

Denizen of the Dark...

# Illinois Central's Hawkeye

ILLINOIS CENTRAL



ABOVE: Illinois Central train number 11, the westbound *Hawkeye*, is paused at Rockford, Ill., on Christmas Day eve, 1969. Due to the holiday season, train length has practically doubled. Though not clearly seen here, IC has added a cafe-lounge car to tonight's consist so as to provide some relief to what was normally a no-food/beverage service run at this point. As for the Railway Post Office up front, RPO service had already ended, but the train continued to run an RPO car for mail storage. Not shown in this photo, this night's *Hawkeye* was led by a Central of Georgia E-unit from the IC-CofG City of Miami/Seminole pool.

BY MIKE SCHAFER/EDITOR PTJ  
PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR EXCEPT AS NOTED

It's no surprise that, knowing my special interest in passenger trains, people often ask what my favorite passenger train is. Certainly, it must be Santa Fe's *Super Chief*, with its superb dining service and its splendid Pleasure Dome Lounge—complete with its private dining alcove, the Turquoise Room? No? Well then, how about New York Central's *20th Century Limited*, America's finest pas-

senger train ever! No again. The incomparable Canadian Pacific/VIA *Canadian*? It's a wonderful train I've ridden several times, but that's not it either.

No, my all-time favorite passenger train is a largely unremarked overnight run that, believe it or not, lasted until Amtrak. In fact, several friends and I were aboard its final run early on the morning of May 1, 1971. I'm talking about Illinois Central's Chicago-Sioux City, Iowa, train, the *Hawkeye*.

IC was very much a north-south railroad, linking Chicago with St. Louis, Memphis, Birmingham, and New Or-

leans, hence its slogan "Main Line of Mid-America." Southward out of Chicago, IC passenger trains fanned out to Springfield, Ill., and St. Louis (*Green Diamond*), Memphis and New Orleans (*City of New Orleans*, *Panama Limited*), and Florida points via Birmingham, Ala. (*City of Miami*, *Seminole*).

And then there was IC's Iowa Division, which reached west out of Chicago to the Missouri River cities of Omaha, Neb., Sioux City, Iowa, and Sioux Falls, S.Dak. via Rockford and Freeport, Ill.; and also Dubuque, Waterloo, and Fort Dodge, Iowa. IC employees I knew joked that the Iowa Division was but a secondary after-

thought to IC management.

Born in the late 1940s, I grew up in Rockford, Ill.—the sometimes second-largest city of the state (always vying with Peoria for that status)—85 miles out of Chicago's Central Station.

## Early history

Through IC passenger service out of Chicago to the Missouri River began before IC completed the Chicago-Rockford-Freeport segment of the future Iowa Division in 1888. Initially, through IC passenger trains used the Chicago & Galena Union (future Chicago & North Western) between Chicago, Rockford, and Free-



1930 OCTOBER 1930

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
5	6	7	8	9	10
12	13	14	15	16	17
19	20	21	22	23	24
26	27	28	29	30	31

**Football Schedule OCT. 1930**

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS (URBANA)
WISCONSIN 18	IOWA STATE 4
FLORIDA 18	BUTLER 18
MISSISSIPPI 25	NORTHWESTERN 18
NORTHWESTERN (EVANSTON) 11	TULANE 11
OHIO STATE 11	OHIO STATE 11
CENTRE 25	OHIO STATE 11

**The Hawkeye**  
A THROUGH TRAIN SERVING  
SIOUX CITY and CHICAGO

Leave Sioux City  
6: P.M.  
Arrive Chicago  
8: A.M.

Phone 57901

D.W. Casady  
CITY PASSENGER AND  
TICKET AGENT

S.L. Springer  
DIVISION  
PASSENGER AGENT

**Illinois Central**  
THE ROAD OF TRAVEL LUXURY

"Back Home Excursion" to all main line stations, to and including Rockford, Ill., over Sunday, Oct. 5<sup>th</sup>. Ask for details

Plan Now  
A WINTER VACATION TRIP  
"WINTER TOURIST" FARES  
IN EFFECT OCTOBER 1st

port, and later Chicago & Iowa (future Chicago, Burlington & Quincy) between Chicago and Forrester, Ill., via Aurora, Rochelle, and Oregon, Ill., thence up IC's Cairo-Galena, Ill., "Charter Line" to Freeport and points west. (A bit of irony here, as this arrangement put IC Chicago-Iowa passenger trains of that period within 100 feet of the future site of the Lee, Ill., PTJ office.) It is believed that what became the "modern day" Hawkeye began operation in the 1870s.

Unlike well-known premier trains of pre-1950s America, early information about the Hawkeye is scarce. It ap-

pears that when the train was running via G&CU's line between Chicago, Rockford, and Freeport, it was known as the *Hawkeye Special* (Iowa is the Hawkeye State). The *Hawkeye Limited* name surfaces when the train was running via the future Burlington routing described earlier. The Sioux City and Sioux Falls sections of the train carried their own names: *Chicago & Sioux City Limited*, *Chicago & Sioux Falls Limited*, etc. Traditionally, the Omaha section of the train was cut out at Fort Dodge, Iowa; the remaining Sioux Falls/Sioux City section was split at Cherokee, Iowa, and vice versa. Yet, the Hawkeye

name seems to have been dropped for a time. A 1914 IC timetable lists trains 11 (westbound) and 12 (eastbound)—numbers associated with the train to May 1, 1971—as the *Chicago & Omaha Limited* and *Omaha & Chicago Limited* respectively, but sometime between then and the 1920s, the *Hawkeye Limited* name showed again up for trains 11 and 12 and their Omaha, Sioux City, and Sioux Falls sections. By the mid-1930s, the "Limited" moniker was dropped for good. The Omaha and Sioux Falls sections were dropped fairly early, Omaha in particular being well-served by several competing railroads out of Chicago.

