has been tamed. Until the next storm.



CHURNING through the passing siding at Easton.



EX-F7B X-2 supplies power, GP9 290 pushes.

HEADING into east portal of Snoqualmie tunnel at Hyak on February 7, 1979.





WIRE which once held catenary sways in the ever-present wind at Beverly.

Saddling up for the desert

WEST from Beverly, a block of SD's rev up for 2.2 per cent.



UNDER the veil of abandonment, Extra 142 West, carrying symbol 201, rocks and rolls through desolate Beverly on bad track beneath skeletal remains of Milwaukee's 3000-volt electrification and barren Sentinel Mountain. Ghosts of vanquished operators tap a silent OS to the strong omnipresent wind. Beverly, junction with the Hanford branch, was an open agency until 1976. But branch business went sour, dropping off to a twice-a-month schedule, and the line was petitioned for abandonment. By 1978 the cycle had come full circle, the Butte-Tacoma main line joining such low-lives as the Hanford branch and the tawny remains of once-green Beverly on the list of too-expensive-to-operate. For Beverly, it was back to being known as "The Mosquito Capital of the West."

STRIKING WEST out of Beverly, the Milwaukee gets a good look at what it's up against: the Saddle Mountains. They rise bluntly from the bank of the Columbia—King of Western Rivers—as a dead freight with 15,000 horses on the point kicks out of town and accelerates across the mile-long river bridge after picking up two 3000 h.p.





WINDING downgrade around a curve and across the Columbia River at 12:10 p.m., August 30, 1978.

EMD helpers for the 19 miles of 2.2 per cent to the top of the range at Boylston—the steepest grade on the railroad's formerly electrified territory.

THE MOUNTAIN allows but one way out from the east: a 90-degree kink which puts the Milwaukee on a north-south alignment. From this viewpoint, enginemen on an eastbound aboard a Locotrol master are directly across from, and below, their slave SD's 51 cars back. A break in the wind on the afternoon of August 30, 1978, at 12:10 p.m. affords the train-watcher a sound show of dynamic content . . . but the lack of wind is a blessing. Wind roars through this gap in the Saddle range sliced by the Columbia in gusts reaching 120 mph, making a battle equivalent to the foray with mudslides and snow in the Cascades. Atop the grade at Boylston, and also at Othello, high-wind indicators glow a steady yellow, playing watchdog for trains after some unfortunate mishaps in which piggyback trailers rode nasty gusts into the river. Winds above 60 mph extinguish the signals, temporarily halting operations over the Columbia.



IF it's out, look out.



TRAIN 201 (Extra 172 West) grinds upgrade between Doris and Boylston, its five SD40-2's held to just 10 mph on 2.2 per cent. Loneliness is unnerving at sunset.



INTO a setting sun against a dramatic backdrop of Columbia Plateau, a westbound with 96 cars struggles upgrade a mile above Doris, where a substation once pumped "white coal" into dual-trolley catenary to keep aging box-cabs on the move. Stalls on the grade were once averted by simply cranking up the voltage to the contact wire. Today's motive power is more finite, as attest Extra 172 West, slugging it out halfway up the mountain with 9000 h.p. on the point and 6000 more mid-train. The 2.2 per cent grade has knocked the train's progress down to 10 mph in a land as renowned for its inaccessibility as for its abundance of rattlesnakes. Ahead are Rye, Heartbreak Curves, and Boylston, all reached through a series of sweeping curves, deep cuts in basalt, and high fills—a circuitous route up a progressive series of sandy hills, the very antithesis of the well-known Cascade climb. Obscurity is the word to describe the Saddle grade. Boylston, summit of the climb at 2450 feet, is attained through short, practically unknown Johnson's Creek Tunnel. Here Extra 184 West stops to drop off its helper units before leaning on its five sets of dynamic brakes to descend 10 miles of 1.5 per cent into Kittitas. Helpers 157 and 136 follow the tonnage down, then tie up at the "Kitty" depot to allow their crew to catch a quick meal.



BOOMING out of quarter-mile-long Johnson's Creek Tunnel: Extra 172 West (but with 184 on the point). This is summit of the Saddles.



HELPER sits in front of Kittitas depot as its crew takes a lunch break.

ON a balmy June evening at nine o'clock, eastbound train 202's four SD's carbonize dangling messenger wire and dust the gray-framed Kittitas depot as 12,000 h.p. crashes through town on an inspired run for the hill. Halfway up the grade at Renslow, the smoking SD40-2's are down to 10 mph as they bridge Interstate 90 and head off for 30 miles of no-man's-land. Then it's twilight on the Puget Sound Extension . . . Extra 167 West rolls with headlight extinguished in anticipation of a meet near Beverly. It is November 1978. Ahead is a long, dark winter. I



POURING it on through "Kitty" at 9 o'clock on a summer night.



EXTRA 167 WEST heads for a meet at Beverly beneath a full moon.



CROSSING Interstate 90 and disappearing into the wilderness.



SHIVERING in a November 19, 1978, blizzard, Milwaukee Road SD40-2 No. 17 holds at Hyak, Wash., in the Cascades because of a line closure 4 miles ahead. From Blair Kooistra's "Of Ryegrass and Evergreen," page 18.