Overnight sleeping-car trains between principal cities were enormously popular from the late 1800s until the 1950s and the coming of the jet airliner. The *Hawkeye* provided an early evening departure from Chicago and a morning arrival at Omaha, Sioux City, and Sioux Falls.

### Family ties

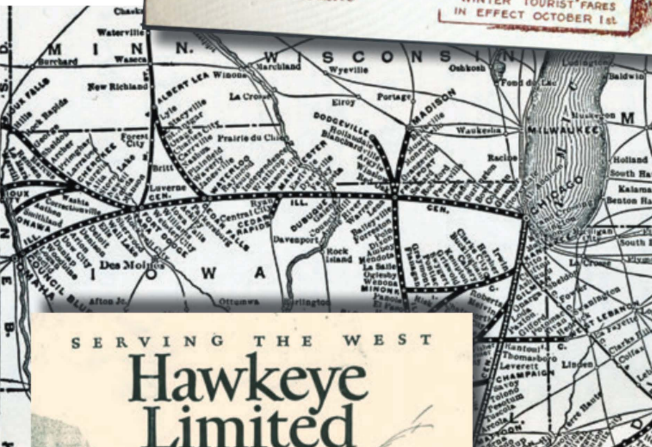
In a sense, the *Hawkeye* played a role in my family for a majority of the 20th century. After my maternal grandparents married in 1912, they lived in a house in Rockford, Ill., that still stands less than a block from the IC (now Canadian National) Broadway grade crossing and parallel C&NW and across the street from the Chicago, Milwaukee & Gary Railway



ABOVE A promotion for the *Hawkeye* in 1930 that listed game schedules for college football.

LEFT A portion of IC's system map circa 1920 showing the *Hawkeye's* west end terminals of Sioux Falls, Sioux City, and Omaha.

LOWER LEFT A 1926 advertisement for the *Hawkeye Limited* indicated it carried an observation car, open-section sleepers with drawing rooms, chair cars and coaches, and a dining car. ALL ADS, MIKE SCHAFER COLLECTION



SERVING THE WEST

# Hawkeye Limited

CHICAGO - OMAHA - SIOUX CITY - SIOUX FALLS

**"A dependable Train"**

Finest all-steel equipment, distinguished by Illinois Central standards—your assurance of exceptional service, on-time arrivals, genuine courtesy, tip top meals.

Lx. Chicago, westbound, 6:00 p.m. Eastbound, Lv. Omaha 5:26 p.m., Sioux City 6:00 p.m. and Sioux Falls 4:00 p.m.

Observation car, drawing-room open section, sleeping cars, chair cars and coaches, dining car serving all meals.

**Illinois Central**  
THE ROAD OF TRAVEL LUXURY

FACING PAGE Throughout the year, the point at which the eastbound *Hawkeye* met daylight between Freeport and Chicago varied owing to the changing observances of Daylight Saving Time. In the upper photo, we see the eastbound *Hawkeye* during its stop at the original Main Street Rockford depot, which was torn down in 1954. At right, head-end-heavy number 12 with back-to-back ETs in charge has left downtown Rockford, crossed the Rock River, and is shown crossing 9th Street near what was the East Rockford depot in the late 1940s. Buckbee Siding, along which author Schaffer hung out in his youth, is the foreground track. BRIAN LANDIS COLLECTION





LEFT Pretty much to the end, coaches assigned to the *Hawkeye* offered little in terms of overnight coach travel. Heavyweight coaches and/or 1947 semi-streamlined coaches rebuilt from heavyweights were the norm, neither of which had seats that reclined more than a few inches. Nonetheless, this scene was a common view on my early trips to Chicago on the *Hawkeye*.



(future Milwaukee Road) main line. My mother was born in that house in 1915 and I suspect that the westbound *Hawkeye* signaled bedtime while the eastbound was a wake-up call for the family around 6AM. They bought a two-family house at 516 11th Street in 1919 and moved away from the tracks, though still within earshot, which I can attest to as that's where I was born in 1949 and lived until 1967.

In her young-adulthood years—the late 1930s—my mother and her girlfriends made Saturday trips by train to The Big City (Chicago), their ultimate target being

the famed Aragon dance hall. IC always had the fastest and most frequent service between Rockford and Chicago throughout the day, and my mom recalls late evening returns to home on the *Hawkeye*, riding the train's open-platform observation car.

In the summer after I was born in January 1949, my maternal grandmother—wielding my Aunt Bert's color movie camera—made a trip back to her homeland in Sweden. In my late teen years, grandma's movies surfaced at a family gathering and—lol!—she had taken a brief clip

of her *Hawkeye* arriving at the Rockford station. Two new brown and orange IC E7 locomotives led the train. (Side note: Between Chicago and New York where she would catch the S.S. *Stockholm*, she rode a Nickel Plate/Lackawanna special chartered by a Chicago-based Swedish fraternal organization.)

It was the *Hawkeye* my mom chose for my first-ever train ride. (My older sister's first train ride was on the *Twin Cities Zephyr*, but that's another story.) I remember it quite clearly. It was November 27, 1953, the day after Thanksgiving, and my sister Maureen and four-year-old me were awakened by mom about 4AM. "Get up! We're taking the train to Chicago!" Instantly, I was up and ready to roll.

Our mom and dad had divorced in March of that year. Dad was not one to take the family on such grand outings, the exception being an occasional trip up to his fishing cabin on Petenwell Lake in central Wisconsin—a much cheaper option more to his liking. After the divorce, our mom was able to travel in ways that we all enjoyed; thus, began 70 years of rail travel for me.

A taxi picked us up (how many of you can remember when taxis actually showed up in a timely manner?) and took us into downtown Rockford, still under the cloak of darkness. I recall city workers setting up Christmas trees on downtown storefronts in those predawn hours.

The *Hawkeye* was due in at 5:15AM, and our taxi delivered us with time to spare at the IC depot on South Main Street. A crowd milled about the sprawling, towered brick depot that was about to enter its last year or so of existence, as a new modern depot was slated to open in 1954. At train time, mom ushered us outside and onto the platform where boarding passengers stood in anticipation of number 12's arrival.

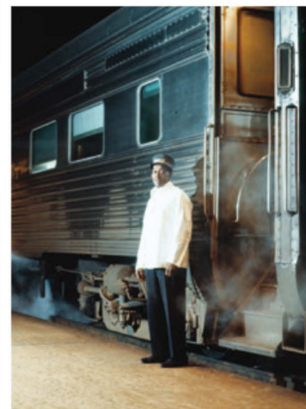


ABOVE As was the case for many post-World War II night-train operations, the *Hawkeye* did a lot of head-end (mail and express) work at major cities along the route. Westbound number 11 had 18 scheduled minutes in Rockford, 15 minutes at Freeport, 20 minutes at Dubuque, Iowa, 25 minutes at Waterloo, and 20 minutes at Fort Dodge. For photographers, such was an invitation for some serious night photography. In the photo above, the head-end crew catches up on the day's news during the stop.

RIGHT Post Office and Railway Express Agency workers transfer mail and express between train and trucks. A Richmond, Fredricksburg & Potomac 10-6 sleeper rides behind the RPO on this evening's number 11, circa 1967.

FACING PAGE UPPER Until almost the end of Pullman service on the *Hawkeye*, the train carried a 6 section-6 roomette-4 double bedroom sleeper, one of which is shown trailing westbound train 11 circa 1965. A spotting feature are the tiny windows for upper section beds.

FACING PAGE LOWER A Pullman car attendant poses at his post beside the RF&P sleeper used in the final months of Pullman service on the *Hawkeye*. This was usually an RF&P County-series 10-6 built for New York/Chicago-Florida service that operated via Atlantic Coast Line into Florida.







ABOVE This is the back-shot photo of this issue's cover scene of the *Hawkeye*. The train is in just passed through 21st Street Junction, arriving Chicago in the fall of 1966 with a particularly interesting consist that included some sort of buffet-lounge, sleeper *Council Bluffs* (ex-Nickel Plate *City of Findlay*), and an ex-DL&W EL sleeper in the Lackawanna colors of gray and maroon. The Flexi-Van on the end was not unusual, as it was shunted onto the train en route. Momentarily, the train will climb up to the St. Charles Air Line that leads to Central Station.

RIGHT So far, this is the only known photo of the *Hawkeye*'s set-out sleeper—on this day the *Sugarland*, a 6-6-4 sleeper built by Pullman-Standard for *Panama Limited* service in 1942—at Waterloo, Iowa, dropped by train 11. It was photographed on June 2, 1966. Set-out sleeper service between Chicago and Waterloo ended early in the 1960s. JOHN HUMISTON, RICHARD HUMISTON COLLECTION



Shortly, roaring diesels and a piercing headlight curved into the scene from the west, followed by the sudden blaring of an air horn blowing for Main Street. I screamed at the top of my lungs—not in fear, but overwhelmed with pure excitement. Though I do not recall the actual boarding, I have a brief memory of the three of us in our coach seats and then a firm memory of eating breakfast in the *Hawkeye*'s dining car. My sister and I had been seated in the diner facing rearward, and laughed and laughed at being confused by our direction of travel. No, I don't remember what I had to eat, but I'm sure it was the traditional bacon and eggs.

A full dining car on the *Hawkeye* in 1953? Yes, but only eastbound from Freeport, Ill., to provide breakfast for the substantial number of people using train 12 to make connections with numerous outbound morning connections at Chicago. Along with a cafe-lounge, the diner worked west in the early evening on train 13, the streamliner *Land O' Corn*, as far as the division point of Freeport, Ill., where the diner was cut from the

train and picked up early the following morning by the *Hawkeye*. As an early evening train out of Chicago, the *Land O' Corn* did a heavy supper business that required not only a full diner, but a cafe-lounge that worked all the way through to Waterloo, Iowa, train 13's terminating point.

Back to my first train trip. Another memory is my astonishment at all the railroad tracks in Chicago; I remember specifically our train slam-banging across seemingly hundreds of tracks intersecting with our train's rails. A dozen or so years later, when fellow newbie railroad photographers and I were traipsing around this area south of Chicago's Loop, it occurred to me that our *Hawkeye* of November 27, 1953, had been crossing the multitude of "diamonds" (crossings) at 21st Street, where IC's Iowa Division main line—shared with Santa Fe passenger trains at this point—intersected two Pennsylvania Railroad main tracks out of Union Station and four Chicago & Western Indiana main tracks out of Dearborn Station.

Although our family would make more day trips to Chicago in the next few years, we usually relied on the *Land O' Corn* in both directions. Not until the day after Thanksgiving 1960 was I reacquainted with the *Hawkeye* when my sister Maureen, now going on 19 and me going on 12, took me into Chicago for the day. By this time I had become quite "railroad aware." When our taxi dropped us off at the Rockford depot, the *Hawkeye* was already in the station for its 12-minute stop. I was puzzled that number 12 had two black freight locomotives instead of the streamlined brown and orange locomotives I so liked and always saw on the *Land O' Corn*. Once aboard, my sister and I had to take separate seats, as the train was packed. It was a quiet ride into the city, though; the hit song of that time was the Tokens' "Lion Sleeps Tonight," and I was playing that in my mind all the way into Chicago.

By this time, breakfast in a dining car was no longer an option, number 12's eastbound diner having been dropped in the late 1950s. Patronage was be-



ABOVE Train 12 is moments away from its 7:15AM arrival at Central Station as it enters the St. Charles Air Line at 16th Street Tower south of Chicago's Loop on July 29, 1967. High-speed passenger GP9s 9201 and 9203 lead this day's train, which is crossing the Rock Island/New York Central leads to La Salle Street Station. A portion of 16th Street tower is visible beyond the nose of the 9201. Now a Metra

facility, this tower remains in service as of 2022, and the Air Line is today used by Amtrak's *City of New Orleans, Illinois, and Saluki*. At the east end of the SCAL at Michigan Avenue, number 12 will curve north while it drops down into Central Station.

ginning to fall on trains 13 and 14, the *Land O' Corn*, and thus a full diner and a cafe-lounge were no longer needed for that train's westbound run. Into the early 1960s, the *Hawkeye* still carried two Pullman-operated sleeping cars, both being 6 section-6 roomette-4 double bedroom sleepers. One operated between Chicago and Sioux City and one was a set-out sleeper between Chicago and Waterloo. Sleeping cars on the *Hawkeye* was something I didn't experience until 1968, more about which later.

### Growing up with the *Hawkeye*

In our early teen years, school buddy Parry Donze, his kid brother Mike, and I began making evening-hour mini-expeditions the five blocks down 11th Street to trackside at Railroad Avenue to watch either the westbound *Land O' Corn* or westbound *Hawkeye* make their grand entrance into town. The latter's 9:35PM (10:35PM during Daylight Saving Time) required us to breach city curfews for those under 16, but we had our ways. During these outings we began to note things like locomotive assignments and car consists on both trains, as well as timekeeping. The *Hawkeye* was a respectable train at this time, with two or three baggage cars

(usually heavyweight) loaded largely with express and pouched mail, Flexi-Vans for sealed mail, and a lightweight Railway Post Office car. Two or three coaches was the norm, either heavyweights or semi-streamlined rebuilt heavyweights from IC's 1947 shop upgrades. At the end of the train was a 6-6-4 sleeper, most often *Banana Road*, *Petroleum*, *Volunteer State*, or *King Cotton*, all originally built for *Panama Limited* service in 1942.

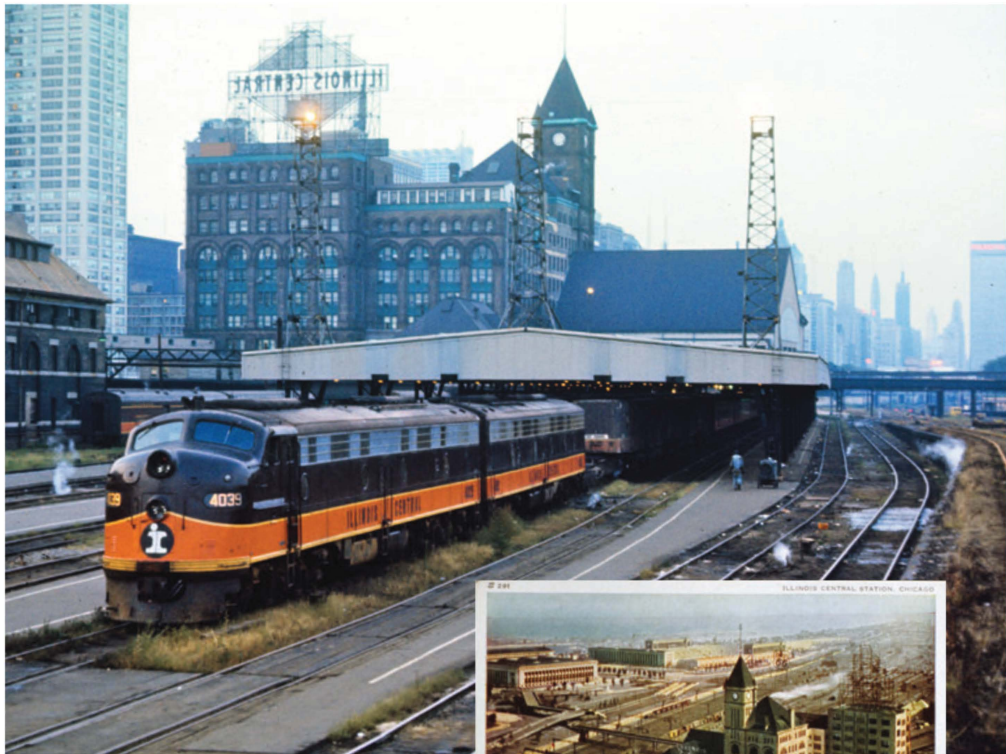
Almost always heading up the train was a pair of those danged, somber black IC "freight engines." We noticed it was almost always the same pair, numbers 9200/9203 or 9201/9202; we later learned from newfound friend Jim Boyd these were GP7 or GP9-series locomotives built by Electro-Motive, the "GP" denoting "General Purpose." Seven years our senior, Jim had astonishing wizardry about all aspects of railroading. A graduate of Milwaukee's famous Layton School of Art & Photography, Jim had moved from his hometown, Dixon, Ill., to Rockford to take a job as a film editor for WTOV Channel 39. We met him through Rockford's Forest City Model Railroad Club, which he joined in 1964 when he moved to Rockford. (*PTJ* readers who also have been readers of *Railfan*

& *Railroad Magazine* may recognize the Jim Boyd name, as he was R&R's editor from 1974 into the 2000s; R&R is now published by *PTJ* publisher White River Productions.)

It was Jim who explained to us that these two locomotive pairs were equipped with steam generators, necessary for train heating when used in passenger service. Further, these four locomotives were ordered expressly for service on the Iowa Division—almost exclusively for the *Hawkeye*—and had high-speed (83 mph in this case) gearing, necessary to maintain tight schedules. Running time for the 85.5 miles westbound between Chicago and Rockford was 90 minutes flat for the *Land O' Corn* and 95 minutes for the *Hawkeye*. This included about 15 miles of Chicago terminal trackage limited to 50 mph and two scheduled flagstops for the *Corn* and one for the *Hawkeye*. Do the math. The best that Amtrak's *Black Hawk* could do over the same route was more than two hours.

As we became more engrossed in train consists, we picked up on the fact that holiday consists could be quite interesting. In the wee hours of November 27, 1964, three of us rode the *Hawkeye* from Rockford to Chicago. This was the





ABOVE An A-B set of E-units led by E9A 4039 has just coupled onto the consist of the westbound *Hawkeye* on a summer evening in 1968. The use of E8 or E9 B-units was almost unheard of on Iowa Division passenger trains until the late 1960s after IC vacated the Steuben Street Station in Sioux City and moved the passenger station to the IC freight yards. There, a loop track allowed the *Hawkeye* to be turned around completely without any switching.

day after Thanksgiving—Black Friday—the day that everyone went to Chicago to start Christmas shopping, or to head home after a visit with the relatives. Our consist included several coaches, including one lightweight Pullman-Standard coach—unheard of for the *Hawkeye*. More surprising was not one, but three sleepers, one of which wore IC brown and orange but was lettered for Delaware, Lackawanna & Western! During Christmas season in the mid-1960s, it was not unusual to see two Railway Post Office cars on the *Hawkeye*. In 1965, I began trading railroad-photo Christmas cards with other friends throughout the Midwest. Once addressed and stamped, I took batches of cards to the Rockford depot and, during the *Hawkeye*'s extended stop, handed them directly to the

RPO clerk, who was always hanging out the door for some fresh air during westbound train 11's 20-minute or so stop. The cards eventually showed up at their destinations post-marked "CHI & SIOUX CITY R.P.O." Also during Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, IC would occasionally stick a cafe-lounge of some sort into the consist, clearly knowing full well that, with swollen patronage, there was profit to be made. The off-season alternative was—at best if at all—for passengers to run into the station at Waterloo or Fort Dodge to get coffee and snacks out of vending machines.

In spring 1966, a significant change in operations on Iowa Division passenger



ABOVE Opened in 1893 at the western foot of 12th Street/Roosevelt Road, IC's Central Station is shown in a postcard view looking southeast with the Field Museum at upper left and Soldier Field at the top. Central Station was the first major railroad terminal I was in, arriving Chicago aboard the *Hawkeye* in 1953. Ironically, I was the last passenger to detrain from a scheduled passenger train at Central Station (in this case, Amtrak's *Campus* from Champaign, Ill., on March 5, 1972).

trains changed the whole picture. At the behest of the U.S. Post Office Department, the erstwhile "streamliner" *Land 'O Corn* was downgraded and rescheduled so that its westbound run left Chicago in the morning instead of early evening, which meant that it now required two sets of equipment. IC's solution was to kill the cafe-lounge, replacing it with box lunches put on the train at Genoa, Ill., and do away with lightweight coaches, replacing them with heavyweight coaches or the 1947 heavyweight rebuilds. Because the change was tied closely to mail & express transport, most of the Flexi-Van

## Working the Hawkeye

The Christmas season of 1967 was not far away. A month's winter vacation from college might allow me to find some railroad work. I had already started the first of my many railroad-related jobs during the summer, working as a reservation/ticket agent for Grand Trunk Western at its Chicago city ticket office. But GTW was not hiring for that position for such a brief time. I knew railroads traditionally hired mail handlers during the Christmas season, so that might be a possibility.

Ultimately I chose to contact Illinois Central. It would be an easy 20-minute commute from my South Shore home on IC Electric's South Chicago Branch to Central Station. When I applied I was told there were no mail handler jobs available, but would I be interested in a temporary coach attendant position? Riding passenger trains and getting paid for it? Sign me up!

I was given a company rulebook and also fingerprinted, which certainly surprised me. It turned out that, because I would be renting pillows to passengers at 25 cents each, the "massive" amounts of cash and coins I would be handling would no doubt be a temptation to steal, perhaps then fleeing to the Caribbean to escape the bitter cold and snow of the Chicago winter.

I could be assigned to any train but two. The *Panama Limited* was, of course, all Pullman and needed no coach attendants. The other off-limit train was the *City of Miami*, which apparently utilized only experienced, high-seniority attendants. My first assignment was the Chicago-Sioux City *Hawkeye*, though not west of Dubuque, my turnaround point. I would depart Chicago at 7PM, arrive Dubuque at 11:19PM, lay over for nearly three hours, and then re-start work on the eastbound train at 2:20AM, arriving in Chicago at 7:15AM. During the busy holiday season the *Hawkeye* was impressive. As I recall, beyond a number of head-end cars, the consist was typically five coaches and two sleepers.

My job was to assist passengers boarding my two or three coaches while separating the "shorts" from the longer-distance riders. After departure I would join the ticket-taking parade. The conductor—usually Bob Calkins—would review the ticket, punch it, and announce to the second parade member, a trainman, the passenger's destination. The trainman would write a code on a seat check, and hand it to me, the third member of the parade, for placement in a groove on the edge of the overhead rack. Talk about a division of labor. I also got vestibule duty at station stops, which might include removing ice and snow.

The trains were mostly full. I wondered how, without coach reservations, IC could match demand with capacity. The only downside to working the *Hawkeye* was

breaking the news to passengers that there was no food or beverage service. Many did not know this, and the prospect of as much as a 12-hour, food-free, drink-free overnight journey to western Iowa was unpleasant news indeed.

All I could do to ease their pain was offer a small pillow, for 25 cents, which to me almost seemed a further insult to a passenger already insulted by a lack of food and beverage service. I would also make a point to check the sleepers to see if they had available space. Then, in an effort to boost IC's passenger revenues, I would advise longer-haul coach passengers that there was an alternative to sitting all night. Quite often I would sell an upgrade to one room, sometimes two, and once three. Proud of myself for performing a marketing function the railroad should already be doing, I soon discovered that the crew felt otherwise. The conductors were disturbed that it meant handling cash fares and more paperwork, and some of the sleeping-car attendants grumbled that it meant more beds to make up in the morning.

On one trip, arriving back at Central Station after a night on the *Hawkeye*, I was asked to hustle over to handle a turn to Champaign, Ill. Two extra coaches on a long *City of New Orleans* would be cut off there and return to Chicago in the afternoon on the *Campus*, which would be full of college students. If only I had a photo of the girl who insisted on briefly wearing my uniform cap. It was a fun moment in a tiring double shift that I was able to survive by sleeping in one of the coaches during the six-hour layover. There were no "hours of service" rules for coach attendants.

It was difficult to adjust to sleeping by day and working by night on the *Hawkeye*. But I preferred it to morning runs on the *City of New Orleans* and *Green Diamond* which meant getting to work in the dark at early morning hours I was not used to. Fortunately, my wonderful mother would drive me to work on those occasions. I also worked to Mattoon and Carbondale on the *Seminole* and *Mid-American*. But the *Hawkeye* was "my train."

No doubt I caught it at its peak. Very soon after the holidays, head-end business withered away, not just on the *Hawkeye*, but on most passenger trains. Its sleeping car service was gone one year later at the end of 1968. Somehow, the train managed to hang on until May 1, 1971, finally succumbing to the Amtrak "reinvention" of the passenger train.

There are efforts underway to restore service on at least part of the route to Rockford, perhaps someday to Dubuque or even beyond. When this happens, I'll be among the first passengers. I might just bring a pillow.—Kevin McKinney

cars were moved from the *Hawkeye* to the *Land 'O Corn*. The high-speed passenger GP9s were pulled from *Hawkeye* service and placed on the downgraded *Land 'O Corns*, and now the *Hawkeye* got E-units on a regular basis.

The *Hawkeye* was now truly the key passenger train on the Iowa Division. It still had head-end work, and it still carried many passengers eastbound, connecting to IC's *City of New Orleans* and *City of Miami* as well as the morning departures of other Chicago railroads.

In August 1967, the *Land 'O Corn* was discontinued altogether, as it had become known that the U.S. Post Office was going to eliminate virtually all rail mail routes. The September 1967 elimination of nearly all R.P.O. routes nationwide was a resounding blow throughout the U.S. passenger-rail network, resulting in the discontinuance of numerous trains that depended heavily on the movement of mail. Like nearly all other railroads, IC lost all its mail contracts, though some express was still carried. The *Hawkeye* at this point still carried

*Text continued on page 54*

BELOW Under a crescent moon in late 1967, the westbound *Hawkeye* behind an unidentified E7 and E6 4003 is waiting for departure time at the Rockford station on South Main Street as crews catch up on the day's events. The man in the white shirt is an IC employee who, some 20 years later, I would occasionally see at the restaurant down the street from *PTJ's* Homewood, Ill., office, which was in the Illinois Central Hospitalization Association building. Small world, you know.







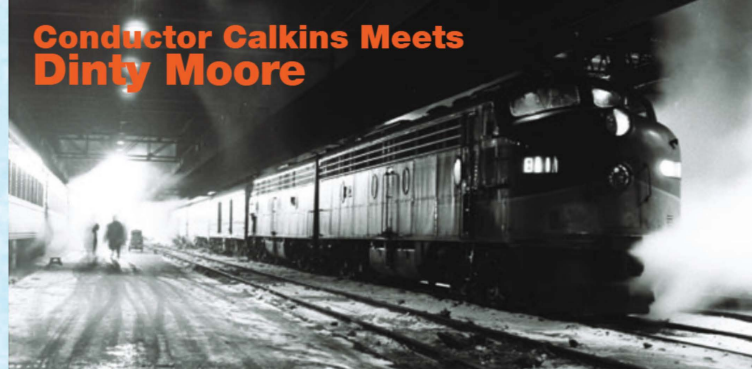
TOP IC's celebrated E6 locomotive 4001—"The Ace" as it was known at the time—heads up the westbound *Hawkeye* at Rockford late in 1970. Built in 1941 for *Panama Limited* service, the 4001 was IC's oldest surviving passenger diesel when this photo was taken. The brass builder's plate from this sleek unit reportedly sold for over \$3,000 in 2021.

LEFT Passengers hustle aboard number 11 at Freeport circa 1970. IC modernized (in 1947) coach 2692 at left was an old familiar friend of mine. In 1965 I rode an 18-car Chicago-Florida special to attend the Lutheran Church of America convention in Miami (see *Classic Trains*, Summer 2015 for complete details). Our church group was assigned to car 2692 down and back. Later, this car became a regular on the *Land O' Corn* and *Hawkeye*. In 1966, it was involved in a wreck between the *Land O' Corn* and a truck. In its post IC years it wound up on a tourist short line in Oregon. JIM HEUSER

ABOVE Mail work on number 11, this time at Freeport. More mail work lies ahead at Dubuque, Waterloo, and Fort Dodge.

## Conductor Calkins Meets Dinty Moore

BY GENE HARMON  
PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



LEFT The *Hawkeye* prepares for departure from Chicago's Central Station in January 1970. Friend Darbee was delayed on C&NW by a blizzard that night and barely made the train. Central of Georgia E8 number 811 and IC E-unit 4042 led this night's run. The train at left is the *Illini* from Carbondale.

The weekend in a wintry January had arrived when my Lake Forest (Ill.) college friends Jeff Darbee and Jake Petrequin and I headed for Illinois Central's Central Station in Chicago. Our objective was to ride IC's *Hawkeye* to Sioux City before it bit the dust. We boarded during a blizzard for our coach-only journey to western Iowa. That night, we had a Central of Georgia E8 in IC colors along with an IC E8 unit, a baggage car, and three modernized heavyweight coaches. Since there was no food service, we had made provision for preparing our own food. But before setting up our sterno heater, we asked the conductor if we could heat our food in his coach. He looked at us carefully, lifted our tickets, and quietly asked us to do our food preparation in the vacant coach behind us.

We moved to that coach and set up the cooking apparatus on the linoleum floor of the swaying car. We opened a can of Dinty Moore beef stew, poured the slithering contents into the cooking pot, and lit the sterno flame. Things went along well for a while as the stew gradually heated up. Suddenly, we hit a bad piece of track on a curve and our sterno pot tipped over, spreading the messy stew on the well-trod linoleum coach floor. I remember we all looked at each other and then without hesitation scooped up the mess back into the pot to continue the heating process. This was our only source of food for the duration of the trip, so our already low standards for food quality were even more relaxed. It was a small price to pay in order to have some dinner.

Conductor Calkins came back to check on us and we struck up a conversation. He saw that we were not destroying his coach with our unusual request to

prepare food in it. When I admired his lapel pin, he asked my address and—to my delight a few days later—a brand-new IC lapel pin arrived in the mail. Conductor Calkins represented the finest of the many train-service personnel who for decades have accommodated American travelers. We ate our dinner, seasoned as it was with the well-trod grit from the coach floor, content that we were in capable hands moving westward in the blizzard toward Sioux City.—*Gene Harmon*



LEFT Activity is sparse at IC's pagoda-style station in Fort Dodge as the *Hawkeye* awaits departure. In the good 'ol days, this is where the Omaha section of the *Hawkeye* was separated from the Sioux City section.



LEFT AND ABOVE Friend Jeff Darbee departs the *Hawkeye* in Sioux City to begin our day of looking around that city on a frigid winter day. After moving out of the city's Terminal Station ca. 1960, the *Hawkeye* terminated at a modest facility off Steuben Street at IC's Sioux City yards. In this scene, the locomotives have run around their train for the trip back to Chicago later in the day.







ABOVE Originally intended to be the new state of Illinois' largest, most important city because of its lead industry (think bullets and the Civil War), Galena instead became a popular tourist center in northwestern Illinois. The ornate, brick depot there served Amtrak as well as IC and today functions as a tourist center. In this view in the midnight hour during the autumn of 1968, Chicago newspapers and company mail have been jettisoned from the westbound *Hawkeye's* RPO-baggage car.



ABOVE Longtime friend and mentor Jim Boyd spent a few months working for IC as a brakeman in freight service before he went to work in the railroad publication field in 1971. During his short stint on IC, he happened to bid on a baggage-handling job and got it. It was the only passenger job he got; it was for one round trip to Chicago and back from Dubuque. Somehow Jim talked me into driving him to Dubuque; he went on duty about 2AM for train 12, and after the train arrived and he boarded, I took this photo of Jim on duty. On the return trip the next night on train 11, he failed to drop off company mail at the manned stations between Chicago and Dubuque. That was the last time Jim was called for a passenger job during his tenure with IC.

ried a Flexi-Van or two, an RPO car, two or three coaches, and a sleeper. The RPO was no longer used for U.S. Mail service, but for IC company mail—primarily to distribute paychecks to online employees—as well as limited checked baggage and express service.

By this time, IC had replaced the 6-6-4 sleeper on the *Hawkeye* with a good 'ol common 10-6 sleeper. This change brought some interesting new color to the

*Hawkeye*, as the Pullman Company began supplying 10-6s to trains 11 and 12 with whatever was handy. We began seeing a Budd-built Southern Pacific sleeper from the *Golden State/Sunset Limited* pool as well as Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac 10-6s or a 10-6 from IC's *Panama Limited* pool, usually cars *Centralia* or *Cairo*.

Like they say, though, all good things come to an end, and Pullman began its

termination of sleeping-car service as 1968 drew to a close. Some railroads opted to provide their own sleeping-car service after Pullman left the scene, but IC did not see any future in this with the *Hawkeye* and announced the end of sleeping-car service on the Iowa Division at the end of 1968. A band of us decided to ride the last westbound sleeper on train 11, though we were not in a position to ride all the way to Sioux City, and not even to a middle-of-the-night turnaround at Manchester, Iowa, to catch train 12 back to Rockford. We wound up spotting an auto at Freeport and paying a day rate for a bedroom for the 28 miles between Rockford and Freeport! Somehow, six of us crammed into one of the SP car's bedrooms to commemorate the end of Pullman service on IC's Iowa Division, with champagne and all. The next morning, I got up super early and drove east to Genoa, Ill., to photograph the eastbound *Hawkeye* with last eastbound sleeper.

In its final years, the *Hawkeye* was but a single locomotive and four cars. By this time, my friends and I were well-known by the *Hawkeye's* regular crew, notably conductor Bob Calkins (see "Jonesy's Big Adventure," *PTJ* 2021-4). I recalled a young coach attendant, about my age, on some of my *Hawkeye* rides during the last couple years, never dreaming that some day he would be my boss for a time! (See Kevin McKinney's sidebar.) Conductor Calkins, who worked out of Freeport, was known among fellow employees to be a bit on the gruff side, but he loved his passengers. We had more than one free ride on the *Hawkeye* in those final days. On one pre-planned occasion, friend Morgan McIlwain drove separately to Freeport, spotted his car there, then rode back to Rockford in my car in time to board westbound 11. We rode all the way through to Dubuque, where Calkins had spotted his car, and after he and his assistant conductor went off duty, we hit the bars in East Dubuque, Ill. (where there are dozens), then drove back on twisting, winding U.S. 20 to Freeport where Morgan and I retrieved his car and headed for Rockford. It was an all-nighter I'll always remember.

By now, you can almost guess the rest of my *Hawkeye* story. It was no surprise to me that Chicago-Rockford-Dubuque-Waterloo-Sioux City service would not be a part of the newborn National Railroad Passenger Corp. (Amtrak). The blood-bath of pre-Amtrak passenger trains that would not survive past May 1-3, as well as my narrow miss at riding the last eastbound *Hawkeye*, is already well-known to *PTJ* readers who have read the "Countdown to Amtrak" issue of *PTJ* (2021-2, issue 287). Here's a brief recap. I was adamant that with "my" *Hawkeye* encounters and memories of 18 years—especially it being my first train ride ever—I was not going to miss riding final number 12 the morning of May 1, 1971. The



ABOVE I'm standing at 21st Street Junction on a warm summer evening in August 1968 as the westbound *Hawkeye*—having left Central Station only moments earlier—negotiates the junction whereby Santa Fe passenger trains out of Dearborn Station enter the IC to pass through 21st Street (C&WI and Penn Central crossings) to gain AT&SF trackage. This night's number 11 is pretty typical: two of the four

high-speed GP9s, three Flexi-Vans, an RPO-baggage, and three coaches. At left is the C&WI main line and at right the Santa Fe coach yard and passenger engine terminal. The IC track remains in place, used by CN freights and Amtrak trains off the Carbondale-Memphis-New Orleans main line when Amtrak is not using the St. Charles Air Line.



ABOVE, BOTH PHOTOS The last westbound sleeper on train 11, April 26, 1968, was Budd-built 10-6 SP 9022, shown at Freeport. I took this photo when six of us detoured here after the ride over from Rockford in a bedroom. The following morning, I



drove to Genoa, Ill., to photograph the last eastbound sleeper (also an SP Budd 10-6) on train 12 as it swept through Genoa just after daybreak. Ancient IC E6 4001 (built in 1941) led the train. In earlier years, Genoa was a flagstop for the *Hawkeye*.

RIGHT This was my last photo of the *Hawkeye*. We're at Central Station moments after the arrival of final IC train 12 at 7:15AM on May 1, 1971. Out of the photo a couple of tracks to the left, the first Amtrak *City of New Orleans* departed. It was a momentous morning in U.S. rail passenger history. But I still miss my *Hawkeye*.

bunch of us making these last runs nearly botched the plan by riding several last-run trains out from and back into Chicago during the previous 12-plus hours, but a five-hour late Burlington Northern eastbound *Afternoon Zephyr* stymied us. We arrived CUS around 4AM which left us no time, as planned, to drive 85 miles to Rockford for the *Hawkeye's* 5:30AM departure. It occurred to me that we could make it to the train's suburban Chicago stop at Broadview at 6:45AM. That we did, and I was able to give a final salute to my all-time favorite passenger train. 🚂

